

הכרת הטוב באלול הרב אליהו חקקיאן

"לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ה' גם דור עשירי לא-יבא להם בקהל, *Parshas Ki Seitzei* contains the *mitzvah* of, (דברים כג: ד-ז) ה'..."
Amoni and Moavi men are never allowed to marry into Klal Yisroel. The next *posuk* details that this is because they did not offer Bnei Yisroel bread and water when they saw them traveling out of Mitzrayim, as well as because they hired Bilam to curse Bnei Yisroel. From Rashi it seems that there are three reasons given for their exclusion from Klal Yisroel: He says the phrase "על דבר", in *posuk* ה', refers to the *eitza* which they used to get Bnei Yisroel to sin. The second reason is not offering food and drink, and the third one is hiring Bilam to curse Bnei Yisroel. The only one of these three which applies equally to both Amon and Moav is not offering food and drink to Bnei Yisroel when they left Mitzrayim. The other two reasons apply only to Moav.

Rabbeinu Bachaye faults Amon and Moav for their lack of *derech erez*. When someone sees a traveler on the road one must offer them assistance, greet them and help them out. This is why Amoni and Moavi men can never join Klal Yisroel.

The Chinuch takes it a little further and attributes it to a lack of *chessed*. They should have been merciful and had the *mida* of *chessed* to help Bnei Yisroel. He says that the lesson for us is that we must be *gomlei chassodim*.

The Ramban, however, learns a profound message from this *mitzvah*. He says that Amon and Moav were beneficiaries of great *chessed* from Avraham Avinu. He saved their father, Lot, not only from being a prisoner of war when he defeated the Four Kings, but then again from the destruction of Sidom. Therefore, Amon and Moav were obligated to do good to Bnei Yisroel and instead they did bad.

This is to say that over 400 years after Avraham Avinu saved their family, Amon and Moav were obligated to remember and reciprocate the *hatava*. In other words, in an era in which media did not exist, before the printing press was invented, at the time in which the method of education and conveying messages was limited to papyrus and maybe wooden tablets with wax, Lot and his children were expected by HaKadosh Boruch Hu to instill in their offspring the message that their very existence was credited to Avraham Avinu's *hatava*. This message had to be etched in the minds of all Amoni and Moavi children, and embedded into the conscience of their peoples. It had to have been so clear and well understood that when they heard Bnei Yisroel was leaving Mitzrayim, they should have naturally come out to greet them and offer help.

The lack of having this depth of gratitude was so serious as to prevent them from ever joining ה' קהל. For whatever reason the Torah calls marrying a *bas Yisroel* ה' קהל, Amon and Moav are not worthy of the title because they did not show their appreciation to Bnei Yisroel. This takes the concept of *hakoras hatov* to a whole other level. It reveals a deeper dimension of *hakoras hatov*.

We see that *hakoras hatov* was the first lesson which HaKadosh Boruch Hu wanted to teach Adam haRishon. The Torah says (בראשית א: ה) that there was no vegetation on the earth because Hashem did not rain water on the ground and there was no man to work the land. Rashi explains that because there was no man to be *makir tov* for the *bracha* of rain watering the vegetation, Hashem did not yet bring it. In other words, HaKadosh Boruch Hu held back the rain until Adam existed to recognize, appreciate, and *daven* to Him for it. The justification for the rain's existence is the very fact that Adam has *hakoras hatov* for it.

In other words, the existence of any *hatava* is dependent upon the recognition of the existence of that *hatava*. What justifies any *bracha* or any good in the world is the acknowledgement of its kindness.

We are a couple weeks away from Rosh Hashana, a day which elicits awe from the mere mention of it. It is the Yom haDin, the day which we hope Hashem will grant us all the *tov* in the world that He has to offer. Next Shabbos, *b'ezer* Hashem, we will read *Parshas Ki Savo* "כדי שתכלה שנה וקללותיה", in order to end the year and its *klalos*. Every year has its *brachos* and *klalos*, its ups and downs. We prepare for Yom haDin during Chodesh Elul— we hear the shofar blow every day, we say extra *tefilos*, we get up earlier to say *selichos*.

I think it is appropriate to take time, even before we reach "כדי שתכלה שנה וקללותיה", to focus on the *brachos* which Hashem granted us last Rosh Hashana— all the *bracha* and all the *tov* we experienced in the past year. We must express the *hakoras hatov* for everything which HaKadosh Boruch did for us until now. All the *simchos* which we celebrated, the *shidduchim* which worked out, all the babies born, the food to eat and clothes to wear and more, that Hashem bestowed upon us. All the *hatzlachos* we had in whatever we did, all the sicknesses, *rachmana litzlan*, which did not come to us, and all other troubles that, *Hodu l'Kel*, we did not have to endure. A year that, Baruch Hashem, had its *brachos*. It is a time to focus and acknowledge those *brachos*.

We are in the middle of what is called the, "עת דודים"— the time of "אני לדודי ודודי ליי". It is a time of strengthening our love to HaKadosh Boruch Hu. We say the *bracha* of *Ahavas Olam/Ahava Rabba* in *birchos Krias Shema*. The *meforshim* speak out that the letter "ז" does not appear once in that *bracha*. That "ז" refers to the seven *krovim* which a person can have— father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister and spouse. When we say *Shema*, we are expressing our love and total devotion to HaKadosh Boruch Hu, we are being *mekabel Ol Malchus Shomayim*. Therefore, we must set aside all of the most significant people in our lives which we love the most as we come to say *Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*. We are focusing solely on our love to HaKadosh Boruch Hu.

Rosh Hashana has the month of Elul preceding it to focus on our love to HaKadosh Boruch Hu. Perhaps, then, we must focus of the *hatavos* and *chassadim* which He provided to us. Can we say that we deserve everything which He gave us? עד הנה עזרונו רחמיך ולא עזבונו חסדיך. Taking time to focus on this strengthens and brings out the love that we must have towards HaKadosh Boruch Hu. That appreciation will justify the *brachos* which we have received in the past year, and will *b'ezras* Hashem make us worthy to receive those which we *daven* for on this coming Rosh Hashana. For all the *brachos* and *hatavos* which we will *b'ezras* Hashem be *zoche* to receive, *hakoras hatov* is the key to grant that for us. After all, we are called קהל ה', which by definition means we are a nation that is *makir tov*. By doing that, *b'ezras* Hashem He will grant us a *Gut G'bentchte Yor* and *Kesiva Vachasima Tova*.