



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חידושי דעיר אנפין collections of
maamarim
given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Vayigash 5761

At the end of *Parshas Vayigash*, the Torah tells us that while Yosef bought the land owned by all of the Egyptians, he refrained from purchasing the land owned by the priests.

רק אדמת הכהנים לא קנה כי חק לכהנים מאת פרעה ואכלו את חקם אשר נתן להם
פרעה על כן לא מכרו את אדמתם (בראשית מ"ז:כ"ב)

Only the land of the priests did he not buy, for it was a decree for the priests from Pharaoh, and they would eat that which Pharaoh designated for them, therefore they didn't sell their land.

Rishonim (חזקוני ופירוש הרא"ש) explain that the Egyptian priests were the judges before whom Yosef was brought when Potiphar's wife accused him of wrongdoing. They saved him from execution and instead sentenced him to imprisonment.

The source of this explanation can be found in the *Targum Yonasan ben Uziel* who elaborates in his translation:

לחוד ארעא דכומרניא לא זבן מן בגלל דחמון ליה זכותא בזמן דבעא רבוניה למקטליה ושיזבוהי
מן דין קטול

Only the land of the priests did he not buy because he remembered their *zechus* at the time that his master wanted to execute him and they saved him from a sentence of death.

We also find a great *chidush* in the commentary of the *Tur*.

"Some explain that this was because of Potiphara who was a priest of On."



[1]

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In other words, Yosef felt a debt of gratitude towards Potiphar because of the years that he served in Potiphar's house. As an expression of that gratitude, he didn't purchase Potiphar's land. However, since he didn't want people to realize that he was favoring Potiphar, he refrained from purchasing the land of all priests.

We must pay attention to the extra dimension of *hakaras hatov* illustrated by this *peirush* of the Tur. According to the first *peirush*, Yosef felt a debt of gratitude to the priests who saved him from death. Even though they went on to sentence him to prison. Yosef certainly benefitted from their decision.

However, according to the *Tur's* explanation, Yosef expressed his *hakaras hatov* to Potiphar even though it was Potiphar who accused him of wrongdoing, had him arrested, and eventually imprisoned. How could Yosef be expected to feel gratitude to someone who treated him so cruelly?

Yosef revealed a fundamental principle of *hakaras hatov*. Even if someone has wronged us in many ways, we are still obligated to acknowledge any favor he has done for us and express our *hakaras hatov*. This follows the teaching of R. Yossi (ברכות ס"ג:)

"R. Yossi began by speaking about *kvod achsanya* - the honor due to a host and he was *doresh* the *pasuk*:

לֹא תִתְעַב אֲדָמִי כִּי אֶחָיִךְ הוּא לֹא תִתְעַב מִצְרִי כִּי גֵר הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶצוֹ

Do not revile an *Edomi* for he is your brother. Don't revile a *Mitzri*, for you were a stranger in his land. (דברים כ"ג:ח)

Is it not a *kal va'chomer*? If we are forbidden to revile the *Mitzrim*, who only hosted *Yisrael* for their own purposes, how much more appreciation is due to someone who hosts a *talmid chacham* in his home, provides him with food, drink and the benefit of all his possessions?"



[2]

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As Rashi explains “Do not entirely revile the *Mitzri* even though they threw your male children into the Nile. Why? Because they were your hosts in your time of need. Therefore, the third generation of sons who are born to them can enter *khal Hashem*.

In *Maseches Pesachim* Chazal say, “In the future, *Mitzrayim* will bring a gift to Mashiach who won’t wish to receive the gift. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will tell *Mashiach*, ‘Receive their gift for they provided my children with a place to stay in Mitzrayim.’”

Chazal teach us (תוספתא שבועות ג':"ו') “There is no one as detested before Hashem as a *kafuy tova* - one who denies the benefit he has received from others.” There is no *mida* which is lower or more despicable than that of *kefiyas tova*.

We all certainly wish to be among those who embody the *mida* of *hakaras hatov* and utilize every opportunity available to express our gratitude. Therefore, we must learn from Yosef who had *hakaras hatov* even when the benefactor has wronged us and it is difficult to comprehend why he should deserve our gratitude. There is no greater *mida* than this.

והמכיר בטובה זוכה ורואה בטוב הנראה והנגלה בכל מעשיו אבי"ר



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