

Expanding Our Definition of Hakaras Hatov

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל
ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | דב בעריש בן פסח צבי

לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל | יעקב אליעזר בן חנה נשא | דבורה לאה בת ביילא | אלחנן צבי בן רחל לאה | שלמה זלמן בן בלומא | שושנה ריזל בת רחל

In this week's Parsha, פרשת אמור, the Torah says the following,

**בַּסֶּכֶת תִּשְׁבּוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים... לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דִרְתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסֶּכֶת
הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
(פרק כג, פסוק מג)**

“You shall dwell in booths (Sukkot) for seven days... so that your generations will know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

The Pesikta comments, “For I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in booths (Sukkot). Why do the Bnei Yisrael make a Sukkah? Rather, it is as a remembrance of the miracles that Hashem performed for them at the time when they left Egypt—namely, that the Clouds of Glory surrounded them and sheltered them, as it is said: ‘For I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in Sukkot.’ And we translate this as: ‘For seated the Children of Israel in coverings of clouds.’

And it is written: ‘You shall dwell in Sukkot for seven days.’ Why? ‘So that your generations will know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in Sukkot.’ The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children! You should make the Sukkot and dwell in them for seven days, so that the miracles I performed for you in the wilderness will be remembered. And even though you make the Sukkah and sit in it for seven days, you are not bestowing a favor upon the Holy One, blessed be He; rather, you are repaying a debt to

Him, as it is said: ‘For I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in Sukkot,’ etc. And dwelling in the Sukkah is a repayment of gratitude for the Clouds of Glory.”

The Hava Amina being addressed here, at face value, calls for deeper analysis. Why would anyone assume that in performing this Mitzvah we are doing Hashem a favor? Clearly, Hashem is in no need of anything.

Yet we see from here that there is a real psychological tendency to view our Mitzvos in this way—so much so that the Torah must explicitly correct it, emphasizing that the Mitzvah is an obligation rooted in Hakaras Hatov.

Accordingly, the Mitzvah of Sukkah is understood as an expression of repaying a debt of Hakaras Hatov. And how is this obligation fulfilled? As the pasuk states, “לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דִרְתֵיכֶם” — “so that your generations will know.” This teaches that Hakaras Hatov is not limited to personal gratitude for what Hashem has done; it also includes communicating that goodness, ensuring it is transmitted to the next generation.

A powerful lesson emerges from here: when Hashem bestows goodness upon us, Hakaras Hatov is not satisfied with internal appreciation or even verbal thanks alone. It obligates us to actively share that awareness—to tell the story, to give it context, and to pass it forward so that future generations live with that same recognition.

Pursuit of Purpose

פרשת

אמור

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Surrounding Ourselves By Shleimus

The Seforno says, “An ox or a sheep—after mentioning all the different types of blemishes in consecrated offerings and disqualifying them from the altar, even though sometimes a flawless animal may be worth only one sela while a blemished one may be worth two, and at times its size and fatness might be considered an advantage for a royal offering of meat—nevertheless, for Me, [what matters is not that].”

For the Rock (Hashem) is perfect in His actions; He desires the perfection and wholeness of that which is offered, and of the one who offers it. The offering should be complete in a natural sense, and the one bringing it should strive for Divine completeness—to resemble his Creator as much as possible.”

In other words, Hashem is perfect, and we are obligated to emulate Him by striving for Shleimus. This is not only about our own growth; it even shapes the way we approach the animal we bring as a korban.

The Seforno is Mechadesh that although the animal itself is not “emulating” Hashem, its wholeness serves as a powerful symbol for us. By encountering Shleimus in what we offer, we internalize that ideal and are helped in our own process of becoming more complete and G-dlike.

Perhaps this also sheds light on the idea of Lechem Mishnah on Shabbos. Even if there may be a larger broken piece of challah available, we specifically surround ourselves with completeness. The message is not practical but symbolic: to live with an ongoing image of Shleimus, constantly guiding us toward emulating Hashem.

The Seforno continues: “Just as with regard to the boundaries of time—over which He has set limits—there is nothing to add and nothing to subtract...”

Here, the Seforno introduces a second dimension of Shleimus: time itself. Zman is structured with precision and completeness by Hashem, and by aligning ourselves with it, we place ourselves within that same framework of perfection. This can serve as a powerful motivation to be careful with Zmanim—to come on time, and to properly observe the times for Krias Shema and Shemoneh Esrei. In doing so, we are not merely fulfilling Mitzvos; but we are also creating an image of Shleimus, which will help in our pursuit of emulating Hashem.

Encountering Hashem When We Learn

The Torah tells us we should love Hashem, and how do we achieve this, “and these words will be on your heart”. Rashi comments “that through the Torah one recognizes Hashem, and clings to his ways.”

Often, when we learn, it is not always clear how the Torah serves as a vehicle for connecting us to Hashem. However, this teaching of Rashi offers a powerful perspective: through learning, we come to recognize Hashem Himself.

When we engage with Torah, we are encountering Hashem’s value system—His דעת, His perspective, His way of seeing the world. In that sense, learning is not just an intellectual exercise; it is an encounter. And through that encounter, we are able to align ourselves with His ways and ultimately cling to Him. To accomplish this we must pay attention to the fact that we are doing so.

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