



Parsha Encounters

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Parshas Ki Savo – Rabbi Yossi Lowinger

Hakoras Hatov

In this week's parshah, the Torah commands Bnei Yisroel to bring Bikurim, which are the first fruits of the season, to the Bais Hamikdash, and to give them to the Kohein.

The Meforshim explain, that one of the fundamental concepts of this mitzvah is to express Hakaros Hatov (appreciation) to Hashem for all the kindness He has done to us. Indeed, the entire parshah of Bikurim is replete with the theme of thanking Hashem for all His kindness.

R' Chaim Shmulevitz points out that Hakaros Hatov is so important that even a commandment from Hashem takes on a different meaning if it's in conflict with a person's obligation of Hakaros Hatov. We find an example of this at the end of Sefer Bamidbar. Hashem commands Moshe to fight Midyan, however, Moshe sent Pinchas to do so instead. How could Moshe not follow Hashem's command? The Midrash in Yalkut Bamidbar 31 explains that Moshe said to himself, "Since I was made great in Midyan, it is not right to harm those that have been good to me." The question however remains as to how Moshe was able to deviate from Hashem's command to fight Midyan! How does Moshe pit his own reason against Hashem's commandment. The answer is that Moshe understood that the obligation of Hakaros Hatov demanded a different

interpretation of Hashem's commandment. Moshe understood that Hashem meant for him to fight Midyan through an agent. It couldn't mean that he should fight Midyan himself, as that would be in conflict with his obligation of Hakaros Hatov to Midyan. Hakaros Hatov revealed the true meaning behind Hashem's commandment for Moshe to fight Midyan.

R' Chaim explains that Moshe came to this conclusion based on what happened during the ten plagues. All of the plagues had been performed through Moshe, except the plagues of blood, frogs and lice, which were done through Aaron. The reason for this was because these three plagues originated from the water and the earth, and Moshe owed Hakaros Hatov to them because the river had hidden him when he was a baby being hunted by the Egyptians, and the earth had hidden the body of the Egyptian he had killed. Moshe derived from this that no command from Hashem could contradict Hakaros Hatov.

We should learn from this how Hashem demands that a person acknowledge every benefactor, and certainly the feeling of Hakaros Hatov we must have to Hashem for all the kindness He bestows upon us.

Rabbi Lowinger learns full time at the kollel.

Halacha Encounters

Supporting the Torah

Rabbi Dovid Greenberg

In this week's parsha we are told of a ceremony where the nation will receive a series of blessings and curses from the kohanim. The last curse in the list is, "Cursed is the one who will not uphold the words of the Torah". The Talmud Yerushalmi (Sotah 7:4) explains this curse to apply to those who do not use their resources and authority to strengthen the learning and observance of the Torah. Conversely, even one who is personally unable to study the Torah, but strengthens it, will be blessed. This idea is codified in the Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 146:1) where it states that although every Jew has an obligation to study Torah, if one cannot do so, he should support those that could. The Rema continues, that one who supports those that learn Torah is considered as if he himself has studied. The Vilna Gaon brings the source for this statement from the Medrash in Parshas Vayechi. When blessing his children, Yaakov Avinu preceded Zevulan before Yissachar even though the latter was older. The Medrash comments that Zevulan took upon himself to support his scholarly brother Yissachar who devoted himself totally to Torah study. Since Yissachar's tremendous devotion to his studies was only attainable through Zevulan's efforts, the study itself was attributed to Zevulan, hence he was mentioned first.

The Rambam (Hil. Deos 6:2) considers supporting Torah scholars a fulfillment of the positive commandment "to attach yourself to G-d" (Dev. 10:20), for the way to accomplish this is by attaching oneself to Torah scholars by letting them benefit from your wealth. The Chinuch in Mitzvah 434 concurs with this ruling.

The greatest act of charity is to support the learning of Torah by providing a Torah education for children who cannot afford it, and by allowing Torah scholars to learn in comfort. (There is a dispute which of these cases takes precedence. See Tzedaka U'mishpat. Chap. 3 f.n. 77) Supporting Torah takes precedence over supporting the poor, unless they are in a dangerous situation or are close relatives. (ibid 3:26, also see Ahavas Chesed 19:1). Upkeep of a Beis Medrash or buying seforim in order to lend them out are also considered acts of supporting Torah. One may use Maaser money to support one's older or married children who are involved in Torah study if the parents cannot afford to do this otherwise. (Sh. A. Harav Hil. Talmud Torah 1:7)

Reb Moshe's view on the Yissachar-Zevulan pact:

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein Zt"l (I.M. Y.D. vol. 4 5.37) ruled that the Yissachar-Zevulan arrangement was not a

form of charity, rather it was a true business partnership. Although all support of Torah is praiseworthy, in order to be considered as if the "Zevulan" has actually learned the Torah studied by the "Yissachar" (and to reap the full benefits of the Torah's protection in this world) one must follow rigid guidelines. One must state explicitly from the beginning of the arrangement that "Zevulan" agrees to share half his income and "Yissachar" agrees to share half of the schar for his learning. The purpose of this arrangement is to allow at least a segment of the Jewish people to acquire a large breadth of knowledge of the Torah and to delve into its depths. This goal is simply unattainable if one is burdened with making a living. Therefore, the partnership must be of a duration which could accomplish this goal, which he suggests is a minimum of three years. With this understanding that the pact is a true partnership and not charity, R' Moshe explains that the rules that one may not donate more than one fifth of his wealth, and that charity must be dispensed to more than one individual, do not apply in this case.

Accepting Support:

We find many places in Chazal where one is encouraged to be self sufficient while learning Torah. For example, in Pirkei Avos 4:7, where Rabbi Tzadok says, "Do not make the Torah a spade with which to dig," meaning, don't use learning Torah as a means to achieve Parnosa. However, throughout the generations, as long as we have been in golus, the custom has been to support the Rabbis and scholars financially. The reason for this is, that due to the spiritual decline of every generation, and the hardships of exile, if the scholars would not have been allowed to pursue their studies uninterrupted, large amounts of the Torah would surely have been forgotten. (Shach Y.D. 246:20) See also I.M. Y.D. vol 2 S.116 where R' Moshe frowns greatly upon those who are capable of full time study, where funding is available, and instead pursue a career based on the notion that one must be self supporting.

As the Days of Awe are quickly approaching and we are all looking for merits, increasing our support of Torah should be at the forefront of our minds. For the Chofetz Chaim writes that the Gemara implies that one who strengthens Torah study attaches himself to the Shechina and atones for all his sins. (Shem Olam Chp. 16.)

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