"For in order to elevate you Hashem has come." (20:17).

The word "nasos" is translated by Rashi as "to elevate." The fact that Hashem Himself has revealed Himself to you will elevate your position in the eyes of the nations. The Rambam and Ramban translate the word "nasos" as "to test." Hashem has come to test Bnei Yisrael. They differ, however, in regard to the time of this trial. According to the Ramban, the emphasis is upon the present. Hashem is telling Bnei Yisrael, "At Har Sinai, you were thoroughly prepared to meet Hashem. You had no doubt concerning His sovereignty. Now we will see if you will pass the test. Will you observe His mitzvos? Will you love Him? Will you repay His kindness to you?" The Rambam, on the other hand, feels that the test will occur in the future. The unprecedented events which took place on Har Sinai, the unparalleled experience of which Bnei Yisrael were a part, should have galvanized their trust in Hashem, so that they will be able to overcome the challenges of the future. Nothing should be able to undermine Bnei Yisrael's faith in the Almighty.

According to the *Rambam*, the experience has strengthened *Bnei Yisrael*, tempering their faith. They should have developed the fortitude to withstand all challenges to their faith.

The *Ramban* posits a different idea. His statement, "Will you repay His kindness to you?" implies that we owe loyalty to Hashem. Without a sense of *hakoras ha'tov*, appreciation and gratitude, we have no relationship with Hashem. *Horav Yitzchok Hutner, zl,* derives a fascinating lesson from the *Ramban*. We have always placed *hakoras ha'tov* among the fundamental character traits that a decent human being must possess. A noted axiom of *Chazal* is that "*derech eretz kadmah la'Torah*," character development, moral and ethical behavior, are pre-requisites to *Torah* study. Gratitude to Hashem is no different. Before one can properly study *Torah*, he must be refined in *middos. Hakoras hatov* to Hashem should be no different.

We glean a more profound aspect to this expectation from the *Ramban*. Hashem arranged the revelation at *Har Sinai* as a test to see if *Bnei Yisrael* would repay His kindness to them. *Harkoras ha'tov* is not simply a character trait - it is the foundation for establishing *avodas* Hashem, it is a prerequisite for serving Hashem. Indeed, Hashem brought about the entire spectacle of *maamad Har Sinai* as a test, to assess *Bnei Yisrael's* level of gratitude. If they are lacking in their sense of appreciation, then their relationship with Hashem will accordingly be inadequate.

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