

Hashem descended to look at the city...which the sons of Man built. (11:5)

Rashi questions the use of the words, *bnei Adam*, “sons of man.” Who else would they be? Were they the sons of donkeys? He explains that the Torah refers to their lineage ascending to Adam *HaRishon*, primordial man, who exhibited ingratitude when Hashem asked him why he had eaten the forbidden fruit. Adam replied, “The woman whom You gave to be with me – she gave me of the tree and I ate” (*Bereishis* 3:11). As he was a *kafui tov*, ingrate, likewise, his descendants rebelled against the One Who had spared them from the effects of the Flood. In other words, they were alive because of Hashem; yet, they were prepared to mutiny against Him.

Had they been spared from the Flood? They were born after the Flood, but anyone with basic common sense realizes that his debt of gratitude extends back to another place and time. Had Hashem not spared their ancestors, they would not be here. This is the Torah’s concept of gratitude: *hakoras hatov*, recognizing /acknowledging the good one receives. All too often we do not show appreciation, because we are indifferent to the good from which we have benefitted. We refuse to acknowledge that we owe anyone. After all, it was so long ago; or he had to do it anyway—it is part of his job. These are all excuses for a repulsive character.

Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, once stayed at an elegant hotel in Paris. He ordered a cup of coffee which cost a few francs. This was quite a bit of money at the time, especially for a Jew from Eastern Europe. After taking in everything that went into the coffee, however, he realized that it was not that much. True, the price of the actual coffee was minimal. There was also the elegant, clean building which housed the hotel. The ambiance of the restaurant-- the china, silver and crystal flatware-- was not to be ignored. The waiters and *maître d*, the staff that saw to the maintenance of the restaurant, were all included in the price. It was no wonder that a cup of coffee cost a few francs. All of these extras indirectly added to the “flavor” of the cup of coffee.

Afterwards, *Rav Yisrael* said, “How much more so are we obliged to recognize the benefits we enjoy in Hashem’s hotel – the world. When a man drinks a cup of water, he enjoys the ground upon which he stands, the air which he breathes, the ambiance of the trees, grass and flowers that surround him. The music of the birds, the warmth of the sun, the fresh air: all of these are included in his cup of water. This is something that should course through our minds the next time we make a *brachah*, blessing, prior to partaking from Hashem’s world.

Horav Yisrael Abuchatzera, zl, reverently known as the Baba Sali, visited France. While he was there, he developed a serious infection in his eyes. His students immediately rushed him to a Dr. Klitzi, who addressed the *tzadik*’s needs and provided the necessary medicine which cured his ailment and saved his eyesight. The Baba Sali thanked the doctor profusely and remained close with him, extending to him every accolade and privilege.

A number of years later, one of the members of the French rabbinate visited the Baba Sali, petitioning him for a blessing for his wife. Apparently, his wife was very ill and her life hung in the balance. The Baba Sali blessed her, wishing her well. As the *rav* was about to leave, he casually mentioned that perhaps the Baba Sali was acquainted with his father-in-law, Dr. Klitzi. As soon as the Baba Sali heard this, he arose from his chair and said, "You should know that your father-in-law saved my eyesight. Had it not been for his excellent care, I would not have achieved all that I have over these last few years. Indeed, I owe him an incredible debt of gratitude. In way of some form of remuneration, I assure you that your wife will immediately enjoy instant recovery from her illness. She will become completely healthy, and all signs of ill health will disappear. When the *rav* returned home, he discovered that the Baba Sali's blessing had achieved immediate fruition. This is the power of *hakoras hatov*.