

For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice. (18:19)

Avraham *Avinu* is known as the *amud*, pillar, of *chesed*. He went beyond the call of duty in order to provide for the needs of those who were not as fortunate as he. It was this character trait which he introduced and inculcated into the psyche of his descendants. *Chesed* takes on many forms. It all depends on the attitude of the benefactor. For the most part, they see a need, and they immediately respond. Then there are those who innovate, who think before they act, who understand that *chesed* goes deeper than fulfilling a need. One must acknowledge the value of *chesed* and the extraordinary merit that it garners for one who extends himself. Successful *chesed* requires innovation and cognition, awareness of an opportunity for performing *chesed* and doing something about it. Understanding the extraordinary merit engendered by acts of *chesed* is what elevates a simple act of kindness onto a lofty spiritual plane.

Two stories capture these ideas. *Horav Chaim Kreisworth, zl*, was a brilliant *gaon* without peer. Equal to his erudition was his uncanny understanding of the value of *chesed* and employing every opportunity to act upon it. He was visiting London, and he arrived at the home of his host, one of Europe's greatest philanthropists, after every *shul minyan* had already *davened Maariv*. Understandably upset, he knew that he was now compelled to *daven Maariv b'yechidus*, alone, without a *minyan*. As such, he sought a place/room in the house that was most propitious to *daven*, a place where his *tefillos* had greater efficacy. [While Hashem listens to all our sincere *tefillos*, regardless of the venue in which they are expressed, it helps to pray in a place *mesugal*, most meritorious, as a backdrop for his prayers.] He went from room to room searching for that special place. One would think that it would be the study, filled with *seforim*, a place used for Torah study. Wrong. He chose the kitchen, since much of the food prepared there was used to feed those in need. This was his depth of understanding the *middah* of *chesed*.

Horav Aizik Sher, zl, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Slabodka, was giving a fiery *shmuess*, *mussar*/character refinement, talk, to members of the *Kollel*, married men who devoted themselves 24/7 to Torah study. The *Rosh Yeshivah* was all fired up with his brilliant talk. Suddenly, the door to the room opened up and there stood his *Rebbetzin*, daughter of the *Alter, zl, m'Slabodka*. She pointed to her watch and said, "It is *Erev Shabbos*, and these young men must go home to help their wives and families." *Rav Aizik* closed his *sefer* and bid everyone a *Gutt Shabbos*. This is how she thought: *Mussar* is vital, but not at the expense of *chesed*. Obviously, the *Rosh Yeshivah* concurred.