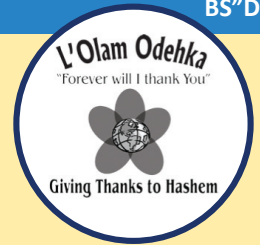


KOL TODA

Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem



THANKFULNESS AND ADMISSION – TWO BRANCHES OF THE SAME TREE

Now is Elul, the month of *teshuvah*, repentance and returning to Hashem. As we all know, one of the main steps in the process of *teshuvah* is “*vidui*.” *Vidui* is essentially an admission to Hashem of a sin we committed. Here we would like to speak of the wonderful connection between “*hodaya*” and “*hoda’ah*” - thanksgiving and admission - and *vidui* and *teshuvah*.

In Hebrew, words are based on roots, foundations of consonant letters. Words that stem from a common root carry the same or a related meaning. We see that the words “*hodaya*,” thanksgiving, and “*hoda’ah*,” confession or admission, both stem from the same Hebrew root.

The *Midrash (Bereshis Rabba 71:5)* writes: “Leah [*Immenu*] took hold of the spindle of *hodaya*, thanksgiving, therefore she mothered masters of *hodaya*: Yehuda, who said, ‘She is right, it is from me... (*Bereshis 38:26*)’; King David, who said, ‘Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good, for His kindness is eternal (*Tehillim 107:1*)’; and Daniel, who said, ‘To You, O God of my forefathers, I give thanks and praise... (*Daniel 2:23*)’.”

The connection in this quote seems unrelated. How is the thanksgiving (*hodaya*) of Leah *Immenu*, King David, and Daniel, which is expressed in song and praise to Hashem, may He be blessed, related to Yehuda’s admittance (*hoda’ah*) of the incident with Tamar? How is gratitude to Hashem connected to admitting one’s wrongdoings?

The *gaon* Rav Yitzchak Hutner, *ztz”l*, in “*Pachad Yitzchak*” (Chanukah, essay 2, chapter 3) writes: “The word ‘*hoda’ah*’ can express two different concepts: one, an expression of *hakaras hatov*, gratitude, for a kindness done; the second, admitting the truth of a ‘judgment’. Yet, the two concepts are in fact complementary.

“Man, because of his basic nature and the traits of his *nefesh*,” explains Rav Hutner, “aspires to sit at the table independently, without needing assistance from anyone.” Indeed, even before a child learns how to speak, he will try at times to assert his independence, wanting to do things on his own.

“Yet, when a person is grateful to a friend and thanks him, he is admitting, in essence, the ‘judgment’ that this time he wasn’t able to do something alone and needed to use his friend’s kindness. And all the more so in matters between man and Hashem... When one gives thanks to Hashem, he is in essence admitting that he has obtained

nothing by himself.”

Expressing one’s gratefulness thus forces a person to admit that he himself did not have whatever he needed, and had to receive something from outside of himself. By acknowledging another’s kindness to him, he is in essence admitting his own shortcomings that prevented him from reaching that completeness alone.

“Thus,” Rav Hutner continues, “in order to be grateful to a friend, one needs to overcome his nature and truly admit that his friend bestowed goodness upon him. And in order to be grateful to Hashem, he needs to overcome his nature and admit that alone he has nothing of his own - that everything he has is from Hashem.”

The *sefer Yodu LaHashem Chasdo* (by Rav Nachman Fish) also illuminates a wonderful connection between the two concepts of *hoda’ah*, and *vidui* and *teshuvah*. When a person acknowledges his wrongdoings and confesses and returns to Hashem, it brings him to give thanks to Hashem, may He be blessed, for everything he is undergoing.

As he contemplates each of life’s trials, he remembers that his pain and difficulty are a reminder to come back to Hashem, *lachzor b’teshuvah*, and to repent before Him. When something difficult comes upon us, *chas v’chalila*, it is meant to arouse us to search our actions and see what Hashem is hinting to us so we will correct, confess, and regret our wrongdoings and wholeheartedly return to Hashem.

In contemplating our actions, we come to acknowledge the truth of Hashem’s judgments and recognize the kindness of His ways. Thus we are grateful and give thanks to Hashem for sending us that wakeup call, the reminder, the hint that served as an impetus to find the right direction and make the correction, so as not to remain

wallowing in sin, forever treading the wrong path, and distancing ourselves from Hashem.

This is the power of *hoda’ah*, admission and thanksgiving - connecting a person with his Creator. Everything one sees and everything that comes upon him is to strengthen him more and more in his *emuna*, faith, in Hashem, and to strengthen him to increasingly thank and praise his Creator.

May it be Hashem’s Will that we merit with happiness and *emuna* to thank Him and acknowledge and confess before Him, and may Hashem *Yisbarach* accept our complete *teshuvah* before Him.



A WORD OF GRATITUDE

Rabbenu Yona writes: “If a person finds himself in sorrow and acknowledges the justice of the judgment and accepts it with love, this will be a shield for him against many other sufferings he would have deserved, as it says (*Tehillim 76:13*), “For the rage of man will thank You; You will restrain the remnant of wrath.” When one thanks Hashem while still in pain, the remainder of wrath will not be unleashed upon him.” (*Shaarei Teshuvah*, Chapter 4:10)

SALVATION IN PREPARATION/ A FABLE

"Help! Help!" the shout echoed from the hollows of a cave. One of the king's closest confidants, while out on a journey, had entered into a dark cave and lost his way out. "Help!" he called, but nobody was there to hear his calls.

Suddenly, he heard sounds. A trumpet, horses' feet, galloping – the king's convoy was passing by. "Help!" he again started shouting. Perhaps the other servants or even the king himself would hear him and come to save him! "Help me!"

The king heard his cries and recognized the voice of his faithful servant. "It is my servant in the cave here!" he told the others. "Make sure to guard all the entrances. Close off all the passages into the cave and send him food and drink only through this small

changes, stuck. It may even feel that we have been forsaken, God forbid.

Could it be, however, that at this precise moment Hashem is preparing for us a great and royal welcome – the most prayed-for and anticipated salvation? Could the *shidduch* be almost there, or the cure at one's doorstep? And perhaps this dark cave we are stuck in is really a means of saving us, a place where our enemies won't vanquish us?

If we realized that Hashem is truly working just now to craft the greatest and most wonderful salvation for us as a nation, and for each person in particular, would we still feel stuck, still feel despair?

Now, imagine if you knew that your best friend was working at just this moment to make you the most wonderful surprise party, simply in expression of his love for you – would you be angry that he was keeping you "in the dark"? Would you not feel special appreciation for his loving efforts and thoughtfulness and thank him? Of course we would.

All the more so, for the King of kings, for His great Goodness and Kindness. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* "neither slumbers nor sleeps – the Guardian of *Yisrael* (*Tehillim* 121:4)." Hashem does not forsake us for even a moment. He is always working tirelessly on our behalf to give us the greatest good. What seems like darkness is really Hashem's goodness, while He is preparing for us our *yeshua*. How can we not praise Him and thank Him while He is

preparing for us a great salvation?

Let us not be ungrateful. Let's not wait until we first see the salvation, to thank Hashem. Let us be grateful and thank Him now, while the salvation is in the making, still undeveloped.

"Thank you Hashem for the periodic times that are difficult for me, because only in this way can I fully appreciate the good, for only after being in darkness is it possible to appreciate the light." (Tefilla Toda)

Let us fill our lips with songs of praise to Hashem, for He is preparing the best for us, although it is still dark outside – for morning will always follow the night.

May we soon merit to thank Hashem for revealing His ultimate good, the Final Redemption, the *geula shleima*, Amen.

Tzaddikim Give Thanks to Hashem

One time, the holy Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonne, *ztz"l*, came to visit his rebbe, the holy Baal Shem Tov, *ztz"l*. He was in the *beis midrash* when he noticed a young man walking back and forth, seemingly unaware of his surroundings. Rabbi Yaakov Yosef went up to the man and asked him, "Where are you from?"

The young man waved his hands, as if saying, "In a minute!" So Rabbi Yaakov Yosef waited a little and came back again to ask him. Again the man responded with the same hand gestures. This went on a few more times, until the young man stopped his meditations and asked Rabbi Yaakov Yosef, "Why is it so important for you to know where I am from?"

And so, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef answered: "It is important because whenever two Jews meet and talk and inquire of each other's welfare, they come to like each other. Then, when they meet again, they are both happy to see one another and they praise Hashem for having merited to see each other again, saying, '*Baruch Hashem; Chasdei Hashem; Hodu LaHashem*'... from meeting a friend they come to thank and praise Hashem. This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 22:4): 'But You are holy, You await [are enthroned upon] the praises of *Yisrael*.' Hashem sits and waits and hopes for the praise and thanks of a Jew, which is very dear in His Eyes."

Just as he finished speaking to him, the young man suddenly vanished.

Rabbi Yaakov Yosef went into his rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov, and told him what happened. "The young man," said the holy Baal Shem Tov, "was Eliyahu HaNavi, may he be remembered for good. He came to hear your interpretation of 'But You are holy, You await the praises of *Yisrael*.' Now he took your interpretation and is repeating it on High, in your name...."

(*Siach Sarfei Kodesh*)

The holy rabbi Shlomo of Karlin, *ztz"l*, said that a person should always say that his situation is good, and his mouth should be full of praise and thanks to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for His kindnesses. "*Baruch Hashem*, everything is good," he would say, even if his situation was not so good yet. If a person will always give praise and thanks to Hashem and say that his situation is "good," Hashem will ensure that this is actually the case, so as not to make the person a liar, God forbid.

If a child is proud of a good benevolent father, touting his merits to all, can the father break his child's perception and act differently? Will he ever try to prove his son wrong on the matter? Of course not.

And this is how he explained the *pasuk* "... And you said, 'I will surely do you good [*heiteiv eitiv*]...' (*Bereshtis* 32:13)." If a person becomes accustomed to always say that everything is good, "and you said '*heiteiv*' – good – I will do good [*eitiv*] to you."

(*Shema Shlomo*)

hole. Make sure that he does not exit!"

The other servants did as they were told. They sealed off all the entryways. Only one small hole was left open through which they sent in food and drink to the king's confidant.

One day, the king ordered them to let his faithful servant out of the cave. They drilled a large hole and instantly the cave filled with light. The poor man finally worked his way out. When he reached the exit he was handed a letter stamped with the royal insignia: "My dearest friend," read the letter, "a terrible battle was taking place right where you were. It had been raging until this very day. My terrible foes were doing everything they could to ferret out all of my friends and kill them. I did all I could to save your life. Now, my dear friend, I can't wait to see you."

Many times we feel shut in a cave. Our situation seems to be one long stretch of darkness, no light or respite anywhere. No solution is visible. Nothing moves, nothing



TELEPHONE LINE FOR MEN

KOL TODA in Hebrew

Shiurim, daily inspiration, personal stories of *yeshuos*

03-617-1190

TELEPHONE LINE FOR WOMEN

KOL TODA

Daily inspiration, *shiurim*, personal stories of *yeshuos*, *tefilla* & *shirim*, in Hebrew, English, Yiddish & French.

To receive the number of the line for women, please call the organization at: 02-580-8137

Dedicated *l'ilui nishmos* Miriam bat Simcha a"n, Eliezer ben David a"n, Chaya bas Michel a"n & Miriam Rivka bat Gershon a"n Art: Yehoshua Wiseman - 054-844-1131

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

To receive this monthly newsletter by email for personal reading or for distributing *l'zichui harabim*, contact: KolToda.Eng@gmail.com

To dedicate a newsletter for a *yeshua*, *l'ilui nishmas* a loved one, or simply to help promote Giving Thanks to Hashem, please contact: 02-580-8137 or 02-586-2813. Graphic Design: Bina Himi 050-412-0727

