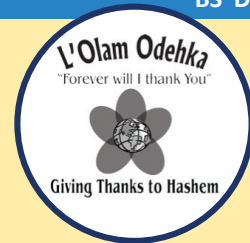


KOL TODA

Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem



INSTEAD OF CRYING, SAY "THANK YOU"!

After the Spies scouted the Holy Land and returned with their evil report, the assembly began crying: "...If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this Wilderness" (*Bamidbar* 14:2). The *Gemara* (*Ta'anis* 29a; *Sanhedrin* 104b) notes a chilling result of these cries: "Hashem said: 'You cried for naught, and I will prepare tears for you for generations.'"

This passage begs for explanation. How can Hashem have meted out such a severe punishment for unnecessary crying? Even the generation that cried was punished for forty years only, one year for every day that the Spies toured the Land. Why, then, were their future descendants being punished as well? What warranted this unique severity of punishment?

Hashem, Benevolent and Loving, does not punish for the sake of punishing. A punishment as found in the Torah is one that rectifies and teaches, one that changes the root of the sin and corrects it.

Indeed, the nation of the Wilderness displayed a lack of *emuna*, faith in Hashem. Despite having heard so much about the greatness of *Eretz Yisrael*, despite having seen all of Hashem's kindnesses and miracles when leaving Egypt and then witnessing the Splitting of the Red Sea, despite the miraculous gifts of the *mann* and the water well, and the protective Clouds of Glory, and despite witnessing Hashem's Revelation at Sinai, they still had complaints, and not only once: "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the Wilderness? What is this that you have done to us to take us out of Egypt?" (*Shemos* 14:11); "...

and the people complained against Moshe, and they said, 'Why have you brought us up from Egypt to make me and my children and my livestock die of thirst?' (*Shemos* 17:3); and more. This pattern indicated a lack of *emuna* and displayed the negative trait of ingratitude, and it needed to be uprooted. It had to be uprooted from the national psyche and a new thought pattern had to be learned in its stead. Therefore, Hashem established the "Crying for Generations."

For many generations we would find that Hashem is hidden from us. We no longer saw the open display of miracles that we

did in the Wilderness and we would suffer many trials and tribulations, personally and nationally. Now it became a challenge to recognize that it is Hashem behind the curtain holding all the strings, orchestrating everything. Now we had to learn through our difficulties, to recognize Hashem and be grateful to Him for all the kindnesses that He did for us and does for us.

People today suffer real difficulties in their lives; disease, strife, finances, and children all pose very real challenges. It is no doubt that these difficulties are Hashem's exact prescription for correcting those purposeless tears. They provide us a chance to look around and see the myriads of little kindnesses that Hashem continually shows us along the way. They are opportunities to learn not to complain or get angry, rather to be grateful for all of His



kindnesses. By recognizing all of Hashem's clear kindnesses, we can fully internalize that also the difficulties He sends us are really for our benefit, a manifestation of His Love and Goodness. We can internalize that everything in the world was and is done for our benefit, and thus correct the tears shed in the Wilderness for no reason.

With new *emuna*, through recognizing Hashem's Goodness and by expressing our gratitude to Him, may we merit to correct the Sin of the Generation of the Wilderness and see the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* speedily in our days, *Amen*.

A BOOK OF THANKS

A well-known Rosh Kollel once came to pour out his tales of woe before Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *ztz"l*. He was suffering from anxiety over the financial situation of his *kollel* and was on the verge of suffering a major nervous breakdown. A psychologist whom he had consulted with told him that he could no longer go on like that, for if he did, he could suffer major psychological damage. "Should I listen to the psychologist?" asked the Rosh Kollel.

"How many years are you heading this *kollel*?" asked Rabbi Shlomo Zalman.

"I've been running it for twenty-five years," said the Rosh Kollel.

"Were there ever times that were more difficult than now?" asked the rav.

"Yes, there were."

"And Hashem helped you in the end, right?"

"Yes, *baruch Hashem*, always. But every month, until Hashem sent the *yeshua*, it was the same anxiety and worry."

"So you see that in the end Hashem always helps and He is the one running the show, so why worry?"

The Rosh Kollel stood speechless and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman continued with personal words of encouragement. "My dear," he said, "you are not the only one suffering this kind of stress. This is the same burden that weighs on the shoulders of every administrator of every *yeshiva*, on every business owner, and on fathers marrying off their children. The answer to all these worries is to have complete *bitachon*, absolute trust, in Hashem. How can you come to this? By acknowledging and thanking Hashem. Let me tell you exactly:

"Keep a small notepad in your pocket. Every time that you see something that suddenly comes through, a *yeshua* of some sort – write it down in your notepad. Then, every day before reciting the blessing of *Modim* in the *Shemoneh Esrei*, pull out your notepad and look at the things that you wrote so you can consciously thank Hashem for them as you say the prayer. If you do this, I am sure that all your worries will subside."

From "Chochmas HaNefesh HaYehudi B'Darko shel HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *ztz"l*"

Numerous stories of *yeshuos* have reached us from people who have taken upon themselves to keep a "Diary of Thanks." In this notebook, they keep an ongoing log of their thanks to Hashem for the kindnesses that He shows them, even for that which at first may seem "bad."

It is advisable to write down our thanks to Hashem every day for at least two of His kindnesses, past or present, and to express them to Hashem out loud. Whenever we want, and especially in times of difficulty, we can additionally refer to our notebook to remember Hashem's kindnesses, to feel His love, and to again express our gratefulness. This is a known *segula* for meriting *yeshuos*, and a powerful way to come closer to Hashem. Try it!

A WORD OF GRATITUDE

"Arise, cry out in the night..." (*Eicha* 2:19). It is written in *Tanna D'bei Eliyahu* (Chapter 18): "'Cry out [*roni*]' connotes thankfulness for sufferings. One performed the deeds that he did and suffering comes upon him for his benefit, to cleanse him [of his sins]. [Therefore,] one should stand in the middle of the night to bless, praise, exalt, and sanctify the Name of He Who created the world, Blessed is He, as it says in *Tehillim* (119:62): 'At midnight, I rise to give thanks to You for Your righteous judgments.' Is there a man in the world who wants evil for his son?"

FROM EXILE TO REDEMPTION – IN THE MERIT OF GIVING THANKS

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

Two years have passed already but the memory of the miracle and my gratitude to Hashem have not dulled for a moment.

For the last twenty years we have been living in *Eretz Yisrael*, in the Southern town of Netivot. For the first seventeen and a half years we rented a beautiful, comfortable apartment where we enjoyed living. One day, we suddenly were presented with an eviction notice. Within a short time we had to vacate the apartment. This came to us as a shock. We didn't even have enough time to lament the sudden eviction notice and promptly found another apartment that, *baruch Hashem*, was nearby and had similar features. We quickly packed up and moved there.

We couldn't understand it – why were we suddenly exiled from our home? But we decided to accept it with love from Hashem and we decided to start thanking Hashem even for this, because although we could not see how, it was surely for our benefit.

Our new place was basically in cartons, and the children spent days looking for their stuff in the different boxes. Everyone was upset over the move but we were adamant to remember that also the *Shechina* is in exile and so is the entire Jewish nation. We raised our eyes in prayer for our own personal redemption, as well as for the *geula* of the entire nation as a whole.

Slowly we began to settle into our new apartment. At first the *yetzer hara* tried to remind us how nice it was in our old place and how it was a shame we had to leave, but we kept strengthening ourselves and reminding each other that everything is for the good, and that this challenge was sent to us from Hashem's benevolent, loving Hand. After a few weeks we were, *baruch Hashem*, completely acclimated to our new place and memories of our old apartment took up less space in our thoughts.

Months passed. It was summer time and the air was suddenly filled with dread. Sirens went off incessantly, blaring to residents to go into shelter. Our tranquil town of Netivot had suddenly become a war zone. Missile after missile fell. The children began to wail every time the sirens sounded and the panicky adults could not calm them. We were forced to learn to live with the sirens and each time we raced to the shelters.

One day, a few minutes after the siren went off, we heard the explosion. It was very close. In the stairwell, people were talking of a missile that had fallen on an apartment. A few minutes later we realized the extent of the miracle – the missile had fallen on our old apartment!

Words could not express the depth of our gratitude! Hashem did not want the missile to fall on us, so He arranged a strange sequence of events so that we would have to leave that apartment a few months before. And even if we had been living there and the missile had fallen when we were not home – that would have been a great miracle in itself, but Hashem

even before we see how good it really is, for good is what it is and what it will be, may we all merit to see it with our eyes.

In these days of *galus*, exile, we must take this point to heart. When we thank Hashem with the belief that everything is for the best - even when things don't go as we want, and even when life turns in a totally different direction from what we planned - we build another stone for the *Beis HaMikdash* and bring closer the Final Redemption.

Rabbi Nosson of Nemirov writes in his *sefer "Likutei Halachos"*: "Indeed, if everyone would heed the call of the righteous *tzaddikim* and walk in the path



did not want any of our belongings to be damaged either.

Suddenly the move and all the frustration came back to us. We remembered all the pain of having to pack up seventeen and a half years and move, and how we knew to trust in Hashem and thank Him regardless. Now we were privileged to see how right we had been.

We decided to learn from this story a lesson – to thank Hashem also for that which is difficult, to have faith and trust in Him and know that everything is for the good. Our Father is Compassionate and Gracious and always does what is best for us, even if we don't understand it at the time. Let us thank Hashem with joy, even for things that don't look so good,

of gratitude, having faith in Hashem, Blessed be He, and believe that all is for the good; if we praise and thank Hashem always, whether for good or for 'bad,' as it says (*Tehillim* 56:11), 'When God [acts in justice] I will praise His Word, when Hashem [acts in mercy] I will praise His Word', then surely all the suffering and exiles will be annulled, and the Final Redemption will be upon us." May we all merit it speedily.

If you would like to publicize your own personal story about giving thanks to Hashem and to mechazek et harabbim, please send it with your name and phone number to Email: KolToda.Eng@gmail.com, or Fax: 02-580-8137.

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Take upon yourself at least one minute per day to thank Hashem & give in a name for *tefilla*: 04-678-1947 or 02-580-8137

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