

## **If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving offering. (7:12)**

*Horav Mordechai Schwab, zl*, distinguishes between the secular concept of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude/appreciation, and that of the Torah. Truthfully, this differential applies to all *middos*, character traits, because, first and foremost, we execute them in response to the Torah's command that we do so. *Derech erez kodmah l'Torah*; human decency/ethical character, refinement, precedes Torah knowledge. One whose *middos* are flawed will not approach Torah as *divrei Elokim Chaim*, words of the Living G-d, but as a secular, mundane discipline. As such, Torah will do very little to nothing in terms of transforming him into a *ben Torah*.

*Hakoras hatov* is an accepted way of life. In the secular world, *hakoras hatov* seems to be contractual: You help me; I, in turn, repay the favor. America has a day dedicated to thanksgiving to the Almighty for favors rendered five hundred years ago. We have a Father's Day and Mother's Day and a host of other days dedicated to appreciating individuals. How is the Torah's concept of *hakoras hatov* different? Appreciation and the sense of gratitude (you do for me; I owe you) are *t'chunos ha'nefesh*, innate qualities, that are intrinsic to human DNA. We all have an inborn sense of obligation to the one who benefits us. When character is molded and shaped by one's DNA, however, one can assuage the obligation/demand for gratitude by devoting one day a year to expressing gratitude, or by limiting his gratitude to individuals whom he has determined are worthy of his thankfulness. It is certainly not a one size fits all form of appreciation, whereby we demonstrate our endless indebtedness to anyone, regardless of the size of the favor, the benefactor's personal gain, the beneficiaries' level of necessity, etc. It is everyone all of the time, anywhere. It does not have to make sense. We owe the Egyptians for their "hospitality"; as such, we may not hate them. We must be cognitive of inanimate objects from whom we have benefitted; thus, *Moshe Rabbeinu* was not permitted to strike the earth or water of Egypt. Perhaps, his subconscious sense of gratitude might have been stunted.

A people/person who is deficient in *hakoras hatov* is distanced from the Jewish people. They can never be attached, accepted as a convert. Hence, the Torah condemns Ammon and Moav. The issue is not so much the evil that they perpetrated against us, but rather that they, as descendants of Lot who was saved by Avraham *Avinu*, should act differently. On the other hand, the Egyptians who persecuted us, but actually housed us (regardless of the self-serving reason), can one day convert and be accepted into *Klal Yisrael*.

*Rav Schwab* related that his *Rebbe, Horav Boruch Ber Leibowitz, zl*, took the obligation of *hakoras hatov* seriously – especially concerning a student's responsibility towards his *yeshivah*. A *yeshivah* is not simply someone's holding pattern until he is ready to move on to the next institution. A *yeshivah* is a home: a father and a mother, a place where one is nurtured. As such, the obligation of *hakoras hatov* to one's *yeshivah* is overwhelming.

When *Rav Schwab* traveled to England for the purpose of *shidduchim*, seeking a wife, he took leave of the *yeshivah* (Kaminitz, under the leadership of *Rav Boruch Ber*). He was supposed to be

gone for a short duration, which stretched out to two months. When he returned, he immediately went to give *shalom* to his *Rebbe*. *Rav* Boruch Ber was visibly upset and asked, “Where is your *hakoras hatov*? Two months passed and not a single postcard!”

Another incident took place following World War I. The wicked *Yiddishists* and Jewish Communists had convinced the Russian government to close *yeshivos* and, instead, to demand the students study secular subjects. The *yeshivos* were forced to close in the larger communities. This did not put an end to formal Torah study. It just required creativity on the part of the *Roshei Yeshivah*, who encouraged their students (at the behest of the *Chafetz Chaim*) to travel to all the small outlying communities and establish *chadorim*, schools, for the Jewish children. These small schools were not culturally correct; thus, they delivered their lessons clandestinely. Money was a major problem, because the *yeshivah bachurim* had expenses, and the schools needed money to function.

In Kaminetz, a group of students consisted of capable young men. They suddenly became adept at the art of fundraising, as they traveled all over raising funds for the newly-established *yeshivos*. They sought out alumni who were able to help and solicited them on behalf of their *yeshivos*. This is when it became tricky. In the *Kaminetz Yeshivah* (as well as in other *yeshivos*), a fund called TAT existed. It referred to *Tomchei Torah*, supporters of Torah, a program earmarked to help with the physical needs of the poorer students – i.e. clothing, travel expenses, even food. The funds for this program had heretofore been solicited from the *yeshivah* alumni. Now the alumni were being approached for the establishment of *yeshivos*. Apparently, just so much money was accessible. When discord emerged between the two fundraising factions, they decided to settle their disagreement by presenting their contentions to the *Rosh Yeshivah*, *Rav* Baruch Ber. The *Rosh Yeshivah* listened and commented, “A student’s first responsibility is to his *yeshivah*. Afterwards, he can go help others. His *yeshivah* and its students are priority number one. He must have *hakoras hatov* to the *yeshivah* that nurtures him.”

*Horav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, zl*, was a *Rosh Yeshivah*, a Torah giant who achieved an extraordinary level of erudition in the entire Torah. His *hasmadah*, diligence in Torah, was legendary. His erudition was matched only by his level of *hakoras hatov*. He showered every person who benefitted him – regardless of faith – with gratitude for even the simplest, most basic and decent favor. This was especially true if Torah benefitted as a result of a person’s generosity – material and emotional. (Yes, giving of one’s time and strength to help a Jew in need should be recognized, acknowledged and appreciated.)

*Rav* Scheinberg had a good friend, Mr. Meyer Marlowe, who was a pharmacist living on the Lower East Side of New York. Upon the *Rosh Yeshivah*’s recommendation, Mr. Marlowe served as the provider of medicines and medicinal supplies for the students and staff of *Yeshivas Mir*, which was located in Shanghai, China. They, together with other *yeshivah* men and families, escaped during World War II just as the Nazis were about to overrun their *yeshivah*. *Rav Shachne Zohn, zl*, served as the liaison between the *yeshivah* and Mr. Marlowe. This represented much more than an act of generosity on Mr. Marlowe’s part. The medicines required meticulous, uniform packaging in order

to pass muster with the Japanese (who controlled it until 1945) authorities. If a shipment that arrived did not meet their strict guidelines, it landed in the ocean. As a result, Mr. Marlowe worked long overtime hours, painstakingly packaging and seeing to it that they executed everything to perfection. All of this was without a fee. It was pure *chesed*, kindness at its apex. This was not a one-time endeavor. It went on for months; whenever the call came, he was prepared to help. Indeed, he viewed this as his special *mitzvah* to assist in the furtherance of Torah.

Years passed, the war ended, and life slowly was returning to a sense of normalcy. Mr. Marlowe developed painful ulcers which, after a while, began to hemorrhage. Even today, with many drugs and procedures, this is a serious illness. Then, it was life-threatening. He was admitted to the hospital where he was treated for a number of months, during which time he required numerous blood transfusions to replenish the blood that he had lost due to hemorrhaging. Regardless of the severity of the illness and station of the patient, only so much blood was available and everyone received an allotment. Mr. Marlowe's allotment had reached its completion. The administrators of the hospital informed the family that they felt bad for them, but other patients were also in need of blood. They were halting Mr. Marlowe's transfusions. This was essentially a death warrant.

The family immediately consulted *Rav* Scheinberg. He, in turn, called *Rav* Shachne Zohn and informed him that the individual who had given selflessly of himself to supply drugs to the *Mir talmidim* was in dire need of blood. The very next day, in what was an extraordinary demonstration of *hakoras hatov*, a line formed from the hospital entrance, stretching around the block. The students of the *Mir* came *en masse* to repay their benefactor. This was true *hakoras hatov*. They realized that his hard work and devotion to Torah played a critical role in their survival. True, he was Hashem's *shaliach*, agent, but, obviously, Hashem had chosen him for his worthiness. He had modeled *chesed* for them.