

And Hashem said to Moshe, "Say to Aharon, take your staff and stretch out your hand." (7:19)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* initiated the last seven *makos*, plagues, while Hashem told Aharon to strike the river and the earth for the first three plagues. *Chazal* attribute Aharon's designation to the fact that the river and the earth protected Moshe. He was placed in the river as an infant to be concealed from the Egyptians, and later the earth covered the Egyptian that he had killed. Moshe benefited from two inanimate objects. Therefore, he must demonstrate his gratitude. This seems to be excessive. The *middah* of *hakoras tov*, appreciation, is one of the mainstays of character development, but is it necessary to show this gratitude to an inanimate object that was essentially fulfilling its purpose in the world? After all, the water or earth are not sensitive to a lack of gratitude.

Horav Mordechai Kukis, shlita, explains that in the area of *hakoras tov*, the beneficiary need not make *cheshbonos*, calculations, to appraise the actual amount of effort his benefactor has exerted in order to estimate how much gratitude he owes. How much was the benefactor put out by his favor? Did he have to do it anyway? Was he going my way? It did not really cost him very much, and so many more excuses that we may use to justify not repaying a favor, not demonstrating gratitude where it is due. Quite possibly, once we start with the *cheshbonos*, we might negate the whole concept of *hakoras tov*!

This is the lesson we learn from Moshe. If Hashem insisted that Moshe demonstrate his sense of gratitude, even to an inanimate object, how much more so must we show our appreciation to human beings, and--ultimately--to Hashem *Yisborach*, the source of all good. Our concern should not be from whom we have received a favor, or the size and value of that favor; our first and only consideration should be that we have benefited and should show our gratitude.

Horav E.M. Shach, shlita, goes a bit further in expounding the demand for *hakoras tov*. We must recognize that Hashem is the source of all the good that we receive. The medium through which we receive this benefit is nothing more than a vehicle for channeling Hashem's favor to us. What difference does it make to us who or what Hashem employs to serve as the agent for carrying out His objective? He demands that we imbue ourselves with the *middah* of appreciation, not distinguishing among the benefactors. This is a case in which too much "discrimination" might cause us to lose sight of the actual source of our blessing--Hashem.