

VA'EIRA

LEARNING TO APPRECIATE

All over the world, children are taught to say thank you. “Say thank you to Grandma for the present she brought you.” “Your friend gave you a candy? What do you say?” Gratitude is universally accepted as proper manners. It’s an important element of a healthy, functioning society. But when our Torah discusses *hakaras hatov* (appreciation), the behavioral expectations extend far beyond thanking the people in our lives. Particular episodes within *parashas Shemos* and *parashas Va’eira* help us explore appreciation – and where it can take us.

One example is connected with the first three plagues. Before the first plague, blood, Hashem commanded Moshe to first warn Pharaoh about the impending plague. As He instructed, Moshe told Pharaoh that if he refused to free the Jews to serve Hashem, “so said Hashem, ‘In this you shall know that I am Hashem.’ Behold I am going to strike with the staff that is in my hand upon the water that is in the river and it shall turn to blood.”¹

If Hashem told Moshe to warn Pharaoh that he was going to hit the water, we would expect the next instruction to read “And if

¹ *Shemos* 7:17.

Pharaoh refuses, then you shall raise your staff and strike the water.” But that’s not what Hashem said. Instead, He continued, “Tell Aharon, “Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt...’.”² Why does Hashem specify that **Aharon** be the one to initiate the plague? This pattern is repeated with the next two plagues – frogs and lice. All three times Hashem instructs Moshe to tell Aharon to actualize the plague. Why doesn’t Hashem tell Moshe to do it himself?

Rashi’s explanation lends new insight into the dimensions of *hakaras hatov*. Rashi says³ that it was inappropriate for Moshe *Rabbeinu* to strike the Nile for the plagues of blood and frogs. After all, this same river provided refuge for him as a baby, when his mother facilitated his escape from Pharaoh’s decree of infanticide. In the same vein, Moshe *Rabbeinu* could not strike the sand to bring the plague of lice. The Egyptian sand had, in effect, protected Moshe when he used it to bury the Egyptian that he killed.⁴ Hashem’s message to Moshe *Rabbeinu* is clear. Striking the Nile River or the Egyptian sand would show a lack of appreciation for how they had helped him and such an action would tarnish his *hakaras hatov*. Rather, Aharon should initiate these plagues, since he never benefitted from the water or the sand to the same extent.

Several strong counter-arguments are obvious. The Nile River and sands of Egypt are both inanimate objects! First of all, they would not have experienced any pain when being hit. Second, they don’t have the free will to consciously choose to help Moshe, so how could they be deserving of *hakaras hatov*? Third, they don’t have the cognition to expect or even understand appreciation. Furthermore, the plagues themselves were a *kiddush Hashem*

² *Shemos* 7:19.

³ Commentary on *Shemos* 7:19.

⁴ *ibid.*, 8:12.

(sanctification of G-d's Name) of extraordinary proportions; surely the significance of Moshe *Rabbeinu's* role in the plague process would veto any need to be sensitive to lifeless entities.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler addresses⁵ these difficulties by reminding us that *bakaras hatov* is mainly about the impact on the appreciator, rather than on the one being appreciated. He explains that the human mind is able to distinguish the importance or entitlement of the recipient. Human emotions, by contrast, cannot. It is irrelevant that our beneficiary might have been an inanimate object. Our emotional reality is that when we strike something, its value is lowered in our eyes. It becomes inferior and we become superior. If we previously benefitted from it, then our *middah* (character trait) of *bakaras hatov* certainly diminishes. How could we properly appreciate something that is now so inferior? Moshe's Divine mandate was to diligently preserve his *middah* of *bakaras hatov*, since it is so critical for *avodas Hashem* (service of G-d), as we shall soon see.

Let us first examine another poignant episode from the previous *parashah*, *parashas Shemos*. Moshe *Rabbeinu* was commanded by Hashem to go back to Egypt and free the Jews. After he finally agreed to assume the leadership role, Moshe still hesitated. Before he left for Egypt, "Moshe went and returned to Yeser [Yisro], his father-in-law. He said to him, 'I shall go, please, and I shall return to my brothers who are in Egypt and I shall see if they are still alive'."⁶ The *Midrash* explains⁷ that Moshe felt compelled to ask Yisro for permission to go.

Moshe's actions here appear strange. How could he hesitate when G-d Himself had just commanded him to go to Egypt?

⁵ *Michtav MeiEliyahu*, vol. 3, p. 100-101.

⁶ *Shemos* 4:18.

⁷ *Tanchuma, Parashas Shemos* 16.

Furthermore, was this not an urgent matter of freeing a suffering people, and therefore, a case of *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life)? Why did he first ask permission from Yisro? One explanation in the *Midrash* is the following: “Moshe said, ‘Master of the World, I cannot [go on the mission], because Yisro accepted me and opened the door of his house to me and I am like a son to him. And anyone who opens his door to his fellow man – he owes his soul to him.’”⁸

While one can relate to Moshe’s gratitude to his father-in-law, his actions seem a bit out of proportion, especially with an understanding of the full story. Rabbi Chaim Friedlander clarifies⁹ that Yisro did not have altruistic motives for taking care of Moshe. In all fairness, he was actually indebted to Moshe for helping to alleviate the tension between his daughters and the other shepherds. Moreover, when Yisro first heard about this man at the well, he hoped this newcomer would be a suitable son-in-law. Yisro’s generous gesture of welcoming Moshe into his house was therefore inspired by ulterior motives.

Our question is now strengthened. Why did Moshe *Rabbeinu* feel he owed Yisro a seemingly undeserved expression of *hakaras hatov* to the extent that he delayed fulfilling a direct Divine commandment to save the entire Jewish people?

Building on a Foundation

Rabbi Friedlander provides¹⁰ a powerful lesson that relates to our discussion. “*Middos* are the foundation of Torah and *mitzvos* (commandments).” If we trample on our *middos* while running to

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *Sifsei Chaim, Middos Ve’Avodas Hashem*, vol. 1, p. 323-324.

¹⁰ *Sifsei Chaim*, vol. 2, p. 270.

fulfill a *mitzvah*, we should re-evaluate, says Rabbi Friedlander. Hashem wants us to fulfill *mitzvos* in ways that preserve our *middos*. We are often misled to act quickly “in the name of the *mitzvah*” and we forget to think about others, crushing our *middos* along the way. Our sensitivity, kindness and *hakaros hatov* are sacrificed for the sake of these “*mitzvos*.”

We now begin to understand why Moshe *Rabbeinu* delayed fulfilling Hashem’s command in order to get permission from Yisro. Moshe knew that Hashem would never ask Moshe to perform a *mitzvah* (even freeing His enslaved people!) at the expense of good *middos* and *hakaros hatov*. In light of Rabbi Friedlander’s teaching, we understand how much Hashem values human attributes. Hashem obligates us to perform *mitzvos* on the foundation of proper *middos*. This responsibility is constant, not restricted to certain occasions or life situations. Hashem expects us to live with a *middos*-consciousness all the time and to direct our conduct with that perspective.

A practical example will help us internalize this concept. Picture the following scenario: you’re in *shul* (synagogue) for the *megillah* reading on Purim. The reading is underway, and a small child is making a lot of noise. His mother makes several unsuccessful attempts to quiet him. His noise continues to distract the congregation. Suddenly another woman walks over to this mother and attacks her verbally. “If your child can’t be quiet, he shouldn’t be in *shul*!” She harshly criticizes her for bringing the child to *shul* because he is disrupting the services. Then she stalks off.

In this example, there are two players: the mother and the other woman. Both of them probably thought they were acting *lesheim mitzvah* (lit. in the name of a *mitzvah* – for the sake of a *mitzvah*). The mother came to *shul* to hear *megillah*, and the other woman wanted to allow everyone else to hear *megillah* properly. But were they acting with *middos*-awareness? The mother, in her

desire to fulfill a *mitzvah*, was inconsiderate of the other people in the *shul*. And the other woman, who so righteously wanted to promote the *mitzvah* observance of everyone else, was insensitive to the feelings of the mother. In their attempt to fulfill a *mitzvah*, they crushed the very foundations of those *mitzvos*.

What is the message here? One should not be discouraged; the solution is **not** to refrain from *mitzvos* in order to avoid the risk of tarnishing our *middos*. Rather, we shouldn't choose the "easy way" to fulfill a *mitzvah* when it might hurt someone else in the process. Hashem's message is intended to inspire our extra effort and creativity. Let us learn from Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who didn't simply refuse Hashem's command in order to prevent violation of *hakaros hatov*. He took the time and energy to explain the situation to Yisro and to ask him for permission. He made the effort to fulfill Hashem's directive while preserving the *middah* of *hakaros hatov*. Observe the actions of Hashem Himself, when He modeled *middos*-consciousness for us, by specifying that Aharon, not Moshe, should strike the water and the sand. The commandment would still be fulfilled, but through Aharon's hand, so Moshe *Rabbeinu* could protect his *middah* of *hakaros hatov*.

In the case of the two women in *shul*, the creative solution might be for the mother to leave *shul* in the middle and hear *megillah* at a less convenient time. The annoyed woman might have to refrain from venting her frustration, and learn how to teach others about appropriate *shul* behavior with more discriminating words. This is Hashem's challenge for us – to perform *mitzvos* upon the foundation of our *middos*.

Knowing Good When You See It

Let's address the second issue: why does Moshe feel such *hakaros hatov* to Yisro when Yisro's generosity was not inspired by

pure intentions? In his discussion of *bitachon* (trust in G-d), the *Chovos HaLevavos* states¹¹ that when someone helps us, we first need to recognize that everything comes from Hashem. We also need to realize that “blessed is he through whom the good happened, for his desire and good intention, because Hashem caused the good to happen through him... ‘a merit is brought by way of the meritorious’.”¹²

Rabbi Friedlander explains¹³ our obligation to recognize two lofty aspects of the person who helps us. First, Hashem chooses His conduits very carefully, and He will only choose a person to be a helper if he is worthy of the task. Second, when Hashem selects His emissaries, they are not forced into action against their will. He simply gives them **opportunities** to help others. When someone actively chooses to benefit others, in reality he is taking advantage of these G-d-given opportunities. His actions reveal his inner goodness.

In light of this idea, we gain new insight about *chesed* (acts of loving-kindness). When someone does us a favor, we must recognize that Hashem has chosen this person specifically and he is, therefore, a special person in some way. Hashem gave that person an opportunity to do *chesed*, and the person revealed his inner goodness by making the right choice. Additionally, when we do somebody a favor, Hashem is complimenting us by virtue of choosing us to be a benefactor. It is a privilege to be the conduit for good and to have an opportunity to actualize our potential.

On one hand, we recognize Yisro's merit; if he was chosen by Hashem to help Moshe *Rabbeinu*, he is worthy of recognition. On the other hand, if Yisro's personal motivations were less than

¹¹ *Chovos HaLevavos, Shaar HaBitachon*, chapter 4.

¹² *Shabbos* 32a, *Bava Basra* 119b, *Sanhedrin* 8a.

¹³ *Sifsei Chaim*, vol. 2, p. 272.

altruistic, wouldn't that diminish his right to receive Moshe *Rabbeinu's hakaras hatov*? How could Moshe still be inspired and eager to show gratitude?

We first need to refine our definition of *hakaras hatov*. We usually interpret it as gratitude, expressing appreciation. The literal translation of the phrase is "recognizing the good" – to simply recognize when you see good. Appreciation is the **expression** of your recognizing the good, but the essence of *hakaras hatov* is the recognition itself. True *hakaras hatov* is a pure recognition that is untainted by outside components.

Moshe *Rabbeinu* recognized the good in Yisro – Moshe *Rabbeinu* was *makir tov*. He further understood that Yisro must be meritorious if Hashem chose him to be his benefactor. The natural expression of Moshe *Rabbeinu's* recognition was his appreciation in thought, in speech and in action. He demonstrated his appreciation of Yisro; he showed him respect and asked him for permission to go because he truly appreciated the good in Yisro. Yisro's original motives were irrelevant to him because his *hakaras hatov* was pure and not influenced by other factors.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz brings¹⁴ examples of *hakaras hatov* expressed in situations where the benefactor had no intention to help the recipient. Reuven felt *hakaras hatov* to Yosef for including him in his dream as an equal with the other brothers. Yosef said: "And eleven stars bowing down to me."¹⁵ After the incident with moving Yaakov's bed to Bilhah's tent, Reuven was worried about his potentially lower status among the Tribes of Israel. Yosef's dream provided relief to Reuven since it included him as an equal. Recall that Yosef did not tell his dream for Reuven's sake; nowhere does the text indicate that Yosef described his dream for

¹⁴ *Sichos Mussar*, p. 318-319 (*Parashas Behaaloscha*, 1972).

¹⁵ *Bereishis* 37:9.

the purpose of comforting Reuven! Reuven benefitted indirectly but was still *makir tov* to the degree that he even protected Yosef from the other brothers' intention to kill him.

An additional example is when Yaakov *Avinu* (our father) asked Yosef to go inquire about "the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the sheep."¹⁶ Why the sheep? Our Sages learn¹⁷ from here that if one benefits from something, it is proper to ask about its welfare. Rabbi Shmulevitz explains that this inquiry about well-being is an expression of *hakaras hatov*. The sheep certainly had no free will to intentionally benefit Yaakov; nevertheless, he showed signs of his *hakaras hatov*.

No matter from whom or what we benefit, it is incumbent upon us to be aware of the good and to express our appreciation for that good. If we deepen our understanding of appreciation, we know that Hashem chose worthy individuals to be conduits for our benefit. Pure *hakaras hatov* remains uninfluenced by outside factors. It shouldn't matter, for example, that the person sponsored a conference just to promote his business (namely, for ulterior motives) or that the person cleaned a car because it's his job (namely, out of obligation). Our mission is to simply recognize the good in others. The intentions (or lack thereof) of other people are irrelevant to us because *hakaras hatov* is about shaping ourselves as human beings, not about the reasons behind a beneficial act.

¹⁶ *Shemos* 37:14.

¹⁷ *Bereishis Rabbah* 84:13.

Facing Up To Others

Why is it often challenging for us to naturally feel and express *hakaras hatov*? Rabbi Pinchos Roberts highlights¹⁸ the depth of the struggle by identifying the two major figures that battled for authority in our *parashah*: Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Pharaoh. Rabbi Roberts explains that this conflict between individuals was also a clash between two opposing character traits and differing perspectives on the world. Moshe *Rabbeinu* exemplified the trait of *hakaras hatov*, as we have explained. Conversely, Pharaoh epitomized *kefiyus tovah*, denying the good.

Earlier in the Book of *Bereishis*, Yosef predicted the impending Egyptian famine, designed the plan of food storage and rationing, and saved Egypt from national starvation. In Yaakov *Avinu's* merit, the Nile River rose once again and the famine ended before the predicted seven years had passed. One would assume that Pharaoh and all Egypt would be grateful to Yaakov and his descendants. But not only did Pharaoh fail to show appreciation, he “made himself as if he did not know Yosef”¹⁹ and treated his descendants with exceptional cruelty!

This *middah* of *kefiyus tovah* has existed since the beginning of human history. Immediately after Adam *HaRishon* ate from the *Eitz HaDa'as* (the Tree of Knowledge), Hashem asked him if he had eaten from the tree. Instead of admitting his guilt, Adam responded, “The woman whom You gave [to be] with me – she gave me from the tree and I ate.”²⁰

On the words “whom You gave [to be] with me,” Rashi comments, “Here he denied the good.” Hashem made a wife for

¹⁸ *Through the Prism of the Torah*, p. 78.

¹⁹ Rashi, Commentary on *Shemos* 1:8.

²⁰ *Bereishis* 3:12.

Adam for his benefit, as a response to the situation of “It is not good for man being alone.”²¹ Instead of being fully aware of that immense good, Adam denied Hashem’s goodness by blaming his sin on the wife that “You gave me.” Later on, descendants of survivors of the great flood quickly forgot how Hashem had spared them. They openly disregarded Hashem’s kindness by attempting rebellion against Him and building the Tower of Babel.²² If we are honest with ourselves, we admit that even to this day, we continue to be deniers of good, both Hashem’s goodness and human goodness.

The source of *kefityus tova* is human nature, according to Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.²³ A baby is born egocentric. He believes that the whole world was created to serve him. Everything is coming to him. He lacks the ability to look outside of himself and appreciate any good. As we mature, we are supposed to identify other independent beings in the world. When we grow beyond infancy, we understand that others helping us is an expression of goodness and not the fulfillment of our natural expectations. Our very life is a gift from G-d; it is neither earned by us nor due to us.

In terms of his *bakaras baton*, Pharaoh was still an infant. As egocentric as a baby, he quickly discounted how Yaakov *Avinu* and Yosef had aided him in the past. Pharaoh refused to recognize the good and show his appreciation for it. The letters of “Pharaoh” reversed spell out *ha’oref* (the back of the neck).²⁴ The back of the neck symbolizes the essential quality of Pharaoh. Refusing to see the kindness of another means turning your back on the giver. That was Pharaoh.

²¹ *ibid.*, 2:18.

²² Rashi, Commentary on *Bereishis* 11:5.

²³ *Alei Shur*, vol. 2, p. 280.

²⁴ *Rabbi Tatz, World Mask*, p. 130.

The *kefiyus tovah* of Pharaoh stands in stark contrast to the essence of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Moshe *Rabbeinu*, our quintessential *makir tov*, is described as “very humble – more than any man on the face of the earth.”²⁵ Humility means possessing a realistic self-view, not functioning under the illusion that everything is coming to you. A humble person realizes that nothing is due to him and takes nothing for granted. If Pharaoh’s symbol is *ha’oref*, the back of the neck, then Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s symbol is the face. The conclusion of the book of *Shemos* describes Moshe descending from *Har Sinai*, and “the skin of his face shone.”²⁶ His face glowed so brightly that he had to veil it to avoid intimidating *Bnei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel).

Cohanim (descendants of the original Jewish tribe of priests) regularly bless Jewish congregations, reciting the *pasuk* “May Hashem shine His Face toward you and be gracious to you.”²⁷ Facing someone means acknowledging another’s contribution. We ask Hashem to “face” us, to see only our good. Turning the back of our neck **towards** someone necessitates turning **away** our face. This act is a blatant refusal to see another person and what he or she has done for us. While Pharaoh turned away from others, Moshe *Rabbeinu* turned towards others and recognized their contributions to his life.

A similar contrast is seen between the two sisters, Orpah and Ruth. The name Orpah also comes from the word *oref*, the back of the neck. The *Midrash* explains²⁸ that she is called Orpah because “she turned the back of her neck to her mother-in-law,” whereas Ruth’s name comes from the fact that “she recognized (lit. saw – “*ra’asah*”) the words of her mother-in-law.” Ruth turned toward

²⁵ *Bamidbar* 12:3.

²⁶ *Shemos* 34:29, 30.

²⁷ *Bamidbar* 6:25.

²⁸ *Rus Rabbah* 1:4.

Naomi, appreciated what her mother-in-law expressed and acknowledged it. Orpah turned her back, did not acknowledge, and left. To turn towards another is the *middah* that led Ruth to *Am Yisrael*. This attribute distinguished her as the mother of royalty, the matriarch of the chain that led to David *HaMelech* (King David) and that will eventually lead to *Mashiach* (the Messiah).

A story told²⁹ about Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach illustrates the sensitivity one can acquire in the *middah* of *hakaras hatov*. Once Rav Shach traveled a far distance from his home to attend the funeral of a relatively unknown individual. It was a hot summer day and he walked a long distance in the procession. Rabbi Meir Haizler asked him why he had exerted himself in that way. Rav Shach answered by telling him the following part of his life story:

When Rav Shach was twelve years old, he was learning in a very good *yeshivah*, but the living conditions were not optimal. The students slept on the floor and subsisted on very little food. Rav Shach related, "I could handle these hardships, but the nights in the *beis midrash* were intolerable. The cold was bone-chilling. I wanted to sleep next to the hot oven, but the many refugees who joined me there at night took the best sleeping places. So I slept far from the only source of heat in the freezing Russian nights, with no bedding or blanket.

"One night, a local Jew saw me shivering on a bench, huddled in all the clothes I owned. He took pity on me and brought me his old winter coat from his house. He wrapped me in it and from then on I was much warmer, and I could sleep." Rav Shach expressed how much the coat had meant to him, since it

²⁹ Rabbi Asher Bergman, *Path to Greatness*, p. 106.

enabled him to continue his learning. He concluded with sincerity, “Is there a limit to the gratitude I feel towards this man?”

Rav Shach’s *bakaras hatov* was on the same level as Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s, untainted by circumstances or details. How many years had passed since that man had paid him the kindness? Did that man ever know that the coat had allowed this young student to continue learning? Now that the man had passed away, was he even aware that Rav Shach had come to pay respects and show his appreciation? These factors did not influence Rav Shach’s *bakaras hatov*. Furthermore, with the same humility as Moshe *Rabbeinu*, he never felt deserving of the coat. Instead, he turned his face toward this man, recognized the good and never forgot it.

We too can achieve this level – if we practice. Let us wear the glasses of *bakaras hatov* and recognize all the good that exists in the world. When we practice seeing through the lenses of *bakaras hatov*, we will eventually express our appreciation naturally. Our gratitude will flow, and the world will become, as Rabbi Wolbe phrases it, a beautiful place of “doing good and kindness, fondness and friendship.”³⁰

The Ultimate Good

We now understand why *bakaras hatov* is so important for our relationships with other people and creatures in the world. Our Sages tell us that *bakaras hatov* is also critical for our *avodas Hashem*, to the extent that “someone who denies the good will not be able to accept the Kingship of Heaven.”³¹ Why is *bakaras hatov* equally important in both relationships, *bein adam lechaveiro* (between people) and *bein adam laMakom* (between people and Hashem)?

³⁰ *Alei Shur*, vol. 2, p. 281.

³¹ *Midrash HaGadol* on *Shemos* 1:8.

The founding principle of the Torah is that G-d is Good. He is the Source of all good, and recognizing Hashem's goodness is the basis for all of our *avodas Hashem*. Only if we realize that all of life's events come from Hashem's goodness, orchestrated for our ultimate good, will we be able to establish true *bitachon* and closeness to Him. Only if we recognize that all of the *mitzvos* are an expression of Hashem's goodness will we be ready to accept them – every single one of them – with a full heart.

It is therefore self-evident why much of our practical *avodah* is an active appreciation of Hashem's beneficence. Most of our *tefillah* (prayer) is composed of praises and expressions of thanks to Hashem! The one hundred *berachos* (blessings) that we are supposed to say each day are to express appreciation that Hashem is the King of the Universe and that He gives us every pleasure, every *mitzvah*, our bodies and our souls! The basis for this *avodah* of the one hundred *berachos* is *bakaras batov*.³² The deep underlying appreciation of Hashem's Goodness is the essence of our praises and our *berachos*.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler develops this idea even more. He points out³³ that not only is *bakaras batov* a large part of our *avodas Hashem* in this world, but it is also the basis for our experience in *Olam HaBa* (the World to Come).

What are we going to do in *Olam HaBa*? We will be doing what the angels are doing now, explains Rabbi Dessler: we will be singing the praises of Hashem. Our appreciation and awe will grow as more and more of Hashem's greatness throughout the creation and throughout history is revealed to us, and we will exult in the expression of our appreciation. Our development of *bakaras*

³² Paraphrase of *Alei Shur*, vol. 1, p. 112.

³³ *Michtav Mei'Eliyahu*, vol. 1, p. 51.

batov in this world actually prepares us for our experience in the next world!

Anyone who has never developed the *middah* of *bakaras batov* in his life will enter *Olam HaBa* with a handicap. He won't be able to see or appreciate. A person with limited *bakaras batov* in this world will have a limited *Olam HaBa* experience in the future. It is critical, then, to develop our *bakaras batov* now, for the sake of both our present and our future. Our *bakaras batov* can make *Olam HaZeh* (This World) a world of "doing good and kindness, fondness and friendship."³⁴ Only then will our *Olam HaZeh* and *Olam HaBa* be worlds of joy in the appreciation of the Hashem's Goodness.

As we have seen, *bakaras batov* is not an abstract, unattainable, or super-lofty ideal. It is a quintessential part of the *middos*-consciousness that we want to permeate our lives. Let us perceive the good from Hashem in our moment-to-moment existence, in even the smallest details. We need to open our eyes to the good in other people: especially when they choose to do good, but even when their goodness is solely recognized by their merit to be Hashem's emissaries. Let us acknowledge the good in even the inanimate objects from which we benefit, recognizing their contributions to our lives. In the merit of our searching to see and appreciate the good, may Hashem continue to show us more and more of it – both in this world and in the next.

³⁴ *Alei Shur*, vol. 2, p. 281.