

## And they ascended Mount Hor ... Then Aharon died there on Mount Hor. (20:27,28)

*Rashi* translates *Har Hohor* as Mountain of the Mountain, explaining that it was given its unique name due to its unique configuration. It was like that of a small apple perched on top of a large one, or like one mountain on top of another. The concept of apple and mountain with mountain above mountain or apple above apple begs elucidation. *Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl*, offers a penetrating insight into understanding the double mountain/double apple relationship to Aharon *HaKohen*. He posits that Aharon integrated the *middos*, attributes, of Avraham *Avinu* with those of Yitzchak *Avinu*.

Avraham was the paradigm of *chesed*. Acts of lovingkindness served as the foundation upon which he based and built his *avodas hakodesh*, sacred service, to Hashem. Yitzchak, who was designated to be-- and served as-- the *Olah Temimah*, perfect sacrifice, devoted his life solely to *avodah*, devotion to Hashem, with prayer and meditation. These two Patriarchs are the pillars of *chesed* and *avodah* in this world.

Avraham *Avinu* referred to the *makom ha'Mikdash*, the place where the *Bais Hamikdash* would be built, as *har*, mountain. Yitzchak *Avinu* called this same place *sadeh*, field -- not just any field, but a field of apple trees. Thus, when Yaakov went in for Yitzchak to bless him, the Patriarch remarked, "The odor of my son is like the odor of the field" (Bereishis 27:27). The *Zohar* says that he smelled like an apple field. In conclusion, when we mention the term *har*, it is a reference to Avraham. When we mention the term *tapuach*, apple, we are referring to Yitzchak. Aharon *HaKohen* distinguished himself in the *middos* of *chesed* and *avodah*, as if he had received the overflow of these attributes from Avraham and Yitzchak. This is implied by the double mountain: mountain on mountain – apple on apple. Aharon *HaKohen* reflected them both.

I think we may supplement this idea. On its own, *chesed* takes on the emotion of the benefactor. He may empathize with a given organization, an endeavor, or a person, more so than with another. Therefore, even though the one which does not find favor in his eyes might be more worthy, he will pass it over in order to shower his generosity on whom/what strikes his fancy. This is why *avodah*, a strong connection with Hashem, and *yiraah*, the fear/awe that it engenders, will allow a person to vacate any partiality that he might have. Every endeavor requires direction. Even acts of *chesed* -- which, for the most part, may be perceived as purely altruistic -- may not be as benevolent as they seem. Satisfying one's guilt, obligations, or even ego, may help the beneficiary, but is it a *halachic* manner of *chesed* guided by *yiraas Shomayim*? I hesitate to voice my opinion.

*Chesed*, caring for others, empathizing with their pain, was the cornerstone of the Manchester *Rosh Yeshivah, zl*. To him, *chesed* was an integral part of his DNA. It was, however, given to very large parameters. No act of kindness was too large or too difficult or too small. He thought of

everything and everyone. In one of his *shmuessen*, ethical discourses, he spoke of *chesed shel Torah*, the Torah's standard of lovingkindness. It is a form of kindness that obliges the would-be-benefactor to visualize himself as the beneficiary – and ask himself, “If I were in need of this kindness, what would I hope to receive from those who would reach out to me? What would be my anxieties and apprehensions, my needs and aspirations?”

*Tzedakah*, giving charitably, is a primary aspect of *chesed*. The *Rosh Yeshivah* taught that doling out one's money for charity is important. So, too, is giving up one's precious time for *chesed*. He added that, just as one does not disburse his money indiscriminately, likewise should he think twice before giving up his time. When people are asked to be part of a particular communal project, they should introspect concerning their true motivation. Is their input really needed, or do they simply want to be “part of it”? Assuaging one's ego is not an intrinsic aspect of *chesed*.

In their commentary to *Koheles* (12:14), *Chazal* teach that, concerning acts of *chesed* which on the surface appear laudatory, but, in fact, are far from it, one must be aware that Heaven will take into account any negative aspects which might be done with the best intentions. Every act of *chesed* must be pristine, free of any form of negativity. The following incident is a classic example of the *Rosh Yeshivah's* sensitivity “transparency” in *chesed*.

A young man whom the *Rosh Yeshivah* did not know passed away, leaving a young widow and two young orphans. The funeral took place on *Erev Yom Kippur*, during a driving rainstorm. During the funeral, the six-year-old boy looked out the window and saw that the Manchester *Rosh Yeshivah* had attended his father's funeral. Everyone was safely ensconced within the walls of the funeral home, everyone but the *Rosh Yeshivah* who remained outside during the pouring rain. The boy never forgot the *kavod acharon*, final honor, the *Rosh Yeshivah* gave his father. When he grew up, he studied under the *Rosh Yeshivah* and became very close to him. He once asked the *Rosh Yeshivah* why he had remained outside during the eulogies. He replied, “I did not know your father. However, when I heard that a young man had died and left over a young, grieving widow and two orphans, I felt compelled to participate. Since I did not know the deceased or his family, I was reluctant to enter the chapel, for fear that my presence may be misconstrued as an intrusion that would cause the family discomfort.” This is the meaning of *chesed* guided by *yiraah*.