

## If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving offering. (7:12)

*Rashi* explains that the *Korban Todah*, Thanksgiving offering, was offered as gratitude for miracles incurred in four different circumstances: when one who has crossed the sea; when one traveled through the wilderness; when one was liberated from prison; or when one was healed from serious illness. In each of these circumstances, the Torah enjoins the individual to demonstrate his gratitude to the Almighty. Interestingly, the *Korban Todah* was accompanied by forty loaves which, together with the sacrifice, had to be consumed during the requisite period of one day and a night – less time than was allotted for a regular *korban*. *Sforno* explains that a vital component in the gratitude process is publicity – public declaration and proffering gratitude for being saved. Forty loaves is a lot of bread/*matzoh* – much more than one person can consume in such a short period of time. He should have either been given more time or less bread. If the Torah required such a sum to be completed “overnight,” there is only one practical way this could be done: invite all of one’s friends and have a “*Todah* party.” Let everyone know why he is thanking Hashem, so they, too, will reflect, acknowledge and share in the gratitude.

Another explanation supports inviting one’s friends to celebrate, other than simply to publicize the miracle that one has experienced. One should share his good fortune with his friends. When one has received a blessing, the correct and proper thing to do is share this blessing with others. This, too, is part and parcel of showing one’s gratitude. If one has received a wonderful gift, he should share that gift, because we do not live only for ourselves. Self-centeredness is not consistent with Jewish practice.

Incidentally, the Hebrew term for gratitude, *hakoras hatov* means “recognizing the good.” The phrase does not state that one must demonstrate his feelings of gratitude. I think this is a given – one acknowledges that he has received a gift of good, that he has benefitted from something. Our problem is not the lack of overt expression, but, rather, the lack of internal acknowledgement of the good. We take so much for granted, until the moment that we might lose it. Then we are suddenly “motivated” to pray that we do not lose our gift. Life is all about *hakoras hatov*, because what greater reason do we have for showing gratitude than life itself?

**Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl**, popularly known as the *Ponevezer Rav*, was a living example of *hakoras hatov*. Every conversation that revolved around his beloved *yeshivah* was peppered with exemplary faith in the Almighty. He reiterated time and again that *Mimcha hakol*, “Everything is from You (Hashem).” He took no credit for his unusual success in building Torah in *Eretz Yisrael*. He attributed it to angels in the guise of men who supported his efforts and assisted him in his every endeavor. It was never about himself.

The *Ponevezer Rav* once wanted to solicit a one-thousand dollar contribution for the *yeshivah*. The would-be benefactor was a wealthy man to whom such a donation, albeit considerable, would not have made a dent in his financial portfolio. Regrettably, the *Rav* was unsuccessful. The man emphatically refused to give. The *Rav* left empty-handed and dejected. A few moments later,

completely out of the blue, a Jewish man, whom the *Rav* had never before encountered, came up to him and said, "I have heard so much about your wonderful work. I would like to contribute to your cause. The man proceeded to present him with a check for one thousand dollars! When a person realizes that life is filled with miracles – that life in itself is a miracle – he will be the beneficiary of miracles.

The *Chida* had a unique signature, which included the image of a ship. In his *Shem HaGedolim*, the *Chida* writes that his grandfather, *Horav Avraham Azulai*, descended from the distinguished *Chachmei Castilia*, wise men of Castille, who were holy, righteous Jews that were expelled from Spain in 1492. The family traveled to Fez, Morocco, by boat. As soon as the boat docked in the harbor, they alighted and set foot on dry land. Suddenly, a storm appeared as if from nowhere and sank the boat with all of their belongings. They were miraculously spared. In recognition of the miracle and to ensure that they would never forget Hashem's gift of life to them, his grandfather incorporated the image of a ship in his signature. This became a family tradition of *hakoras hatov*.