Jewish Tribune – Ki Sisa

**Greatness in Gratitude**

The Artscroll biography of Rav Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg relates how Rav Scheinberg had a close relationship with his students, and with their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well.

Reb Avrohom Ginzberg, father of Rav Aryeh Zev Ginsburg, rav of the Chofetz Chaim Torah Centre in Cedarhurst, New York, was a talmid of Rav Scheinberg from the early days when he was the mashgiach in Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim.

Rav Scheinberg always felt a special sense of gratitude toward the Ginzberg family, as the Ginzberg Bakery in Bensonhurst provided cake and bread for the Yeshiva Torah Ore during its early years.

When Aryeh Zev went to learn in yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael, he was chosen by his friends to ask Rav Scheinberg a question one Friday afternoon. He came to his home and asked him the question and after receiving an answer, he sent regards from his father.

When he informed Rav Scheinberg who his father was, Rav Scheinberg responded that Aryeh Zev had to stay for Shabbos. The rebbetzen even took Aryeh Zev’s watch as collateral, to make sure that he would return for Shabbos after going back to his dormitory to get dressed.

For the next 35 years, Rav Aryeh Zev Ginzberg continued to maintain a close relationship with Rav Scheinberg.

Rav Aryeh Zev always wondered why Rav Scheinberg maintained such a close relationship with all his students’ children and grandchildren.

The answer was revealed to him in a beautiful insight that Rav Scheinberg himself shared on this week’s sedrah.

Forty days after Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai, Klal Yisroel sinned with the golden calf. HKBH instructed Moishe Rabbeinu:

לֶךְ רֵד כִּי שִׁחֵת עַמְּךָ

Go, descend, for your people has become corrupt (Shemos 32,7)

Rashi comments that Hashem told Moshe to descend from his greatness, because he was only elevated because of the Jews he was leading.

Rav Scheinberg explained that even though Moshe had not slipped, because his students had faltered, by definition, he had become diminished.

Rav Scheinberg continued, “A Rebbi must show hakoras hatov to the talmidim, as his greatness is due, in a large part, to them.”

And the converse is certainly true.

The gratitude a talmid must have for a Rebbe is immeasurable.

Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl once sent a cheque as a wedding gift to a talmid who had recently married. The cheque was for $500. Noting the very large sum large, the חתן thought that there may have been a mistake. Maybe it should have been $5 or $50. He went back to his illustrious Rebbe to clarify.

Rav Moshe told him there was no mistake. The חתן was a grandson of Rav Moshe’s own Rebbe, Rav Pesach Pruskin. Rav Moshe who had learned under Rav Pruskin in Slutzk and explained to the חתן that the debt he had to his former Rebbe was immeasurable and if he could have afforded to, he would have given much more.

So, there should be a reciprocal feeling of gratitude. A Rebbe to his talmidim, because his greatness is due in large part to them. And this extends to the children, grandchildren of the talmid. And the talmid’s gratitude to his Rebbe should know no bounds.

This reciprocal feeling is true in other relationships too. A husband and a wife, a parent and a child, siblings, co-workers. In some way, much is received, and much is achieved because of the other person in the relationship.

To a large degree, we are who we are because of so many other people. It is a strength to recognise that, and it is right to show gratitude because of it. And it is greatness to extend that gratitude far beyond those people themselves and to their children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren.

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