

Hakarat HaTov, showing and expressing gratitude to people is a fundamental concept of Judaism. The Torah is replete with such examples; eg- by the first plague in Egypt, Aharon was designated to strike the River and not Moshe. Rashi states that since the River had protected the infant Moshe when his mother placed him upon it, it would have been wrong for him to inflict a plague upon it. If the Torah considers it wrong to show ingratitude to an inanimate river, surely one must be zealous never to slight a human being. How much more so must we express gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch-Hu.

There is an interesting Midrash Tanchuma (at the end of Sefer Bamidbar), which deals with Korach and attitude towards gifts that we receive from HaShem. Rav Soloveitchik noted that a Midrash Tanchuma should never be understood merely on the literal level but must be analyzed to find a deeper level of comprehension. The Midrash states that there were two exceptionally **wise** men, two exceptionally **strong** men and two exceptionally **wealthy** men who came to this world. In each case one of the two came forth from Israel and one came from the nations of the world. And the common denominator of all six is that they were all destroyed and they all met a terrible death at the end. *****

The **wise** man from Israel was **Achitofel**, and his counterpart from the nations of the world was **Bilaam**. The **strong** man from Israel was **Shimshon** and his counterpart was **Goliath**. The **wealthy** man from Israel was **Korach** and his counterpart was **Haman**. The Midrash then proceeds to ask why these people's lives met such terrible endings. The Midrash answers, because they did not appreciate the tremendous gift that HaShem had granted them and did not acknowledge HaShem as the source of their exceptional greatness.*****

Most people realize that Chachma [wisdom] and Gevura [strength] are gifts-that's just the way you were born. The one thing that people may not look at as a gift is Osher-wealth. If a person becomes wealthier than his neighbor, has a better job, he tends to attribute it to the fact that he was more capable, wiser, or a better businessman. The Midrash tells us otherwise.

If a person thinks, it's because of **his** wisdom, or his intelligence, that enabled him to accumulate his fortune, and **his physical or emotional** strength that made him successful, it then follows that he believes everything he owns is **his**; such a person is doomed for failure. If he realizes that these successes are truly gifts of HaShem, then his attitude and his actions will be different and so will his fate.

A **well known** physician in Chicago who was gifted with an unusual talent of diagnosing internal ailments had literally saved or extended the life of thousands of patients. He decided to retire at an early age. His Rabbi tried to convince him that G-d gave him this talent to save lives, and continue doing so for as long as possible. Perhaps curtail your practice and work shorter hours, but don't retire completely. The doctor didn't listen. He enjoyed his life on the golf-course, but died in less than six months after retirement.

Shabbat Shalom- from Brooklyn NY .Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

