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Lecturer urges Orthodox community to perform acts of loving-kindness



Rabbi Paysach Krohn
Noted speaker, author, and mohel

by **Debra Rubin**

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Acts of loving-kindness are a central theme in the Torah and should be part of the daily routine of any Jew, according to a noted lecturer and author on Torah education and character development.

“The Torah begins with *chesed* [kindness] and ends with *chesed*,” said Rabbi Paysach Krohn, speaking Saturday night, Jan. 13, before a crowd that filled the sanctuary at Congregation Ohr Torah in Edison.

The talk was the latest of a series of programs known as *Achieving Change Through Torah*, or ACTT, intended to promote “character improvement” within the Orthodox community. Orthodox synagogues in Highland Park, New Brunswick, and East Brunswick are sponsors of ACTT.

In this latest “module,” participants are being urged to perform acts of *ahavas chesed*, loving-kindness, including such simple tasks as running an errand for a friend, giving a person an unexpected compliment, or helping someone find a job.

“The ability to do *chesed*, to see others in trouble and help them, is the essence of being Jewish,” said Rabbi Yaakov Wasser of Young Israel of East Brunswick as he introduced Krohn, a fifth-generation *mohel* from Queens.

And yet, Krohn said, not enough is being done to promote this essential character trait.

“Torah is not enough,” declared Krohn, the author of a guide to Jewish circumcision whose lectures on parenting, marriage, and character development are widely distributed in the Orthodox community. “We must take action. We must teach *chesed* in our synagogues, make it part of our behavior 24/7.”

Krohn, the oldest of seven children, recalled an incident that occurred in 1966 when he was a 21-year-old yeshiva student. His father died, and a man from the family’s synagogue, knowing they were struggling financially, gave Krohn \$1,500. Although he and his mother protested that they did not need the *tzedaka*, the man said it was not charity but rather a loan that could be paid back whenever the family could afford to do so.

More than two years later, Krohn, then working as a *mohel*, went to the man’s office to repay the loan. Krohn said his benefactor refused to take the money and told him, “A number of years ago I was on the verge of bankruptcy, and a man named Mr. Lowenstein gave me the money. He said, ‘I’ll never ask you to pay it back. When you can find someone else who needs the money, give it to them.’ So that’s what I’m telling you. Find someone else who needs the money and give it to them.”

Krohn said he and his mother passed the money to a family in need and told them to pass it on when they could.

“Look how many *Yidden* have shared with people and passed on that *chesed* — I don’t know how many times,” he said.

Krohn chastised those who do not perform similar acts of *chesed* for others. He said there were only three reasons why such people would choose not to — they don’t feel responsible for their fellow Jews, it’s not important to them, or they feel they are more important than others.

And yet, he said, “every Jew has an important role to play in life. Every Jew has something no other Jew can accomplish.... No one can do it alone. We all need someone else.”

For more information on the ACTT program, email info@actt613.org, telephone 732-993-5376, or visit the ACTT web site www.actt613.org.

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