

Translation

**Simon the Righteous was of the remnants of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world stands on three things: on the Torah, on the Temple Service, and on Deeds of Loving-Kindness.**

Maimonides

This is to say that by wisdom (that is the Torah), by the exceptional moral qualities (and they are Deeds of Loving Kindness), and by observing the laws of Torah (and they are the sacrifices), will be the perpetualization of a repaired world, and the ordering of its existence on the path of wholeness.

Rabbi Pinchas Kehati

**On the Torah:** As our sages said: (Nedarim 32a) "Great is Torah. Were it not for the Torah heaven and earth would not exist. As it says (Jr 33:25): 'If not for My Covenant with day and night, I would not have appointed my ordinance of heaven and earth,'" which means to say, but for the Torah of which it is written (Joshua 1:8): "This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth and you shall meditate on it day and night," the world would not endure. **On the Temple Service:** for as long as the services of the Holy Temple continues, the world and its inhabitants are blessed and rain falls when required, as it is written (Dt 11:13): "And if you serve God with all your heart and with all your soul, I shall give the rain in its season." Avot deRabi Natan: Following the destruction of the Holy Temple, prayer which is the service (i.e. worship) of the heart, was substituted for the service (sacrifices) of the Holy Temple. Another

interpretation is that הַעֲבוּדָה refers to the general observance of the *Mitzvot*. Still others assert that הַעֲבוּדָה refers literally to physical work like plowing, sowing, reaping etc. through which a human being becomes a partner of the Holy One, Blessed be God, in the work of creation, as it says (Gn 2:3): "which God created to do," which means that God created so that a human being might continue to do, i.e. to populate the world and to refine it. (*Sefer Hama'or* in the name of *Lev Avot*.) **Deeds of Loving-Kindness:** The kind acts which a person performs for the sake of another person, as it is written (Ps 89:3): "The world is built on Loving-Kindness." And our Sages said: "The *mitzvah* of *gemilut chasadim* is greater than the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* because *tzedakah* is

שְׁמַעוֹן הַצְּדִיק הָיָה מְשִׁירֵי  
 כְּנִסֵּת הַגְּדוּלָּה. הוּא הָיָה  
 אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים  
 הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל  
 הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוֹת חֲסָדִים :

performed with property, whereas *gemilut chasadim* is performed with both our possessions and our personal selves (like comforting the mourning, visiting the sick, etc.). *Tzedakah* is given only to the poor; whereas, *gemilut chasadim* can be extended to the poor as

well as to the rich. *Tzedakah* relates only to the living; whereas, *gemilut chasadim* can be practiced towards both the living and the dead. According to *Midrash Shmuel*, Simon the Righteous intended to explain that the members of the Great Assembly, in promulgating the three statements of the previous Mishnah, wanted to strengthen the three pillars which sustain the universe. Concerning *Torah* they said "raise up many disciples." Concerning הַעֲבוּדָה which involves the observance of the *Torah* and its *mitzvot*, they said: "Make a fence around the *Torah*." Concerning *gemilut chasadim* they said: "be cautious in judgment," because there is no greater act of Loving-Kindness than saving the oppressed by rendering fair judgment.