

# KOL TODA

Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem

## Fruits of Gratitude

Many have the minhag to eat fruits on Tu Bishvat and use the opportunity to express praise and gratitude to Hashem for them. The sefer Shevet Mussar (15) describes this as a praiseworthy custom adopted by virtuous people.

Toldos Yitzchak found a remarkable covert allusion to this custom in a passuk in Tehilim (122:4): "...The tribes of G-d [Hebrew: Shivtei Kah] are testimony to Yisrael, to give thanks to the name of Hashem". Shivtei Kah – the word "Kah" is numerically equivalent to the number 15, and "Shivtei" includes the same letters as the word "Shevat", alluding to the fact that the 15th of Shevat is a day designated for Yisrael to give praise to the Almighty.

Rabbi Leib Eiger zt"l of Lublin explains this custom in his sefer Toras Emes: "The benefit and pleasure that people derive from Hashem's creations and their gratitude to Him for them, cause Him great gratification, as it says in Mishlei (16): 'All that Hashem created is in order to arouse praise'. Therefore, on Tu Bishvat, when the sap starts rising in the trees, a phenomenon that will ultimately produce fruit for our consumption, the custom is to eat fruit and praise Hashem for the delightful, beneficial fruits He created. Every person must say 'the world was created for me'. He should feel that the fruits were created specifically for him and that his praise of Hashem is significant for the sustaining of the entire world. With this attitude we should eat the fruits of the tree on this day. By means of our appreciation of the munificence of Hashem, the sap receives the strength to rise and grow beautiful luscious fruits for our benefit and enjoyment – for us to once more be aroused by them to praise and thank Hashem."

The Midrash Tanchuma (Bereishis 4) brings the following remarkable idiom: "In the same manner (i.e. with the same level of enthusiasm) that a person blesses Hashem – Hashem

blesses him." How fortunate is the person who merits to be a recipient of Hashem's unreserved blessings!

People are accustomed to think that the way to invoke Heavenly blessing is through prayer. There is in fact another most powerful way of doing so: According to the extent a person feels



and expresses gratitude to Hashem he will open the gates of Divine benevolence. The more gratitude – the more blessings.

Gratitude not only opens the Heavenly gates of blessing, it also causes prayers

**We cannot imagine to what extent Hashem loves us and wishes to bestow on us unlimited blessings. All of creation was designed for this purpose! We only have to make ourselves suitable receptacles for that bountiful blessing by means of our appreciation of Him and our wholehearted, enthusiastic expressions of gratitude.**

to be accepted. The Zohar (Vayishlach) writes: "A person should thank Hashem continuously since Hashem desires the song and praise of Yisrael. One who knows how to praise Hashem fittingly, Hashem accepts his prayers and saves him from travails."

This sheds light on an obscurity regarding Birchot Hamazon. After the final blessing of Birchot Hamazon we add a list of prayers and requests. These additions are not mentioned in the Gemara, why is it such a widespread custom to include them?

The Chafetz Chayim (Parashas Ki Tavo) explains that the basis of this minhag is the fact that a prayer said after performing a mitzvah is most auspicious, for the merit of the mitzvah provides powerful impetus for the prayer to be accepted. This fact is also stated in the Tosefta in Maseches Maaser Sheni (5,14). But the question remains, how come this was instituted particularly with Birchot Hamazon and not with any other mitzvos?

According to what was said above the answer is apparent. Gratitude is a major means for invoking Heavenly blessing. After thanking Hashem for our meal, and especially after the blessing of "Hatov vehemetiv – Who is Good and does good", in which we describe Hashem's personal goodness to us, past, present and future, we have these two factors – gratitude together with the fulfillment of a mitzvah. The gates of Heaven are now open wide for our prayers to be accepted. These prayers were therefore composed to be said specifically at this highly auspicious time.

We cannot imagine to what extent Hashem loves us and wishes to bestow on us unlimited blessings – all of creation was designed for this purpose! We only have to make ourselves suitable receptacles for that bountiful blessing by means of our appreciation of Him and our wholehearted, enthusiastic expressions of gratitude. Praising and thanking Hashem for all the good we enjoy – including the delightful fruits He provides for us – is the master key to causing exceptional gratification to Hashem and opening the gates to endless Heavenly blessings.



# Our Delightful World

## A parable

Nathan stands at the entrance to the wedding hall, orchids blooming on both sides of the pathway. The grand hall he chose looks like a palace – candle-lit chandeliers setting off the marble and oak interior of the halls – exactly what he had dreamed of for his beloved son. Tonight, Nathan's only son is getting married, and for him, it could be only the best. The fanciest, most expensive party planner in the world was employed to plan the wedding of a lifetime. His guests are in for an unforgettable evening. It took months of painstaking planning, testing, trial and shopping. The food is just perfect; a chef has prepared each guest's personal preferences. Carving stations, chocolate fountains and fruits of every color and shape, cakes and pastries fill the dinner hall, everything is now ready.

Nathan is standing at the entrance, waiting expectantly to greet the guests as they come.

What does Nathan expect from all these fortunate people who received invitations? First of all, they are obviously expected to keep to the basic rules of decency and conform to the host's carefully prepared plans. They should not come and start changing around the seating arrangement or change the carefully planned backdrops and amenities! Nor should they give their personal advice to the carefully tuned and directed string quartet!

But even worse than this, is the guest who comes and greets Nathan with a cold, perfunctory, hasty mazal tov fulfilling his obligation without any hint of emotion. Was this what he had given so much for? Was this what he deserved after going into so much effort to provide for his enjoyment? Not to mention the guests who complain loudly: "The music is not to my taste" ... "I would have preferred a different dessert"! What Nathan really wants to hear from them is that his extensive effort and planning were appreciated, how much they enjoyed the celebration and what a wonderful evening it was.

We are all in a big, incredibly beautiful, perfectly planned party hall. The venue was carefully chosen, the lighting,

the scents – all designed specifically for our enjoyment and pleasure. The backdrop – foliage and fauna, sun, stars and constellations, place settings and seats, food and drink – everything is planned for our benefit and pleasure. We are most fortunate to be invited to this very exclusive event. Hashem, our generous Host, expects us to keep to the rules – we must conform to His carefully considered plan. But more than anything else, our great, incredibly benevolent Host, wants us to enjoy and appreciate all that He painstakingly prepared for us. He looks forward to our expressing gratitude and appreciation for all that He prepared for us.

We must notice and feel appreciation for all the delightful extras that He prepared for our benefit. The Tu BeShvat table arrayed with delightfully presented fruits is an excellent opportunity to do this. The range of colors,

shapes, tastes and aromas should arouse our hearts to feel immense heartfelt gratitude. Even when coming to Hashem with a request, we must approach Him with feelings of gratitude and joy with all that we have received from Him, not just complaints about what in our eyes – could be better. We mustn't allow the problems of life to cause us forget how good life really is. Every cloud doesn't just have a silver lining – the cloud is really entirely silver – bringing us

endless blessings, even when they are not immediately evident. We must feel how privileged we are to be guests of Hashem in His delightful world. We must show our appreciation by broadcasting to everyone our joy at being part of His wonderful master-plan. There is no greater expression of gratitude than this.

Rav Avraham Pam zt"l, late Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaath, used to say that the greatest appreciation a person can show when receiving a present is to show his pleasure and enjoyment with the gift.

"Show the benefactor that you are happy with what he gave you. That is the biggest 'thank you' you can say!" That is the way we should be thanking Hashem.



### "KOL TODA" PHONE LINE

Daily inspiration, shiurim, personal stories of yeshuos, tefilla & song.

#### FOR MEN

In Hebrew & English  
03-6171190

#### FOR WOMEN

In Hebrew, English, Yiddish & French  
03-6171180



### Did you get chizuk from the monthly bulletin?

Please consider making a donation to Kol Toda for ilui neshama, as a zechus for yeshua or as a way of thanking Hashem for His innumerable acts of chessed.

Eretz Yisrael 052-7108384 02-5808137

America 011-97225808137 011-972527108384

NEW

### SHA'AREI HODAYA

SHV'VEI HODAYV

New Hebrew booklet now published!

Sha'arei Hodaya will help you savor the sweetness of thanking Hashem throughout the year.

Includes chapters on the pleasure of hodaya, cultivating a sense of wonder at Hashem's kindnesses, practical hodaya and more.

Approbations by gedolei Yisrael.  
Available at distribution points throughout Israel.

For more information & orders  
please call 055-6785647