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Hakarat Hatov **The Importance of Appreciation**

The Ramban says on Parashat Bo that we have no other purpose in creation other than knowing and giving thanks to G-d who created us. It says in Gemara Bava Kama (16b) that someone who doesn't bow at Modim will not merit to go to Olam Haba. Another Gemara says that a person's spine will turn into a snake. The Maharsha and the Maharal say that this is an allusion to Adam Harishon. Adam Harishon blamed Hashem for his own sin. (The woman you gave me made me do it) Don't waste a modim- recognize everything is a function of Hashem's mercy.

The Chovot Halevavot says that the basis of our entire avodat Hashem is Hakarat Hatov. "Olam Chessed Yibaneh". This world does not perfect Hashem at all, it has no effect on him. It is an expression of his chessed, of his kindness. He was, is, and will always be perfect before, during and after this world. The anti-thesis of hakaras hatov is a kafoi tovah (an ingrate). "A king arose who did not know Yosef" Pharaoh was the ultimate kafoi Tovah". Everyone had to know Yosef, he saved the entire nation! But this Pharaoh did not have Hakarat Hatov to Yosef- he denied that Yosef did any good. After he denied the good that Yosef did for the country, it was only a matter of time before he denied Hashem, "mi Hashem" – who is G-d? A person who's not "makir tov" for anything, at the end he will not appreciate Hashem. The Avot De Rebbi Nosson says that if your friend does you the smallest favor, it should be like the biggest favor in your eyes. Rabbeinu Bachya says that we are all conditioned to receive since we are children, we cry whenever we want anything. As we get older, do we grow up from that?

The Chovot Halevavot says that a person has to be very careful that he doesn't turn into a receiver. It says in Gemara Brachot, what does a good guest say? Look how much the host worked for me! Look at this Shabbat seuda, it's unbelievable! A bad guest says, he didn't do it for me, he did it for his wife and kids anyway. Two people can go to the same exact meal at the same exact house, one guy thanks and the other doesn't. We don't even know what's good and what's not good. We have to be able to grow up, mature and understand.

Often times people are kafui tovah to Hashem. There is a story about a teacher who gave a question to her students in first grade. What are the 7 wonders of the world? Some kids answered the Hanging Gardens, the Pyramids, the Great Wall of China. One little girl answered: that I can see, that I can hear, that I can taste, that I have a loving family. That's crazy, that's what a 6 year old girl said is the 7 wonders of the world! We're thinking big, we're thinking magnificent. This little girl is thankful

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for every little thing that we thank Hashem for every morning in the brachot. Every day we live the 7 wonders of the world. We experience 7 wonders! We should be thankful for what we have. The unbelievable things that Hashem does for us. It's in human nature to always want more. You have 100, you want 200. It's in human nature for a reason. You finish one masechta, you want to finish another. You work on one midda, you want to work on another. There is a purpose for that desire of wanting more. It's supposed to be turned to spiritual things. What do we want out of life? What do we desire? A big house with many cars? How about saying that you wish you could have your eye sight your whole life. How about saying I want to be able to hear my whole life. Do you realize what blessings you have? No, because we're looking at the big house and the big job. Start saying thank you for the most simplest things.

The Rambam says that one must get rid of two character traits: anger and pride. Anger is when "my fantasy of what should happen, doesn't happen". Anger stems from pride. Pride is when one says to oneself "I should be recognized, why don't they recognize me?." "The way of creatures is to hide the favors that people do and reveal the bad things." Rav Wolbe and Rav Dessler say that when a person does you a favor it means you couldn't do it on your own. You needed someone else to help. It's a blow to the ego. But real Hakarat Hatov is when you recognize the good done to you, it doesn't make you less of a man. It's not all coming to you, no one owes you anything. You have to thank people. We have to ask ourselves, at the end of the day, are we givers or takers?

A person who thinks he owns things with money, that's a horrible trait. The Gemara in Makkot says that a person gets lashes from an ox/donkey made wip. Hashem tells Bnei Yisrael you are lower than the donkey when you get the lashes. Even a donkey knows it's owner. Do you recognize G-d your owner? Rav Moshe Cordovero says every moment there is a constant divine influence from Hashem theres a spark of G-d in everything, if these was no spark, the world would cease to exist. The very spark he gave you and you are using it against him. "Chitzoniyot Meor Penimiyoot". Outer movements effect the inner self. Emotions naturally come and go, you have to create them. They can be created by outer movements. The more we are oblivious to saying thank you to people and recognizing the good things they do for us, the more it turns us into receivers. When we don't act with Hakarat Hatov, we slide naturally into a kafui tovah. Do we thank G-d for the opportunities he gave us? Do you understand how great you have it? Rav Wolbe says make sure you properly thank 3 people a day for a month and you will see a big difference. Say modeh ani, thank G-d that you have another day of life. Take nothing for granted. At the end of the day, are you a giver or a taker?