



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Ki Savo 5759

I often share one of my experiences with the Gerrer Rebbe, the Beis Yisroel זי"ע, that relates to a *posuk* in this week's parsha.

One day, the Rebbe summoned me during the pre-dawn hours, (as was his custom), and discussed the case of a certain bochur. This young man was a direct descendant of a great Chasidishe dynasty. During the war, most members of that chasidus were killed *al kidush Hashem*, leaving only a few scattered survivors. The few surviving Chasidim wanted to appoint a Rebbe. However, this young man, despite his lineage, had no connection to Chasidus.

The Beis Yisroel, זי"ע, cared deeply, and invested great effort into helping each *Chasidus* reestablish itself after the war. The Rebbe wanted to do everything possible to reconnect the young man with his heritage, and inspire him to lead and rebuild the Chasidus. The Rebbe evaluated different plans but wasn't satisfied with any of them.

I suggested to the Rebbe that we initiate a *chavrusashaft* between the bochur and an excellent chasidishe avreich. The avreich could hopefully awaken his interest in Chasidus, and in his family heritage. I even suggested an excellent candidate for the task. I knew a chasidishe youngster, who, in his youth, had learned in the very yeshiva this bochur now attended. He also lived near the yeshiva. I believed that he would be able and willing to contact the bochur and learn Sifrei Chasidus with him.



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The Rebbe was delighted, and told me to immediately implement the plan. However, he asked me to ensure that no one would know that he was behind the project. This was his way, always trying to accomplish the maximum, while taking steps ensure his anonymity.

As soon as I left the Rebbe's room, I composed a letter to my acquaintance, emphasizing the importance of the task, and asking him to accept the assignment. Before sending the letter, I brought it to the Rebbe for approval. He read it carefully, and urged me to send it immediately.

Right after Shacharis, I mailed the letter, and a few days later, my friend wrote back, informing me that they had begun to learn together and that, *b'siyata d'shmaya*, the bochur was developing a positive connection to Chasidus.

I updated the Rebbe, who asked for as many details as I could provide. He was clearly delighted that the plan was progressing successfully. He then asked me if I had thanked the young man who undertook this project. I responded that I knew my friend planned to come to Yerushalayim in a few days for a simcha. I was invited to the same simcha, so I intended to thank him then.

When the Rebbe heard my answer, he put down the kvittel that he had been holding during our conversation. With his characteristic sharpness, he said, "When it came to asking him for a favor, you immediately wrote him a letter. You took the time and effort to buy a stamp and envelope, and to hurry to the post office in order to send the letter as soon as possible. However, when it comes to thanking him for his efforts, you are content to postpone *hakaras hatov* till you may happen to meet him at a simcha."

The Rebbe then told me to bring a *Chumash Devorim* from his bookshelves. These shelves were located in the room that the chasidim called the "Shulem Shtub". I remember that in my state of awe and fear,



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I was so nervous that I couldn't figure out how to open the glass doors of the bookcase. The Rebbe urged me to hurry. When I finally brought the Chumash, he opened it to Parshas Ki Savo, and began to read out loud, with a nigun, a posuk from *Parshas Bikurim*.

וענית ואמרת לפני ה' אלוקיך, ארמי אובד אבי, וירד מצרימה ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול עצום ורב. (You should say out loud before Hashem *Elokecha*, The Arami wanted to destroy my father (Yakov), who went down to Egypt and lived there in a small group, and he became a great, powerful, and populous nation there. He then read Rashi's peirush on וענית ואמרת - לשון הרמת קול - with a raised voice.

The Rebbe then asked me why the Torah instructs one who brings Bikurim to raise his voice? The Gemara, (ברכות כ"ד:) says "המשמיע קולו בתפלתו הרי זה מקטני אמנה, המגביה קולו בתפלתו הרי זה מנביאי שקר" (One who makes his voice heard in davening, has little Emunah. One who raises his voice in davening is a false prophet.) Why does the Torah require a raised voice when it comes to reading the *Parshas Bikurim*?

The Rebbe explained that when a person needs a *yeshuah*, he usually calls out for help as loud as he can. It should therefore follow, that when expressing his thanks to one who helped him, he should raise his voice at least as much as he did when he called out for help. Neglecting to do so, and acknowledging his benefactor with a quiet "thank you", would be an act of *כפיית טובה*. (Ignoring the benefit that you received). This is what Rashi revealed to us, when he explained that the words, "וענית ואמרת", instruct the Jew who brings Bikurim, to raise his voice when thanks Hashem by reciting Parshas Bikurim.

The Rebbe then instructed me to write a letter thanking my friend for his efforts, so that I would not be considered a *כפוי טובה*.

I immediately went down to the Beis Medrash and composed a long and elaborate letter, showering my friend with praise and thanks for all he had done. I then showed the letter to the Rebbe. He read it quickly,



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smiled and said, "איך האב נישט געמיינט אזוי ווייט" (I didn't mean for you to go that far).

I learned two lessons from the Rebbe that day. The first - to thank someone with the same level of emotion and urgency, and in the same tone of voice, that you use to ask a favor. The second - to thank someone in an appropriate manner, and not to go overboard.

There is so much to say about the *avoda* of my grandfather zy" a, who excelled in the *midah* of *hakoras hatov*. He treated anyone who did him the tiniest favor, as if he was his greatest benefactor. Just this week, someone who, as a child, lived near my grandfather in Shaarei Chesed, told me that he remembered a day, when my grandfather knocked on his family's door, bearing a large basket of grapes. Such grapes were a luxury that was difficult to obtain in those days. My grandfather announced that he is bringing the grapes to express his *hakoras hatov*. It seems that a few days earlier, the boy's father saw my grandfather in the street, and assisted him in some way.

The man told me that as his father escorted my grandfather on his way out, he asked how he allowed himself to carry a basket of grapes through the street. The Gemara in Bava Metzia (ל), says that if a *zaken* finds a lost object, and carrying such an object in public, would detract from his *kavod*, he is exempt from returning the object to its owner.

When my grandfather heard this question, he turned pale, and responded that *kfiyus tova*, is the most dishonorable behavior imaginable. He was shocked that someone imagined that he would allow himself to adopt such a repulsive *midah*.

Hakoras Hatov is also the key to *parnassa*. The *Sefer Hachinuch*, (מצות ברכת המזון), says that the essence of Brochos, is the expression of *hakoras hatov* to Hashem yisborach, for all that he gives us, every moment of every day. The *Sefer Hachinuch* concludes, "I have learned



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from my Rabbeim, ישמרם הא-ל, that one who is careful to recite *Birkas Hamazon*, will receive his sustenance *b'kavod*, all of his days”.

We must do all we can not to sink to the level of the *kafuy tovah*. Instead, we should be careful to express *hakoras hatov*, to everyone, in all circumstances, with at least the same energy that we invest in asking others to help us. Then, we will be *zocheh* to receive *shefa tov* in every way.



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