

You shall be glad with all the goodness. (26:11)

Parashas Ki Savo begins with the *mitzvah* of *Bikurim*, the first fruits, in which the Jewish farmer is enjoined to bring his first fruits to Yerushalayim as a sign of his gratitude to Hashem. He makes a declaration of gratitude, whereby he details Hashem's loving intervention throughout history, thus demonstrating the realization that everything that he has is only a result of Hashem's beneficence. *Hakoras hatov*, expressing one's gratitude, is a requisite for an individual to be considered a decent human being. One who is an ingrate to others will eventually act likewise to Hashem. We are accustomed to viewing the ingrate as arrogant, considering himself better than those who reach out to benefit him. Expressing gratitude for favors received is below his dignity. Another negative perspective of the ingrate is his insatiable hunger, his implacable desire which is hardly ever appeased. Thus, whatever someone does for him is insufficient, because he wants more. He never has enough, so why should he be grateful? He is a self-centered person, who sees everything in life as being all about himself/me. He does not care about anyone other than himself. Gratitude is the farthest thing from his mind, because everyone owes him. These characterizations of the ingrate have one common denomination: the ingrate has feelings; he is not emotionless. If someone were to act unkindly to him, he would take revenge. He would not tolerate a disservice, maltreatment, or disparagement.

Another aspect of ingratitude is that the reaction of an ingrate goes beyond the pale of "normative" ingratitude: the Amalek syndrome. In the end of *Parashas Ki Seitzei* (*Devarim* 25:17), the Torah exhorts us to remember the evil attack of Amalek against us during our nasency as a nation. Shortly after our liberation from Egypt, Amalek attacked us for absolutely no reason other than his venomous hatred against G-d's representatives in this world. Our only offense was our religion. As the designated chosen people, we became Amalek's sworn enemies.

The *Midrash Tanchuma* (*Ki Seitzei* 6) offers a rare perspective on the aberrant behavior of this loathsome nation, and, by extension, all those who have descended from the original miscreants, or, who act in a manner similar to them. The *Midrash* cites *Sefer Tehillim* 32:9, *Al tiheyu k'sus k'fered ein havin*, "Be not like a horse, like a mule, uncomprehending." Hashem said to *Klal Yisrael*, "Do not be like the horse that lacks comprehension. If a man (his master) goes to bring it food, to place upon it ornaments, it swallows the food, bends its neck and kicks outward. Likewise acts the mule. (These two animals are clueless concerning the generosity of their benefactor. To them, the aid and services they receive mean nothing.) You (*Klal Yisrael*), do not be like them (horse/mule, or in their characterization of Amalek). You should pay attention and be vigilant in appreciating the favor that you receive and express gratitude for it." The *Midrash* continues that we should neither despise the *Edomi*, because he is our brother; nor the Egyptian, because we were "guests" (ill-treated, but still guests) in their land.

Horav Henach Leibowitz, *zl*, derives from this *Tanchuma* a novel perspective concerning the *kafui tov*, ingrate. It is possible that this person not only eschews expressing gratitude, but also neither reacts to evil, nor exacts retribution against someone who has hurt him. While the latter may be to

his credit, the reason for this attitude is not. This person responds neither to the good nor the bad, because he is apathetic, impervious to expressing emotion, regardless whether it concerns good or bad. He simply does not care; he is indifferent to what happens around him, totally disengaged from reality.

It is possible for a person not to acknowledge the most basic and most simple occurrences for what they are. The *Rosh Yeshivah* posits that the Torah exhorts us to remember what Amalek did to us – not because the Torah is suggesting that Amalek did not seek to do us harm. We have no question that his intentions were evil and that he was bent on destroying us. So, what is the problem? Why do we require a reminder to inculcate our psyche that Amalek's name must be blotted out? People who do not think do not comprehend. They can go through life ignoring all the signs that point to someone and scream, "He is evil! He wants to destroy you!" If a person refuses or is unable (for various reasons) to think cogently, he will ignore the clear and the obvious and might even embrace Amalek! We have seen more than one instance in which well-meaning (but nonsensical and naïve) people have embraced the most reprehensible individuals – people who sought to do us harm. Why? They did not think. The *Tanchuma* teaches us that one who does not think is like a horse or a mule: clueless, insensitive and dimwitted.