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## On the Parsha

In Parshas Ki Savo, Moshe Rabbeinu readies Bnei Yisrael to enter Eretz Yisrael. To prepare them, Moshe discusses the commandment of Bikkurim which will apply to them when Bnei Yisrael settles the land. The Bikkurim are the Jewish farmer's first fruits that are given to the Kohain as an expression of Hakaras Hatov (gratitude) to Hashem for the harvest. One who brings Bikkurim recites the following formula which has been further explained with Rashi's commentary in brackets.

"And you shall lift your voice and say before Hashem: 'An Aramean [Lavan] destroyed my father. [Lavan intended to root out the entire (Jewish) nation by pursuing (and destroying) Yaakov (the nation's forefather), and the (Torah considers it as if he had accomplished his goal because the) evil intent of a gentile is reckoned as if the act has actually been done], and [after Lavan, others also tried to destroy us; for after this] he (Yaakov) went down to Mitzrayim (Egypt). And he lived there in scant number, [seventy souls], and he became there a great, mighty, and populous nation. And Mitzrayim did evil to us, and afflicted us, and they placed us under hard labor. We cried out to Hashem, the G-d of our fathers. Hashem heard our voices, and He saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. And Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great fear, and with signs and wonders. And He brought us to this place [the Temple], and He gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the land, which You, Hashem, have given to me.'" (Devarim 26:5-10)

The concept of Hakaras Hatov is linked with the Middah (character trait) of Emes (truth). The Maharal, Rav Yehudah Lowe ZT"l (1520-1609) in his Gur Aryeh provides insight into the link between the two by answering the following question.

A careful reading of the first few verses above yields the following discrepancy. The verses describe

Lavan's attempt to hurt Yaakov, and then Yaakov's journey down to Mitzrayim without mentioning that Hashem saved Yaakov (and by extension, the entire nation) from Lavan. The verses should have said that Lavan plotted against Yaakov, then Hashem saved us from him and then our forefather Yaakov went down to Mitzrayim.

The Maharal addresses this question by noting that if the verses mentioned that Hashem saved us from Lavan, then the events described in the verses above would appear as two separate, discrete events. The first, Hashem saving us from Lavan, and the second, our journey down to and Hashem freeing us from the servitude of Mitzrayim. However, as presented, they appear as one continuous narrative and with it, the ability to recognize a heightened appreciation of what Hashem did for us. When viewed as one single narrative, we see the contrast from the beginning of the narrative – the tenuous situation and mortal danger that we were in with Lavan, to the end of the narrative which concludes with the safety and security of being brought to Eretz Yisrael, a land that flowed with milk and honey. With this proper perspective, we can truly see what Hashem did for us and can express our Hakaras Hatov to Hashem properly.

This is the link that the Maharal provides between Hakaras Hatov and Emes that is referenced above. In order to properly thank Hashem, we need to be honest with ourselves and acknowledge all of the good that Hashem has bestowed upon us. If we do not fully see this truth, we will not go far enough in our expressions of Hakaras Hatov to Hashem.

Truth is not merely a concept; it is one of the primary attributes of Hashem. As it pertains to Bikkurim, when we express gratitude to Hashem with our first fruits, we must be honest and acknowledge the entirety of the bounty that has been bestowed upon us by Hashem. Otherwise, we will be lacking in our expression of gratitude to Him.

In our world today, misinformation, half-truths, and outright lies are quite prevalent. Winston Churchill once said, "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on." In such an environment, it can be difficult to conduct oneself consistently with honesty and integrity. However, that does not free us from the obligation to do so. Just as Bnei Yisrael were enjoined to present their first fruits with the full measure of gratitude owed to Hashem, which could only be accomplished with being honest regarding acknowledging all that Hashem had done for them, we too are obligated to be honest and assess all of the good that Hashem has bestowed upon us so we can thank Hashem accordingly.

### Halacha – Jewish Law

#### QUESTION: Recently,

Reb Shammai Hartman

Z"l, a Holocaust survivor, known for the tremendous amount of Tzedakah (charity) that he would give to individuals and Jewish institutions passed away. One story that was told about him, was that he was approached by a needy individual who asked him for Tzedakah. He responded, "I want you to be alive for your children and grandchildren. From the smell of your clothing, I can tell that you are a smoker. I will give you a nice donation (e.g. a hundred dollars). However, if you promise me that you will quit smoking, I will give you a much nicer donation (e.g. a thousand dollars). Do you promise to quit smoking?"

Was this permitted for Reb Shammai to do, if there was a good chance that the needy individual would lie and say that he would quit smoking to get the larger donation, and then continue to smoke? Would Reb Shammai be committing the transgression of Lifnei Iver (causing someone to sin – in this case, causing the needy individual to lie)?

**ANSWER:** There was a case of a wealthy Jewish individual who asked for some bread. Before one eats bread, one is obligated to wash one's hands. Generally speaking, one is not allowed to give a Jewish person bread, if one knows that he will not wash his hands. Giving the person bread in such circumstances, would constitute Lifnei Iver (causing someone to sin – in this case, eating bread without

washing one's hands). However, in this particular case, it was known that if this particular Jewish person was not given bread, he would come to hate Torah scholars which is also a sin and therefore, one would transgress Lifnei Iver if the bread was not given to him as well. In this case, we have opposing Lifnei Ivers. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ZT"l rules that one should give the person the bread, because the sin of hating Torah Scholars is worse than eating bread without washing one's hands.

By the same token, in the case of Reb Shammai, we have a Lifnei Iver (causing someone to lie about smoking) pitted against the possibility of extending that person's life by getting him to quit smoking. Since this is a greater consideration than causing the needy individual to lie, Reb Shammai did the right thing by trying to secure a promise from the needy individual to quit smoking even if he may come to lie about it.

### Mussar – Introspection

We continue with our translation of the sixth chapter of the Chofetz Chaim's Sefas Tamim.

"In this chapter, we will explore the full spectrum of 'lies', what is included in the definition of 'lies', and the despicability of liars.

And now we will return to the topic begun in the third chapter, that one who wants to save himself from the sin of deceit should constantly think deeply about the enormity of the sin of lying. And in so doing, he will additionally be saved from the sin of deceiving. I will address you and say how much a man must continually strengthen himself not to allow a lie to leave his mouth. Even if there is no deceit buried within the lie, it is nevertheless an extremely despicable character trait, and by virtue of lying one will defile his lips which are the tools created within man for the purpose of praising HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Please see Sefer Shemiras HaLoshon – 10<sup>th</sup> Chapter, where we elaborated on this subject. These words of admonishment alone are sufficient for any thoughtful person who listens to them, to constantly be vigilante against his speech becoming defective by virtue of lying."