



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

### *Melave Malka Parshas Vaeira 5759*

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל אַהֲרֹן קַח מִטְּךָ וּנְטֵה יָדְךָ עַל מֵימֵי מִצְרַיִם... (שמות ז:י"ט)  
And Hashem said to Moshe. Tell Aharon, take your staff and stretch your hand out over the waters of Mitzrayim.

Rashi explains:

“Because the river protected Moshe when he was thrown into it. Therefore, it was not struck by Moshe, neither in the plague of blood nor in the plague of frogs. It was struck by Aharon.”

We need examine Rashi's *peirush* in light of the following questions.

Where do we find that the river protected Moshe? He was saved by Batya the daughter of Pharaoh. Were it not for her, he would have drowned in the river.

Even though the *teiva* that held Moshe floated on the waters of the Nile, the river wasn't the instrument of his salvation. The opposite was true. Moshe's life was endangered by being placed in the river.

How does Moshe Rabeinu's refraining from striking the river express gratitude if he then sends someone else to strike the Nile? In the end, the river was struck. What difference does it make if Moshe struck the river, or if Aharon (following Moshe Rabeinu's command) was the one who struck the river?

It seems that in order to understand Rashi, we need to broaden our understanding of *hakaras hatov*. It doesn't simply mean expressing



[1]

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gratitude to our direct benefactor, but also to anyone or anything that contributed to the benefit we received. Also, *hakaras hatov* isn't limited to expressing gratitude for a *tova*. There are times when we must feel and express *hakaras hatov* to someone or something that refrained from harming us!

In the case of the Nile, even though the river didn't proactively protect or save Moshe Rabeinu, his salvation took place on the river. Chazal view the location of a miracle as part of the miracle itself. Therefore, they teach us in *Maseches Brachos* (נ"ד.) that one who sees a place where *Am Yisrael* experienced miracles should say ברוך שעשה נסים הנה - במקום הזה - Blessed is the One who did miracles for our fathers in this place. That is why Moshe Rabeinu could not strike the river.

While it is true that the river was eventually struck by Aharon, Moshe Rabeinu himself could not do so. This teaches us that if there is a need to strike something that was a source of *tova* for us, we must try to minimize כפיות טובה - ignoring the benefit, as much as possible. By refraining from striking the Nile, Moshe Rabeinu expressed *hakaras hatov* that was commensurate to the peripheral role played by the river in his salvation. That is not contradicted by Aharon taking over the necessary task of striking the river.

This teaches us a vital lesson in the *halachos of hakaras hatov* and *kefiyus tova*. If a person received *tova* in a particular place, or through the assistance of a particular person, he must feel and express a limited amount of gratitude even if they weren't the primary source of the *tova*.

A person needs to be a "*mara d'chushbena*" - a master of calculation, who can understand the need to express an appropriate measure of *hakaras hatov* even to those who played a peripheral role, whether large or small, in helping him.



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My grandfather the Rebbe zy”a, always felt a debt of gratitude to a certain person. When asked about it, he simply replied that the man had once done a great *tova* for him. They wanted to hear the story, so they went to that individual and asked him to tell them what great favor he did for the Rebbe zy”a.

Surprisingly, the man said that he recalled the incident, but that he was very ashamed of how he had behaved. The Rebbe had once come to the door of a building where a certain event was taking place. The man had opened the door and refused to let the Rebbe enter because he hadn’t been invited. Only after the Rebbe repeatedly requested permission to enter, did he relent. He let the Rebbe enter and guided him to a seat below the dais, that was not befitting the *kavod* of a *tzadik* who was nearly eighty years old.

When I heard this story, I decided to ask my grandfather why he felt any gratitude at all to this person. He was very disturbed by the fact that I had heard the story. Eventually, he simply replied, “In the end, he did let me in and find me a seat. He could have left me to stand outside.”

Similarly, he once hoped to open a *Beis Hachnassas Orchim* that would provide lodging for needy visitors to Yerushalayim. He began to raise money for the project. One day, he approached a certain wealthy man and asked to meet with him. The *gvir* treated my grandfather with disdain and rudely rejected his request. Eventually, he told my grandfather that he could meet with him at a certain time and place.

I accompanied him to that meeting. Once again, the *gvir* treated my grandfather with a total lack of *derech erez*. Before we left, the host in whose home the meeting took place, offered my grandfather something to eat. He had no need to eat then, so he politely refused.

From then on, he made sure to honor and express his gratitude to that host. He hardly spent any time in the man’s home, and he received



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nothing from him. Nonetheless, he always expressed his gratitude to the man for offering him something to eat. That is true *hakaras hatov*!

We must encourage each other to be “*marei d’chushbena*” who recognize and are grateful for every small *tova* that we receive. We also need to feel and express gratitude to someone who merely thought about helping us even when the thought never led to action. Like Moshe Rabeinu, we should even feel gratitude to the place where we experienced a *tova*.

If we follow that path, we will eventually be filled with love for Hashem who created the world and all that is in it, for our benefit. As Yeshayahu Hanavi said;

שְׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ מִי בָרָא אֱלֹהֵי הַמּוֹצִיא בְּמִסְפָּר צְבָאָם, לְכֹלֵם בְּשֵׁם יְקָרָא מְרַב  
אוֹנִים וְאִמִּיץ כַּח אִישׁ לֹא נֶעְדָּר (ישעיהו מ:כ"ו) .

Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these, he takes out their host in number, to all of them he calls by name, because of His great power and mighty strength, no one is missing.

וכאשר ננהג באופן זה, נמשיך עלינו בחינה זו של הכרת טובה והארת פנים אכי"ר



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