

Then Pharaoh said to Yosef. “See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt.” (41:41)

Hakoras hatov, recognizing a favor and paying gratitude, is a defining *middah*, character trait. One who is an ingrate is not a *mentch*, decent human being. Nonetheless, some individuals who, although not by nature ingrates, find themselves hard-pressed to recognize that (a) they owe something to someone, (b) that they have sufficient reason to show their appreciation. In other words, they seek every excuse to justify their lack of gratitude. They owe no one for anything.

We all know people who seek excuses not to show their gratitude. We observe another form of character deficiency. A person helps; he is acting on someone’s behalf, be it a job, a marriage partner, or simply an act of lovingkindness. Once he has performed his good deed, he expects constant recognition. “Remember how you got here and who helped you along the way.” If, Heaven forbid, a day passes and the beneficiary neglects to pay his respects and laud his benefactor for everything – then he is an ingrate. Yes, there are people like that. They thrive on and need constant recognition.

Indeed, *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, suggests that Pharaoh was like that. He elevated Yosef from slavery to monarchy, which was certainly no simple feat. No one other than Pharaoh (with a “little” manipulation from Hashem) could have achieved this transformation. If so, why does Pharaoh say to Yosef, “See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt”? A few *pesukim* later, Pharaoh “reminds” Yosef, “I am Pharaoh.” Obviously, he is Pharaoh and, undoubtedly, he is the only one who has the power to elevate Yosef. Why does Pharaoh have to issue these “subtle” reminders?

Rav Sholom explains that Pharaoh was intimating to Yosef, “Remember who gave you this job. I am not asking for anything from you -- no accolades, no gifts, nothing – but that you remember how you got here and who helped you along the way. Do not ever lose sight of the fact that, regardless of what you have become, I am still Pharaoh. Never forget! I will not!”

Pharaoh represents the classic example of the fellow who simply will not let go. He has benefited others, and, in return, he wants recognition. Indeed, he thrives on recognition. If a day goes by and he does not receive his recognition, he will be hurt and upset.

Rav Sholom relates that he heard a similar exposition with regard to the Angel that informed Manoach and his wife that they would soon have a son (Shimshon). At first, Manoach and his wife were uncertain as to the identity of the individual who conveyed the good news to them. Was he a human being or an Angel? The *pasuk* concludes: “The Angel of Hashem did not continue anymore to appear to Manoach and his wife; then Manoach realized that he was an Angel of Hashem” (*Shoftim* 13:21). How did the fact that the Angel did not return serve as an indicator that he was, in fact, an angel?

Rav Sholom explains that a human being might not have placed great demands on Manoach and his wife, but recognition is a given. He would like them to talk about him, tell their friends, make a point of coming over to him, so that he could remind them that, if not for “him,” they might still be childless. That is human nature. Angels are not that way. Thus, if he did not return, he must have been a supernatural being. One must always show his appreciation by expressing his gratitude. On the other hand, the benefactor should keep it to himself and just feel good that Hashem “allowed” him to be His conduit for helping another Jew.