



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת כי תצא

לא יבא עמוזי ומואבי בקהל ה' וכו' עד עולם. על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים, ואשר שכר עליך את בלעם בן בעור מפתור ארם נהרים לקללך. (דברים כ"ג, ד-ה)

An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem ... for eternity, because they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Mitzrayim, and because he hired against you Bilam, son of Beor, of Pethor, Aram Naharaim to curse you. (Devorim 23:4-5)

In this week's *Sidrah*, Moshe explained to Klal Yisroel the various nation that are forbidden to marry into the Jewish people. The males from Ammon and Moav are permanently prohibited from marrying into Klal Yisroel, even if they convert. However, Edomites and Egyptians who convert are permitted to marry into the nation after two generations.

The Meforshim discuss the severity of the sin committed by Ammon and Moav, which resulted in their eternal ban from marrying into Klal Yisroel. What distinguishes them from converts from Edom or Mitzrayim, who are allowed to join after two generations? After all, did Mitzrayim not cause our nation to suffer and endure terrible hardships for many generations? Furthermore, Edom opposed us with drawn swords. Why, then, are they treated more leniently than the Moavim, who only failed to offer bread and water to Klal Yisroel during their travels?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* cites R' Elyah Lopian *zatzal* (*Ma'areches HaTeshuvah*), who elaborates on a fundamental lesson to be drawn from these laws. He references the Ramban's explanation, that although the Egyptians and Edomites harmed Klal Yisroel in more significant ways, the allegation against Ammon and Moav is even stronger. Avraham Avinu had saved their ancestor Lot during the war of the five kings against the four. Furthermore, it was due to Avraham's merit that Lot was rescued from Sedom. They were obligated to express *hakoras hatov*, and thus their failure to repay Avraham's kindness to their forefather - while instead harming the descendants of their benefactor – demonstrated a profound lack of human decency, resulting in their eternal exclusion from marrying into Klal Yisroel.

R' Elyah emphasises that this lack of gratitude reflects a deficiency in the basic level of *middos* required to marry into the Jewish nation. He draws an analogy to a physical shortcoming: Chazal state that even if someone suffers a significant loss of blood, if they still possess one *revi'is* of blood, they can recover. While such an individual is gravely ill, the presence of this minimal amount of blood gives them a chance for recovery and rehabilitation. Similarly, concerning *middos*, even if a person is extremely spiritually ill, possessing a basic sense of decency allows them to be considered alive. However, without the trait of *hakoras hatov*, a person is regarded as spiritually dead. They are comparable to someone lacking the minimal *revi'is* of blood, and as such, can never enter into the Jewish nation. The ingrained selfishness and ingratitude of Ammon and Moav displayed a character that has no place in Klal Yisroel.

The Chinuch (*Mitzvah* #33) discusses the commandment of honouring one's parents, emphasising the importance of acknowledging and appreciating those who have benefitted us. Being ungrateful and

ignoring the acts of kindness we have received is a deeply repulsive trait in the eyes of both Hashem and humanity. He then explains that when a person recognises the immense goodness received from their parents, who have worked tirelessly for them since childhood, they will come to appreciate the kindness of Hashem as well. This recognition leads to an understanding that without Hashem, one would have nothing at all. As a result, a profound sense of *hakoras hatov* toward Hashem develops, which is a crucial foundation for properly fulfilling Torah and *mitzvos*.

The centrality of this *middah* is evident in Moshe's criticism of Klal Yisroel when he states: הֲלֹא תִגְמְלוּ זֹאת עִם נָבִל וְלֹא חָכָם הֲלוֹא הוּא אָבִיךָ קִנְךָ הוּא עֲשֶׂךָ וַיִּלְנַנְךָ *Is it to Hashem that you do this, O vile and unwise people? Is He not your Father, your Master? Has He not created you and established you?* (Devorim 32:6). Klal Yisroel are labelled as נָבִל, *vile*, for being ungrateful and failing to acknowledge the blessings they received from Hashem in the past. They are also referred to as לֹא חָכָם, *unwise*, for not recognising their dependence on Him for future provisions.

This aspect of *hakoras harov* as a motivation for serving Hashem is highlighted in an insight from the Malbim. The *possuk* states: וְאֲנִי בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ אָבוֹא בֵּיתְךָ, אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל הַיְכָל קִדְשְׁךָ בֵּירְאֲתְךָ *As for me, through the abundance of Your kindness I will enter Your House; I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You* (Tehillim 5:8). The Malbim explains that Dovid HaMelech was conveying that an individual's initial motivation for approaching Hashem in prayer should not stem from fear. Rather, feelings of gratitude towards Hashem and an acknowledgement of His profound kindness should inspire a person to desire closeness to Him. As a result, after reflecting on the infinite greatness of Hashem, a person should prostrate himself with feelings of awe and reverence.

We learn from the severity attributed to the characters of Ammon and Moav the importance of feeling gratitude towards our benefactors and acting accordingly. A lack of *hakoras hatov* is not merely a minor flaw; it indicates a significant deficiency in one's fundamental spiritual character, which can lead to a lifelong ban from marrying into the Jewish people. May we internalise this lesson, recognising the kindness others have shown us and acknowledging the immense and ongoing kindness we continuously receive from Hashem.