

Shabbat Hodu – Thanksgiving 5775

Developing an Attitude of Gratitude

In the future, all sacrifices will be abolished except for the thanksgiving-offering. All prayers will be abolished except for prayers of gratitude - Leviticus Rabbah

Who is rich? Those who rejoice in their own portion
- Pirke Avot

נְשִׁמַת חַיֵּי תְּבָרָךְ
וְקָרַב לְבִי יִשִּׁיר:

כָּל עוֹד נְשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי
מוֹדָה/מוֹדָה אֲנִי.

Morning Blessing, by Marcia Falk

*The breath of my life
will bless,*

*the cells of my being
sing*

*in gratitude,
reawakening.*

The attribute of gratitude is reflected in his name, his identity, and shapes our essential character- Yehudi.

What does a good guest say? "How much trouble my host has taken [for me]! How much meat he set before me! How much wine he set before me! How many cakes he has set before me! And all the trouble he has taken was only for my sake!" But what does a bad guest say? "How much, after all, has my host put himself out? I have eaten one piece of bread, I have eaten one slice of meat, I have drunk one cup of wine! All the trouble my host has taken was only for the sake of his wife and his children. *Berachot 58a*

The Thanksgiving Offering

Our Rabbis teach us that a key aspect of the experience of bringing the Korbon Todah (thanks-offering) is the social component. When one brought a thanksgiving sacrifice after being saved from a life threatening event, he was required to bring forty loaves of bread in four different forms as well. One of each kind was given to the Kohen, leaving 36 loaves which had to be consumed that day and the following night. The medieval classic commentator on the Torah, the Sforno, explains that this was to ensure that at the time that one expressed gratitude for his good fortune, one had no choice but to make this a social event. Included in this occasion was sharing one's food while recounting to others the story of the life- saving incident

<http://huc.edu/ckimages/files/Kalsman/Pelcovitz,%20D%20-%20GRATITUDE%20%20chapter%20from%20Pelcovitz%20and%20Pelcovitz.pdf>

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter once noticed that a fancy restaurant was charging a huge price for a cup of coffee. He approached the owner and asked why the coffee was so expensive. After all, some hot water, a few coffee beans and a spoonful of sugar could not amount to more than a few cents. The owner replied: "It is correct that for a few cents you could have coffee in your own home. But here in the restaurant, we provide exquisite decor, soft background music, professional waiters, and the finest china to serve your cup of coffee." Rabbi Salanter's face lit up. "Oh, thank you very much! I now understand the blessing of Shehakol – 'All was created by His word' – which we recite before drinking water. You see, until now, when I recited this blessing, I had in mind only that I am thanking the Creator for the water that He created. Now I understand the blessing much better. 'All' includes not merely the water, but also the fresh air that we breathe while drinking the water, the beautiful world around us, the music of the birds that entertain us and exalt our spirits, each with its different voice, the charming flowers with their splendid colors and marvelous hues, the fresh breeze – for all this we have to thank God when drinking our water!"

Morning Blessings (from Ritualwell.com)

*Awareness returns before the sun does,
much too soon.
But for some, it does not.
I reach out my arms, legs and
arch my back
and creak
and crack.
But some cannot.
Pulling away the blanket, I wince
at this cold room.
But some have no choice.
And I temper the chill with a hot shower.*

*But some must wait for help.
Once I've pulled on
and stuffed in
and tied up
All the things for this day,
I walk outside into a morning cold
few experience.
But some know all too well.
The sky is more clear at this hour,
and crisper
than at the previous day's end.*

*There are
so
many
stars,
And so
many
wonders.
But down here,
I count sounds on my fingers.
And some never notice.
As the frozen leaves crunch
under my feet,
I see
so very far away,
over the eastern mountains,
Venus pulling up
the Sun.
And so easily I could not.*

Michael Seidel



Thanksgiving and Gratitude

Modeh Ani I am grateful to You, living, enduring Sovereign, for restoring my soul to me in compassion. You are faithful beyond measure	מודה אני לפניך, מלך חי וקים, שהחזרת בי נשמתִי בחמלה, רבה אמונתך.	(1)
Comment by R. Hammer: I am grateful. To wake in the morning is to be reborn. Nothing is to be taken for granted, certainly not life itself. The first word of prayer, is perhaps the most important מודה, I am thankful. The essence of prayer is the grateful acknowledgment of the gifts we have been given. (<i>Or Hadash</i>)		(2)
Modeh/ah Ani is said first thing in the morning. It implies that the simple act of waking up is cause for thanking God. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Does this idea resonate with you? Why or why not?		
From Nishmat Kol Hai Could song fill our mouth as water fills the sea And could joy flood our tongue like countless waves- Could our lips utter praise as limitless as the sky And could our eyes match the splendor of the sun- Could we soar with arms like an eagle’s wings And run with gentle grace as the swiftest deer- Never could we fully state our gratitude to you Our God and the God of our ancestors.	נשמת כל חי ואֵלֹו כִּינוּ מֵלֵא שִׁירָה כִּים, וְלִשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה כְּהֶמּוֹן גִּלְיוֹ, וְשִׁפְתוֹתֵינוּ שִׁבַּח כְּמִרְחֵבִי רִקְיעַ, וְעֵינֵינוּ מְאִירוֹת כְּשֶׁמֶשׁ וְכִיָּרֵחַ, וְיָדֵינוּ פְּרוּשׁוֹת כְּנִשְׂרֵי שָׁמַיִם, וְרַגְלֵינוּ קִלּוֹת כְּאַיִלוֹת, אֵין אֲנַחְנוּ מִסְפִּיקִים לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ	(3)
This poetic passage describes the extent of our gratitude to God. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Why does the text use these images?What occasions cause us to feel extreme gratitude?		
Talmud Bavli Brakhot 35b Rabbi Haninia Bar Papa said: Anyone who enjoys anything from this world without a blessing, it is as if they have stolen from God and the community of Israel.	תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף לה:ב אמר רבי חנינא בר פפא: כל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה כאילו גוזל להקדוש ברוך הוא וכנסת ישראל	(4)
Tosefta Brachot 4:1 One should not taste anything until s/he has blessed as it says: “The Earth, and all it contains, is God’s”	תוספתא מסכת ברכות (ליברמן) פרק ד: א לא יטעום אדם כלום עד שיברך שנ' לה' הארץ ומלואה	(5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">According to these two texts, why must we say blessings before enjoying?What can we do to cultivate our personal sense of appreciation for that which we enjoy?		

<p>Talmud Bavli Brakhot 58a</p> <p>Ben Zoma saw many people on the steps of the Temple mount. He said: "Blessed is One who knows secrets, and blessed is the One who created all these to serve me."</p> <p>He would say: "How many labors did primordial Adam have to work at until he found bread to eat?! He plowed, planted, harvested and stacked the sheaves. He threshed, winnowed, sorted, ground, and sifted, kneaded, baked and after all this he ate. And I wake up and find all these done before me.</p> <p>"And how many labors did primordial Adam have to work at until he found clothes to wear?! He sheared, cleaned, combed, spun, weaved, and then he had clothing to wear. And I wake up and find all these prepared for me."</p>	<p>(6) תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף נח עמוד א</p> <p>בן זומא ראה אוכלוסא על גב מעלה בהר הבית, אמר: ברוך חכם הרזים, וברוך שברא כל אלו לשמשני.</p> <p>הוא היה אומר: כמה יגיעות יגע אדם הראשון עד שמצא פת לאכול: חרש, וזרע, וקצר, ועמר, ודש, וזרה, וברר, וטחן, והרקיד, ולש, ואפה, ואחר כך אכל, ואני משכים ומוצא כל אלו מתוקנין לפני.</p> <p>וכמה יגיעות יגע אדם הראשון עד שמצא בגד ללבוש: גזז ולבן ונפץ וטוה וארג, ואחר כך מצא בגד ללבוש, ואני משכים ומוצא כל אלה מתוקנים לפני.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To whom is Ben Zoma grateful? How does this compare to sources 1-5? • How often do you think of the types of labor that are required for your food or clothing? • What processes and people are involved in production of food, clothing, or other items that we use daily? 	
<p>From Birkat Hamazon</p> <p>We thank You, Lord our God, for the pleasing, good and spacious land which you gave to our ancestors and for liberating us from Egyptian bondage. We thank You for the covenant sealed in our flesh, for teaching us Your Torah and Your precepts, for the gift of life and compassion graciously granted us, for the food we have eaten, for the nourishment You provide us all of our days, whatever the season, whatever the time.</p>	<p>(7) ברכת המזון</p> <p>נודה לך, ה' אלקינו, על שהנחלת לאבותינו ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה, ועל שהוצאתנו, ה' אלקינו, מארץ מצרים, ופדיתנו מבית עבדים, ועל בריתך שחתמת בבשרנו, ועל תורתך שלמדתנו, ועל חקיך שהודעתנו, ועל חיים חן וחסד שחוננתנו, ועל אכילת מזון שאתה זן ומפרנס אותנו תמיד, בכל יום ובכל עת ובכל שעה.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are we thanking God for in this paragraph? • What is the connection between this paragraph and eating? Why is this part of <i>birkat hamazon</i>? • What are you grateful for? • How do you express your gratitude to God? To others? 	

by Rabbi Ashira Kongisburg
for the Rabbinical Assembly
Thanksgiving 5772

Quotations on Gratitude

The following are quotations from a variety of sources on the subject of gratitude. Their wisdom is another reason to give thanks. Consider attaching a quotation on thankfulness to each person's place card around your Thanksgiving holiday table. You can invite people to share their quotes and/or to experience the holiday through the prism of their randomly selected quotation.

When a person doesn't have gratitude, something is missing in his or her humanity. A person can almost be defined by his or her attitude toward gratitude. –Elie Weisel

Ben Zoma was once in a [crushing] crowd on the steps of the Temple mount. He said: "Blessed is the One who discerns secrets, and blessed is the One who has created all these people to serve me." For, he also used to say, "What labors did Adam have to carry out before he obtained bread to eat? He ploughed. He sowed. He reaped. He bound the sheaves, threshed the grain, winnowed the chaff, selected the ears, ground them, sifted the flour, kneaded the dough, and baked it. Only then was he able to eat. But I get up and find that all these things have already been done for me. Similarly, how many labors did Adam have to carry out before he obtained a garment to wear? He had to shear the sheep, wash the wool, comb it, spin it, and weave it. All I have to do is get up and find these things done for me. All kinds of artisans come early to the door of my house, and I rise in the morning and find all these before me." – Talmud Berachot 58a.

Ben Zoma used to say, "What does a good guest say? "How much trouble my host has taken for me! How much meat he has set before me! How much wine he has set before me! How many cakes he has set before me! And all the trouble has taken was only for my sake!" -- Talmud Berachot 58a.

One who crosses the ocean and is rescued from a shipwreck gives thanks to God. Should we not thank God if we cross without a mishap? One who is cured of a dangerous illness offers praise to God. Should we not praise God when God grants health and preserves us from illness? –The Radziminer Rebbe

Two kinds of gratitude: The sudden kind we feel for what we take; the larger kind we feel for what we give. – Edwin Arlington Robinson

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us. – Albert Schweitzer

It's a sign of mediocrity when you demonstrate gratitude with moderation. –Roberto Benigni

My grandmother would ask me, whenever someone complained. "Sister, did you hear what Brother So-and-So or Sister Much-to-Do complained about?" I would nod. "Sister, there are people who went to sleep all over the world last night, poor and rich and white and black, but they will never wake again. Sister, those who expected to rise did not, their beds became their cooling boards and their blankets became their winding sheets. And those dead folks would give anything, anything at all, for just five minutes of this weather or ten minutes of that [work] that person was grumbling about. So, watch yourself about complaining, Sister. What you're supposed to do when you don't like a thing is change it. And if you can't change it, change the way you think about it." –Maya Angelou.

Don't grumble. It may lead to other sins. –Derech Eretz Zuta

Although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty. – Edward Winslow writing about the first American Thanksgiving, December 11, 1621

The prohibition against ingratitude applies not just to personal kindnesses, but to intellectual influences. Thus the Gaon of Vilna counsels, "If you find something worthwhile in a book written by another, don't ridicule parts of the book with which you disagree." – Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

Blessed are those who can give without remembering and receive without forgetting. – Unknown

Can you see the holiness in those things you take for granted--a paved road or a washing machine? If you concentrate on finding whatever is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul. – Rabbi Harold Kushner

If you can't be thankful for what you receive, be thankful for what you escape. –Unknown

Ingratitude to man is ingratitude to God. –Shmuel HaNagid

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others. –Cicero

We give thanks to You, Adonai, our God, because we are able to give thanks. –Sotah 40a

Source – Rabbi Debra Orenstein <http://www.rabbidebra.com/gratitude-quotations.html>

A Reading for the Thanksgiving Table

Today is a day of gratitude—for the blessings of health, safety, friends and family, and for the abundance before us. In many American homes it is customary to say words of blessing and thanks before eating the Thanksgiving meal. As Jews, gratitude is embedded in our tradition. In *Birkat Hamazon*—the blessing after meals—we acknowledge that God sustains the entire world with goodness, and gives food to all creatures.

We express our appreciation for the food we have eaten today that nourishes and sustains us, and for the land on which it is grown:

V'achalta v'savata uverachta et Adonai Elohecha al ha'aretz hatova asher natan lach.

When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall praise Adonai your God for the good land God has given you.

—DEUTERONOMY 8:10

But even as our gratitude overflows, our hearts are heavy with the knowledge that more than one billion people today cannot access these blessings. We live in a world in which more than one in seven people are severely undernourished, a world in which hunger claims 25,000 lives daily.

Let us hasten a day without hunger by remembering, at this Thanksgiving meal and every time we sit down to eat, that gratitude should always be a motivational emotion, driving us to pursue a better world for others. We may add our own prayer that we will do our part to build a world without hunger, ensuring that *all* people have the gifts that we celebrate today—fullness and gratitude for our many blessings.

Statistics: United Nations World Food Programme. Hunger Statistics. 3 May 2011. <http://www.wfp.org/hunger/stats>



American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is an international development organization motivated by Judaism's imperative to pursue justice. AJWS is dedicated to alleviating poverty, hunger and disease among the people of the developing world regardless of race, religion or nationality. Through grants to grassroots organizations, volunteer service, advocacy and education, AJWS fosters civil society, sustainable development and human rights for all people, while promoting the values and responsibilities of global citizenship within the Jewish community.

A Thanksgiving Prayer

By Rabbi Naomi Levy

For the laughter of the children,
For my own life breath,
For the abundance of food on this table,
For the ones who prepared this sumptuous feast,
For the roof over our heads,
The clothes on our backs,
For our health,
And our wealth of blessings,
For this opportunity to celebrate with family and friends,
For the freedom to pray these words
Without fear,
In any language,
In any faith,
In this great country,
Whose landscape is as vast and beautiful as her inhabitants.
Thank You, God, for giving us all these. Amen.

*From TALKING TO GOD: Personal Prayers for Times of Joy,
Sadness, Struggle, and Celebration (Alfred A. Knopf, New York)*