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#### HOW BIG OF A MITZVAH IS HAKORAS HATOV?

Our discussion today is about the obligation of *hakaras hatov*. In the hierarchy of all *mitzvos*, where does *hakaras hatov* stand? How important is it? What would you say?

The Chovos Halevavos tells us that the base upon which all avodas Hashem stands is hakaras hatov. You know, when you ask most people for a favor, what do they want to know? "What have you done for me lately? Why should I do it for you?" A lot of people ask that. So Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "I'll tell you what. I'm going to beat you to it. I'm going to provide for you first. I will first take care of you." And if a person receives benefit from Hakadosh Baruch Hu and he does not respond, he's not being makir tova.

Now there are two levels of behavior we observe in people in this matter. There is one person for whom you do a favor, and he doesn't respond in any way. He doesn't do anything bad to you – he just doesn't respond. And then there is another person who is מַשִּיב רְשָה תַּחַת טוֹבָה "he repays good with evil" (Mishley 17:13); you did him a tova and instead of giving back a tova, he responds with bad. You know what it says in the passuk about such a person? The passuk (ibid) says, מַמּוֹשׁ רַשָּה מְבֵּיתו, "evil will not be removed from his house."

A father called me up today, a *heimishe yid*. He said to me, "I have lots going on in my life." Every time he tried to do things, everything fell through. And he wanted to know why he was not getting the *tova*. I told him, "Could you think of somebody who did a *tova* to you, and instead of you being *meishiv* a *tova* to him, you were *meishiv ra'a* to him, you repaid him with bad? Could you think of such a case?" He said, "Could it be this? Could it be that?" I said, "My friend, I'm not here to tell you. I'm just here to give you the prescription. Now you figure it out." He says, "I'm middle-aged already," he tells me. "How am I going to remember everybody I ever did something to?" I said, "If Hashem is giving you a reminder, so Hashem is telling you that you can figure it out. And when He gives you a message - יְּבַשְׁבַּשׁ בְּבַעֲשָׁיִי. You are supposed to do משפרש מעשים (search your actions).

## RECEIVING GIFTS OBLIGATES US

Do you think that if somebody benefitted you, you have the right to walk away, close your eyes, and ignore it? You have to know, you are inviting *ra'os* into your life, into your home! When somebody does you a *tova*, you have a *chiyuv* to respond in the right way. It's not simply a nice thing to do, it's an obligation. The Vilna Gaon writes (commentary on Sefer Rus), the first one who does the other one a *tova*, that's a nice thing, that's a *chessed* – if Reuven extends himself to Shimon, for example. That's a nice thing to do. But to reciprocate, that's a *chiyuv*, an obligation.

Your parents do you tovos, they load you up with tovos. You are chayav to them. What a chiyuv are you chayav to them! Now the little mechutzafim or the big mechutzafim say, "They didn't do enough." Or , "They did it for their own good. They took care of me for their own kavod, they didn't do it for me" Oh, Hashem is going to come and see you. Then you are bringing ra'a into your life and you are going to wonder why the ra'a is coming. "I'm not a bad guy. I don't bother anybody. I keep to myself." No, my friend. You're a meivi ra'a el toch beisecha. You are bringing ra'os to yourself.

Before you take from somebody, don't think you are not going to owe them. It's a very important lesson. That's the basis of all *avodas Hashem*. That's why the Chovos Halevavos writes in Shaar Habechina to know about all the myriads of *tovos* and miracles that Hashem does for us because that is what will arouse you to *ahavas* Hashem, and *avodas* Hashem.

So here is a person who says, "I'm not into ahavas Hashem. I never asked Hashem for things." I mean, oh, is that guy lucky that Hashem is a baal harachamim. Because if anyone you were doing tovos for, tothe degree that Hashem does tovos, would say to you, "I never asked you to do me anything," even if you weren't a baal kaas, even if you weren't a ragzan, you know what you would do? You would do a big smile and say, "Okay, goodbye." And you would flip the switch. You wouldn't say, "Let me give you more, let me give you more." You wouldn't say that.

### THIS REALLY BOTHERS HASHEM

The Steipler notes something very interesting. Almost all of the *aveiros* in history that Hashem was upset about, were for not having *hakaras hatov*. Adam Harishon was thrown out of *Gan Eden* because of *kfiyas tov*. You know what

he was *kofui tov* about? He blamed Hashem for giving him a wife. "Look what this wife brought me. She brought me to *aveiros*. Without her, I wouldn't have ever sinned." Adam Harishon could have stood up to the *nachash*. But he said, הָאָשֶׁר נְתַהָּה עִּמְּדִי , "The woman you gave to me, she caused me to do *aveiros*." (Bereishis 3:12) That is called *kfiyas tova*. And the Steipler (Bircas Peretz, pg. 30) lists a number of *aveiros* that were rooted in not having *hakaros hatov*. When Klal Yisrael were in the *midbar*, Hashem got angry with them because they weren't *makir tov*.<sup>2</sup>

Now you have to know another thing that *Chazal* tell us. What *middah ra'ah* does Hashem have a difficulty accepting more than all other *middos ra'os*. There are many *middos* ra'os. You don't have to go to the other ends of the world to discover them. What would you say is the worst *middah* of all *middos*? What does Hashem get ticked off from more than any other *middah*? This is a very good thing to know because if you know that this bothers Hashem the most, that means it's the first thing Hashem is going to take retribution from you. Take a guess. It's being *kofui tov*!

So Chazal (Mishnas Rabbi Eliezer 7:8) tell us, אין לך קשה לפני הקב"ה יותר מכפיית הסובה. That is amazing. That ticks Hashem off the most. To me, that is mind-boggling. That's why, when someone experiences something bad happening to himself, the first thing you should think is, "What did I do to tick Hashem off? Do you think that I murdered someone? I don't remember murdering anybody. Did I cut anybody? Did I steal from anybody?" You don't have to go there. Just ask yourself, "Were you makir tov, or were you kofer betov?"

I've asked this question to many people. You know what they say to me? "I am *makir tov*." I scratch my head. How are you *makir tov*? You don't do one thing Hashem wants. And if you do what Hashem wants, you do it in such a minimalistic fashion. You are not *machnia* yourself at all to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Whenever something doesn't go your way, you get all bent and twisted out of shape. And when things go your way, you have no feeling, no *hergesh* toward Hakadosh Baruch Hu. You don't listen to one thing Hashem says. So that is something that is mind-boggling.

That's where you've got to go, my friends. That's the place that ticks Hashem off. So if something is not working right for you, you have to ask, "Is Hashem upset?"

#### HASHEM'S SOLE DESIRE

Remember what the Ramban says, the famous Ramban (Shemos 13:16).³ It's one of the most famous Rambans in kol haTorah kulah. I'll give you a little hint. It's at the end of parshas Bo. You know what he says there? Take this with you for the rest of your life. He says there: אין קל עליון חפץ בתחתונים, Hashem has no interest in mortals, in people in this world, מלבד, only – meaning, if you want to know why Hashem created us, it is for the following. שידע האדם ויודה לאלקיו שבראו - His whole desire from us is that we should be modeh to Him, we should be makir tov. We should admit, and speak out and say, "Hashem, you are our Hashem, Who created us and gives us everything." And all the things we have depend on our maasim tovim and our maasim ra'im. You do bad, expect bad. You do good, expect good. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is telling us, He wants us to be modeh to Him.

# SAY "THANK YOU" WITH MODIM

You know how important the brachah of *Modim* is? I find it mind-boggling. Who knows a *ra'ayah* of how important *Modim* is? I'll give you a hint. It has something to do with *chazaras hashatz*. Iit's the only thing that we don't rely on the *chazan*. The *chazan* says *Modim*, and we say *Modim* ourselves. We said it already, pshhh. You already said *Modim* yourself privately. You said *Slach lanu*, you said *Shema koleinu*, you said *Goaleinu*, you even asked for *da'as*. *Chazal* tell us, *Modim* is being said, and you're not going to join? That's how important *Modim* is.

י בפסוק "זה אי ואנוהו" אמרו חז"ל בשבת דף קל"ג הוי דומה לו מה הוא חנון ורחום אף אתה, והרמב"ם ז"ל פ"א מה' דעות ה"ו כתב דרשה זו מקרא דוהלכת בדרכיו מה הוא רחום וכו' וכ"כ רבינו יונה ז"ל ומקור לוה כתבו שהוא מספרי עקב, וכנראה מדברי הרמב"ם ז"ל שזהו מ"ע מדאורייתא. ובגמרא סנהדרין צ"ב אמרינן כל אדם שאין בו דעת אסור לרחם עליו שנאמר כי לא עם בינות הוא ע"כ לא ירחמנו עושהו וכו' ואר"א כל הנותן פתו למי שאין בו דעה יסורין באין עליו שנאמר וכו', והדברים צריכים ביאור גדול שהרי אפילו על בהמה ושאר בע"ח מצוה לרחם וכדאמרי' בב"מ דפ"ה אי שא"ל רבי לאמתי' שבקי' ורחמיו על כל מעשיו כתיב וכש"כ על אדם שאין לו דעת כגון תינוק שבודאי מצוה לרחם עליו לעזרו ולמלטו מכל צרה וצוקה [בזמן שאין לו מי שיפקח עליו]. **ונראה** בזה בעה"י שני גדרים אמיתיים, האי דלא נקרא רחמנות אלא במה שלא חייבתו תורה ליתן וכגון אם הוא עני הרי חייבה תורה לכל ישראל להחזיק בידו ולתת לו די מחסורו וכן השבת אבדתו ופריקה וטעינה וכל כיו"ב אין העושה נקרא מרחם אלא עושה מה שחייב לעשות וזה ודאי חייבים לעשות לכל אדם ואפילו למי שאין בו דעה ואפילו אם הוא אדם בעל מדות קשות ורעות שכל זמן שהוא בכלל אחיך חייבים לעשות לו כמו לשאר עניים שבישראל אבל ענין רחמנות המדובר כאן הוא לענין לתת לו לפנים משורת הדין דהיינו יותר ממה שחייבה תורה וזהו מצד הרחמנות בלבד ועל זה אמרו שלמי שאין בו דעת אסור לרחם עליו והטעם הוא כמשי"ת בעה"י. נראה עוד גדר בזה דודאי מי שאין בו דעת כלל לא לטובה ולא לרעה וכגון ילד וכיו"ב מצוה גדולה להטיב עמו ולרחם עליו בכל מה שהוא צריך, אבל הגמרא מדברת כאן במי שאין בו דעת ורגש להכיר טובה למטיבים עמו ולהכניע מפניהם, אבל יודע לבעוט בגאוה ובוז על המרחמים עליו ומביט עליהם כעל נחות דרגא הנכנעים לפני מעלתו, ותחת להכיר ביקרת לבבם של המרחמים עליו ובמעלת נדיבותם, הוא הושב בדמיונו שכ"ז הוא חולשה מצד מרחמיו שהם כמוכרחים להטיב עמו וכי לכבוד הוא להם להיות בתומכיו [ובדמיונו מצוייר כאילו זה מגיע לו באמת וכמעט שקובע בלבו שהוא עושה. טובה עמהן במה שהוא נאות לקבל מהן] והוא מתברך בלבבו לאמר הגה נפל לידו בר נש שאפשר למצוץ ממנו, וכבר הוא אצלו בהרשימה של משועבדיו. והתוצאות מהרחמנות על שכוה המה רעות רבות. א'] אין שמחוקים את גאותו של זה ובפרט שיתגאה בלבו על מטיביו, ב] שהלה אינו מכיר טובה כלל והו מדה רעה מאד וכמשי"ת בעה"י, הג'ן שבכדי להראות שהוא איננו נכנע כלל להכיר טובה, הוא אדרבא משלם רעה תחת טובה ומעמיד פנים כאילו הוא נפגע מהם, וכאילו הדריכו את מנוחתו, וכידוע ליודעים. וזהו מדה מנולת מאד. וחד] שבהתנהגות כזו, הרי הוא מעורר קפידה גדולה אצל מטיביו, ונמצאו באים לידי שנאה תחת אהבה שהיתה ראוי לבא ע"י מדת ההטבה. והה'] שכפי הרגיל האדם הלזה מוסיף דורש בתוקף שיחזרו ויתנו לו ורוצה שיתנו לו דוקא כאשר בתחילה, וכפי הרגיל גם בפעם השני מרחמים עליו קצת אבל לא כאשר בתחילה והלוה מתקצף כאילו גזלוהו כו', וסוף סוף שדורש וחוזר ודורש עד שמסתלקין ממנו לגמרי והלוה נעשה שונא גמור למטיביו, וכ"ז בא ע"י שרחמו על מי שאין בו דעה להכיר סובה, ולכן אחז"ל שאסור לרחם על כיו"ב כי תוצאותיו הם צרות רבות ורעות וכשנ"ת. ואפשר דוהו נמי מה שאמרו דיסורין באין עליו [על המרחם למי שאין בו דעה] דהיינו יסורין של שילום רעה תחת טובה, ושל קטטות ושנאה כבושה וכנ"ל. ועיין עוד חולין דף קל"ג ע"א בגליון. ומניעת הכרת הטובה הוא מדה רעה ומרה מאוד ועיקר הדרך לאהבת השי"ת ביארו החסיד בחו"ה על יסוד הכרת הטובה. והנני מעתיק מש"כ בברייתא משנת ר"א פ"ז מ"ל אין לך קשה לפני הקב"ה יותר מכפיית טובה וכו' לא נטרד אדה"ר מג"ע אלא על כפיית הטובה כו׳ אף אבותינו במדבר לא כעס עליהן הקב״ה אלא על כפיית הטובה כו׳ וכשהיו אבותינו בארץ לא היו רוב חטאותיהן אלא כפיית טובה כו׳ מפני מה ענש הכתוב ביותר לכפויי הטובה מפני שהוא כעין כפירה בעיקר כו׳ האדם הזה הוא כופה טובתו של חברו למחר הוא כופה טובתו של קונו כו׳ שכפיית הטובה הוקשה לכפירה בעיקר כו׳, הזהרו שלא תכפו טובה שכפוי טובה אינו יכול לקבל מלכות שמים, וע"ש.

י ולפיכך אמרו (אבות פ"ב מ"א) הוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה שכולן חמודות וחביבות מאד, שבכל שעה אדם מודה בהן לאלקיו וכוונת כל המצות שנאמין באלקינו ונודה אליו שהוא בראנו, והיא כוונת הצירה, שאין לנו טעם אחר ביצירה הראשונה, ואין קל עליון חפץ בתחתונים מלבד שידע האדם ויודה לאלקיו שבראו, וכוונת רוממות הקול בתפלות וכוונת בתי הכנסיות וזכות תפלת הרבים, זהו שיהיה לבני אדם מקום יתקבצו ויוד לקל שבראם והמציאם ויפרסמו זה ויאמרו לפניו בריותיך אנחנו, זוו כוונתם במה שאמרו ז"ל (ירושלמי תענית פ"ב ה"א) ויקראו אל אלקים בחזקה (יונה ג ח), מכאן אתה למד שתפלה צריכה קול, חציפא נצח לבישה (עי" ערוך ערך חצף). [ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה בנסים הנסים יטד הוורה כלה, שאין לאדם חלים, עליון כאשר הזכרתי שנאמין בכל וכליהם יכריתנו ענשו, הכל בגזרת עליון כאשר הזכרתי שבא מבר לבא הנסים הנסים הנסים הנסים הנסים הנסים הנסים הנסים הנדע מעוב הרבים בענין הרבים כאשר יבא ביעודי התורה בענין הברכות והקללות, כמו שאמר הכתוב (דברים כט כג-כד) ואמרו כל הגוים על מה עשה זה בעונה לארץ הזאת, ואמרו על אשר עזבו את ברית ה" אלהי אבותם, שיתפרסם הדבר לכל האומות שהוא מאת ה" בעונשם. וראם וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה" נקרא עליך ויראו ממך. ועוד אפרש זה בעזרת

#### 100 THANK-YOUS IN A DAY!

You're learning a lot of firsts today. Do you know what is the biggest *chiyuv* in quantity that a Jew has on a daily basis? In other words, what *chiyuv* do you have to repeat many, many, many times a day, every single day of your life? You know what that *chiyuv* is? You would think talmud Torah. I'll give you a big hint. You have to do it every single day 100 times.

היה רבי מאיר אומר, R' Meir used to say, חייב אדם לברך מאה ברכות בכל יום, R' Meir used to recite one hundred blessings every day (Menachos 43b). Isn't that amazing? Imagine if you stop any Jew in the street and ask, "Are you religious, sir? How long are you religious for?" "Oh, I was born religious." "Okay. Is there anything you do 100 times a day?" "I have no idea. I say negative things, lashon hara, 100 times a day maybe." "But what mitzvah are you obligated do you 100 times a day?" People don't know. It says חייב אדם. And he learns it out of a passuk in the Torah.4

Now, what is the *pshat* in this? If a person is *chayav* to say 100 *brachos* a day you have to ask why? I remember my *rebbi* (R' Meir HaLevi Soloveichik) was always counting his *brachos*. Not on a regular day because on a regular day, he knew for certain that he was covered. But every single Shabbos or Yom Tov, he was always counting his *brachos*. I asked my *rebbi*, "What are you afraid of? You're not starving, you're not living in the desert.? I told him, "What are you afraid of, you're not going to make 100 *brachos*?" "I'm holding by 97, holding by 96." It was amazing. He took the *chiyuv* seriously.

#### WHAT DOES BARUCH ATAH HASHEM MEAN?

Brachos are a form of hodayah to Hashem. When you say a brachah to Hashem, what are you doing? So there are two schools of thought in the Rishonim about what a brachah means. When you say baruch atah Hashem, what do you think that means? Baruch atah Hashem - "Blessed are you Hashem." Now how do you understand that? If somebody would ask you, "Are you giving a blessing to Hashem?" What are you going to answer?

So I'm going to tell you. Don't ever forget this point. At least if people say, "What did you learn there?" You can say, "I learned what blessings mean." Anything else? Hopefully. But that's a starting point. A good enough starting point. Baruch atah Hashem means, "You Hashem are the source of all brachos. You are the mekor of brachah." So what do I say to Hashem? Baruch atah Hashem elokeinu melech ha'olam malbish arumim, "I thank You for the clothes." You know what I'm saying? I'm not thanking Him. I'm acknowledging that Hashem gave me clothing – I'm being modeh to Him, I'm admitting. Modim means admission. I'm saying, "I'm modeh, Hashem, that You are the source of my clothes." You are the source that I'm not an eved. You are the source that I'm not a goy. There is no other reason why I'm not a goy other than the fact that that's what Hashem chose, and so on and so forth. To acknowledge I'm standing on solid ground because Hashem made that ground solid for me. That is one pshat in baruch atah Hashem.

What is the other *pshat* in *baruch atah Hashem*? That Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants the little me to say to Him, "Hashem, I want the awareness that You are the One Who clothes people to be increased in the world." So when I say *baruch atah Hashem*, the awareness of You should be *baruch – baruch* means increased – that You are the *malbish arumim*. Do you know how many people know that Hashem gives them clothes? I don't believe many people think about it. I think if you took a poll and asked people, "Who gives you clothes, where are your clothes from?" They would say, "My mother, my father, my husband, my wife," all kinds of stories, *bobbe maasehs*. "I choose my own clothes, I buy my own clothes," they would say. You know how many *yidden* really know that Hashem gives them clothes? Not too many.

So therefore we say, "Hashem, I want the awareness that I have clothes from You to become increased. I want that awareness and realization to be increased." For example, when you say a brachah "shelo osani goy," what should you be thinking about? Someone will ask you one day, "Why aren't you a goy?" What's the response that most people would give? They would say, "Because my mother was Jewish." That's not why you're not a goy. You're not a goy because Hashem decided you shouldn't be a goy. And you want that awareness to become increased. If we would truly have that awareness, we would be praising Hashem all day long, and we would feel extremely obligated to Hashem! And therefore, R' Meir was telling us that a person has to know that you have to thank Hashem every single day.

Now, imagine you did somebody a *tova* and the guy would come to you 100 times every single day to say "thank you," what do you think you would tell him after a day or two? "Listen, do me a favor, buddy, buzz off. You're starting to become a pest. I appreciate it, but this is getting to be too much." He comes the next day 100 times. You say, "Shrek, give me a break!" But Hashem wants me to do that. He doesn't think I am being a pest. Hashem wants to hear from me!

I want to tell you the biggest *chiddush*. You know what the biggest *chiddush* in the world about *brachos* is? That I, who am a figment of Hashem's imagination – my entire existence and being at every second is only due to the fact that this second and this moment, Hashem wills that I should exist. I am to Hashem less than what a speck of dust on the floor under my shoe is to me! A speck of dust is an independent being from me. Maybe I'm a bigger being, a smarter being and, that is a smaller being, less smart. But me to Hashem?! I am nothing! Zero! I only exist by His will. And Hashem still wants to hear from me? He gave me the opportunity that me, this little *gornisht*, could come and empower Hashem. He created a system where I could give credit to Hashem. Yes, I could empower Hashem! I could increase the awareness of Hashem in this world. That is just mind-boggling. He gave me a *mitzvah* where I could thank Him. Could you imagine if a guy created a computer and the computer would say, "Thank you for creating me, thank you for creating

me." Would that even be anything? *Gornisht*. You know why? Because the guy had to program that into the computer to say that. So it makes no sense.

So here Hashem creates me, and He tells me what I could do and what I can't do, and then He says, תְּנוֹ עֵז לֵאלֹקִים - "Ascribe might to Hashem" (Tehillim 68:35). "Serve me in the best possible way," Hashem says. "Just encourage, express yourself that you want Me to be known in the world. It's My world. There is nothing else that exists without Me or but Me."

#### TO BLESS HIM IS "PLEASURE UPON PLEASURE"

I heard a *chiddush* from my *zeide* (R' Avigdor Miller) that I never heard anywhere else. I've not even seen it anywhere else. And he says that he heard it from his *rebbi* in Slabodka (R' Yitzhak Isaac Sher, 1880-1952). He quoted from the famous *sefer*, the Kuzari (3:12-13), where he discusses one of the reasons that Hashem created *brachos*. What is the reason that we make *brochos*? He says, וְיוֹסִיף לוֹ, to increase upon a person שֵׁרְבֵּנוֹת עֵּל עֵּרְבוֹת עֵל עֵּרְבוֹת עֵל עֵּרְבוֹת y pleasure upon pleasure. Hashem wanted to increase pleasure upon pleasure, שֵׁיְבְּבֶרְ תָּמִיד, that you should always bless Him. When you bless Hashem constantly, that is another jolt of pleasure! Even though the Kuzari says it's one of the reasons, my grandfather used to say, his *rebbi* says it's *the* reason. It's not one of the reasons, it's *the* reason.

So R' Meir tells us that hakaras hatov is something that you can never forget and you should never forget. You know why Hashem tells me to be makir tov to Him? Not because He wants me to serve him, but because Hashem wants me to bask in His kindness. He wants me to have geshmak on top of geshmak.

But the way we make *brachos*, I can tell we never had any *geshmak*. The way we make *brachos* looks like it's a punishment! When a person makes *brachos*, the person is not increasing his *geshmak*. It's not what the person is doing. But Hashem is trying to increase your *geshmak*, to make you realize that even if you are drinking simple water you are taking a drink of the most delicious liquid. Hashem says, "I'm giving you this liquid, and I tell you, make a *brachah* before you enjoy this liquid. You know why? I'm trying to increase your *geshmak*."

#### THE DELICIOUS TASTE OF COFFEE

I remember in the Shomer Shabbos *shul* in Boro Park, a tremendous place of *chessed*, they had a big sign over the coffees, a quote from my *zeide*: "Give special thanks for the kindness of the taste of coffee." I remember seeing that sign and saying, "Wow, I never once thought about it." I don't mind coffee, but did I ever thank Hashem for the special taste of coffee? I don't know if my grandfather ever drank coffee. He liked water. He was a water man. He thought water was the best. But if you think about it, you realize, "Wow, it's amazing *taka*."

So Hashem wants you to be *makir tov*. And *hakaras hatov* makes you aware of how much you receive from Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And the more you are aware that you receive, the happier you will be. But if you don't think about the *brachah*, even if you enjoy the coffee and say, "This coffee is absolutely delicious," it won't help you reach that happiness. Today, coffee became a big thing in the world. When I grew up, there was no such a *metzius*. Everybody drank the same coffee. The same bitter coffee, you drank it and finished. Now, they made it smooth, and there are woody tastes, nutty tastes, buttery tastes. It's got the taste of every food possible.

They go to the Himalayas, and they bring it from there. Sometimes when I drink a cup of coffee, if it's one of these rare exotic coffees, which they say on the back of the packet that it comes from the Himalayas, I think, "What kind of *sheker* is that? It probably comes from their backyard in Indiana, and they say they bring it from the Himalayas." I don't believe them for one second. But whatever it is, even imagining it comes from there makes me feel good. I feel I'm drinking something exotic. And I try to picture that there is some guy wearing funny clothes, on some mountain in the Himalayas, and he's got a sack over his back, and he's throwing in coffee beans that he's picking off, one by one. And Hashem is saying, "This is for Yisroel Brog." Hashem marks it: make sure this gets to Yisroel Brog. So He's thinking about all the *hishtadlus* of how to make the coffee get here, and when it gets here, it has to be delivered to a local store. Then you have to have a kind-hearted *bachur* who will get it and bring it here and deliver it to me.

Now you can order things from China, and it comes in a couple of days. From China? China is like the other end of the universe. It's a *peleh* and that's why it is worthy of our hakaras *hatov* to Hashem.

#### WHO WOULD CHOOSE TO BE SAD?

A person has to know that hakaras hatov is the greatest of all the middos and if you don't have it, firstly, you're missing out on the secret to a happy life. And a person who is not happy by choice, Hashem is very angry at him. Hashem says, "You like to be sad? I'm going to give you more sadness." You like being sad? It's going to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hashem is going to bestow upon you exactly what you want. A boatload of unhappiness. "That's what you want? I'll bring you the Titanic full of unhappiness," Hashem says.

A person has to walk around happy. You have to think about this happiness. Hashem says, "You'd better express thanks and be *mechavein* when you say *berachos*, if you want to have *areivus al areivus*."

Here is a mother trying to give a kid pleasure. Did you ever see a mother trying to feed a kid, and the kid is not

in the mood? They eat, duh, deh. Then he starts to cry. The mother says, "You are not getting dessert unless you eat this delicious food." And the kid is screaming and crying. And the mother, *nebach*, she's forcing him to eat to make him happy. Is that normal? It's not normal.

#### A LOST OPPORTUNITY

In conclusion, I want you to know, there is an amazing *gemara*. It's a frightening *gemara*. The *gemara* (Sanhedrin 94a) says an amazing thing. Hakadosh Baruch Hu once chose a known individual to be Mashiach. You know who that was? Chizkiyahu Hamelech. Hashem wanted to make him Mashiach. During his lifetime, he was besieged by one of the greatest armies, the army of Sancheirev, and he raised Klal Yisrael up to an amazing level of *bitachon*. And Hashem wanted to make him Moshiach. And then Hashem changed His mind so to speak. He canceled the order. You know why? ממרה מדת הדין לפני הקב"ה, middas hadin said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: "אמרה מדת הדין לפני הקב"ם, the great-grandfather of Chizkiyahu, Dovid, said ממה שירות ותשבחות לפניך, and you didn't make him a Moshiach? So Chizkiyahu, for whom You performed such amazing miracles – he was deathly ill and You healed him, he was surrounded by armies, millions, and You took them all out for him, and he didn't say *shira* to you – are You going to make him Moshiach?" And therefore, he did not end up becoming Mashiach. What a tragedy.<sup>6</sup>

Now, I have no doubt that Chizkiyahu Hamelech said *shira* to Hashem. What do you think?! He just went on with his life? Of course, he said *shira* to Hashem! But he didn't give the *hodayah* the way it was expected for having such miracles happen to him. I see people getting up at their kids' *bar mitzvah*s and thanking their wife nonstop for putting together the *bar mitzvah* or the *kiddush*, and I'm thinking to myself, "I wonder if this guy ever thanked Hashem in this fashion." The only thing I say to myself is, "I hope he doesn't mean it, then Hashem won't feel bad because it's just words." Do you hear what prevented Chizkiyahu from being Mashiach? He wasn't *makir tov* the way he was supposed to be. That is very tragic.

# OUR BEST MERIT BEFORE ROSH HASHANAH: HAKORAS HATOV TO HASHEM

We are now standing before Rosh Hashanah, and every one of us would love to know, is there anything that we can do to buy a little *zechusim* for ourselves? Could we buy a little merit? Is there anything we could do to make our life better? And the answer is, you can. Be *mekabel* to be *makir tov* to Hashem. Thank Hashem for a year. Go through every single *inyan*. How many nights this year did you not sleep? How many days were you stuck in the hospital? How many days did you spend at the doctor's office? How many days did you not have enjoyment in your life? Think about the meals, the clothes, the air conditioning, the weather, all the great things that you enjoyed. So you had a blackout once. It's a drop in the ocean when you begin thinking about all the things Hashem did for you. You got that blackout in the middle of the summer heat because you never once thanked Hashem for air conditioning. When that air conditioning comes back on, you are going to understand how thankful and grateful you should be for air conditioning and how you can't take it for granted.

I want to say that I'm extremely grateful. I don't know where to begin. When I wake up in the morning, I think, "How many times did I wake up this year?" Unbelievable! I was able to go through my day, walking around, without breaking any limbs. You know how many people had something that broke? Tons of people. The doctors are making a fortune. Breaks, hands, feet, ankles. Older peopleHave it all the time. And younger people, as well. I need to think about what Hashem did for me. He gave me a wife, he gave me family, he gave me talmidim. You have to thank Hashem for each and every one. Thank Hashem for your house, your bed. It's unreal how many tovos Hashem does for us if we just pay attention and think. If you went through this list already, then start thinking about your eyes, your mouth, your heart, your lungs, and your digestive system. Think. Every day you use something. Things could break. That's how things are. Things break. Hakadosh Baruch Hu made it hat it never broke for us. So for that, we have to be modeh to Hakadosh Baruch Hu We'll buy ourselves some zechuyos and we'll be happier. We won't walk around looking like we're in a morgue. We'll be smiling no matter what Hashem doesn't give us. And we'll be zoche to a shana tova.

ô למרבה המשרה ולשלום אין קץ וגו' (ישעיהו ט, ו) א"ר תנחום דרש בר קפרא בציפורי מפני מה כל מ"ם שבאמצע תיבה פתוח וזה סתום ביקש הקב"ה לעשות חזקיהו משיח וסנחריב גוג ומגוג. אמרה מדת הדין לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע ומה דוד מלך ישראל שאמר כמה שירות ותשבחות לפניך לא עשיתו משיח חזקיה שעשית לו כל הנסים הללו . [רש"י: כל הנסים הללו - שניצל מסנחריב ונתרפא מחליו] ולא אמר שירה לפניך לא עשיתו משיח חזקיה שעשית לו כל הנסים הללו . [רש"י: כל הנסים הללו - שניצל מסנחריב ונתרפא מחליו] ולא אמר שירה לפניך לא עשיתו משיח חזקיה שעשית לו כל הנסים הללו . [רש"י: כל הנסים הללו - שניצל מסנחריב ונתרפא מחליו]

# **₹** The Bottom Line **¾**

Hakoras hatov is the basis of all Avodas Hashem, as the Chovos Halevavos and the Ramban tell us. Not expressing hakoras hatov, by walking away from a person after they do us a tova, or failing to acknowledge his tova - literally brings evil to the בפוי בשוב . When we experience interpersonal struggles, the first place we have to look is whether there is a lack of hakoras hatov, along with introspection and בששים. There is nothing that bothers Hashem more than בשיי הטובה . So the first thing we should ask ourselves when facing a challenge is, "What did I do to upset Hashem? Was I perhaps בפוי בשוב - not being grateful for Hashem's daily chassadim to me and my family?" The good news is that there are numerous reminders to help us stop and think about the constant chessed of Hashem, like birkas modim and birkas ha'shahar, which are all forms of hoda'ah to Hashem, reminding us that He is the source of all these blessings - whether it's our health, our clothing, or the fact that we are yiddin and not avodim, and so on. This coming week, when I say birkas ha'shahar, I will try to identify one area in these brochos where I am really grateful to Hashem, especially if I had some challenges in that area (i.e., thank Hashem for healthy eyes, healthy feet, healthy back, physical strength or stamina, clothing, my needs being fulfilled, etc.). Besides realizing that Hashem is the source of those brachos, I will also think about how I would like for that awareness to increase throughout the world. By practicing my daily hakoras hatov to Hashem in the month of Elul, iy"H, I will be zoiche to a