

"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 erez 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. *Hakoras ha'tov* is not simply a character trait - it is the foundation for establishing *avodas Hashem*, it is a pre-requisite 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.