

KOL TODA



Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem

Breads of Infinite Goodness

Only on the holiday of Shavuot, when we were given the Torah, do we understand that slavery was the vehicle enabling us to receive this outstanding, phenomenal blessing.

On the holiday of Shavuot a special sacrifice is offered in the Beit Hamikdash, unlike any other. Shavuot is the only occasion when a public sacrifice of chametz - leaven bread - is offered. No other public sacrifices are permitted to be chametz, besides the Offering of the Two Breads brought on Shavuot. What lies behind this exceptional directive?

The Ramban answers this question with the following elusive words: "The Two Breads are leaven for they are a thanksgiving to Hashem for the harvest, and Thanksgiving Offerings (Korbanot Todah) include leaven bread. The prohibition of leaven (chametz) in all other public sacrifices is due to its allusion to the Attribute of Judgment... whereas on the Holiday of Shavuot, the sacrifice should be presented in the same manner as personal Thanksgiving Sacrifices ... This is the key to understanding the words of our sages' [Vayikra Rabba 9:7] 'in the future, all sacrifices will be discontinued, except for the Thanksgiving Sacrifice', for it is analogous to the World-to-Come, since it contains both matzah and chametz."

Let us try to understand the link between the Thanksgiving Sacrifice and chametz and matzah.

When a private person brings a Thanksgiving Sacrifice, he offers it together with four types of breads. Three matzah, and one chametz. Chametz symbolizes G-d's judgment, matzah - G-d's kindness.

One who offers a Thanksgiving Sacrifice, by including chametz is essentially saying: "Ribbono Shel Olam! I am thankful to You for everything. Not only for having delivered me from my troubles, but I realize that even the Heavenly Judgment that brought the problem was for my benefit, and I am thankful to You even for it." He expresses his gratitude for G-d's kindness by means of the matzah, and for G-d's judgment (ie. the trouble from which he required deliverance) with the chametz.

In accordance with this illuminating explanation, the Ksav Sofer explains a Midrash. The Midrash on Tehilim explains the passuk: "One who sacrifices a Thanksgiving Offering honors Me (yechabdoneni)..." (Tehilim 50).

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The word “yechabdoneni” - “honors Me” appears in an abnormal form, with a double nun, to teach us that one who brings a Thanksgiving Sacrifice honors G-d in a twofold fashion. Explains the Ksav Sofer, He not only thanks Hashem for the salvation that he experienced, but also for the trouble that necessitated the deliverance. This is reflected in the double letter – he honors Hashem for both the bad and the good. He understands that all our troubles are predestined by our devoted - incredibly loving - Father in Heaven, entirely for our true ultimate benefit.”

The Ksav Sofer concludes: This passuk in Tehillim ends with the words “... and I will show him G-d’s salvation.” One who expresses thankfulness even for troubles, is granted a special Heavenly gift – it will be revealed to him how his gratitude is justified. He will be shown that what he perceived as a severe difficulty was really a tremendous benefit – a major kindness of Hashem.

On Pesach we ate matzah – no chametz. We were grateful for G-d’s salvation. As a nation, we were not yet on the spiritual level to thank G-d for the difficulty of slavery. Only on the holiday of Shavuot, when we were given the Torah, did we understand that slavery was the vehicle enabling us to receive this

outstanding, phenomenal blessing. The Torah elevates our stature infinitely, both in this world and in the next. For this it was worthwhile enduring even the difficult tribulations in Egypt. Therefore, on the holiday of Shavuot we offer a sacrifice of chametz, thanking G-d even for the pain and suffering we endured in Egypt, which we now see was for our genuine benefit.

This is the characteristic of the future world, when the reason and goodness in all pain and suffering will become apparent. As the Gemara relates (Pesachim 50a), we will then thank Hashem wholeheartedly retrospectively for all of the problems we now experience, with the berachah of “Hatov Vehamativ” - “Who is good and does good”. This is the meaning of Ramban’s words: “The Thanksgiving Sacrifice is an analogous semblance of the World-to-Come.”

The holiday of Shavuot is a day of thanksgiving for the eternal spiritual elevation we receive by means of the priceless gift of the Torah. Included in this, is the understanding and appreciation, that both good and bad, light and darkness, stem from the prodigious goodness of Hashem, and are all - without exception - designed completely for our true genuine benefit.



A Word of Gratitude

David Hamelech writes in Tehillim (16,2): " The goodness that You do for me I have no claim to". Rabbeinu Bachyah (Beraishit 32,27) comments: A person should notice the innumerable kindnesses of Hashem to him and should realize that Hashem has no obligation at all to provide us with all this blessing, it is pure kindness.

TZADDIKIM THANK HASHEM

Thank You Hashem, for Your Torah and Mitzvos!

The following story was told by the Chatam Sofer about his venerated Rebbe, Rabbi Natan Adler.

They were once riding on a donkey-drawn wagon on a freezing winter day. It was snowing and one of the donkeys got frostbite. The wagon driver stopped at a village to find a replacement. He returned to the wagon with an ox that he had found to take the place of the donkey. Rabbi Natan Adler promptly got off the wagon and began dancing exuberantly in the snow. "Why the joy? What is the reason for the dance?" asked his student, the Chatam Sofer.

"Don't you see? The non-Jewish wagon driver brought an ox instead of a donkey. Now there is a donkey and an ox pulling our wagon. Hashem presented us with the rare opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of not 'plowing with a donkey and ox together'. It is not every day that we have this opportunity! I am thanking Hashem for this precious gift!"

L'Olam Odehka
"Forever will I thank You"



Giving Thanks to Hashem

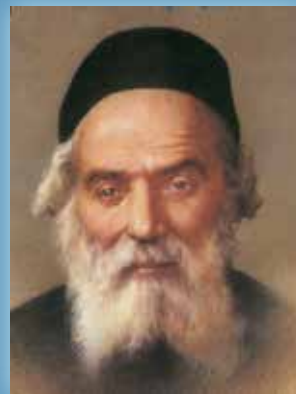
Rabbi Meir Lieberman, a student in the Radin Yeshiva, told about the Chafetz Chaim, that in his old age, when walking became difficult for him, he used to hire a wagon to take him from place to place. Once, on a Friday afternoon, riding back from the mikva, the Chofetz Chaim paid the wagon driver, went into the house and started dancing around the table.

"The rebbe is surely happy that he was able to go to the mikva in honor of the Shabbos," said Rabbi Lieberman.

"No" said the Chofetz Chaim "I am overjoyed that I was able to fulfill the Torah commandment to pay a worker on the day that he worked ..."

Rabbi Herschel Zacks, the Chofetz Chaim's grandson, told about his holy grandfather:

The Chofetz Chaim was known to spend time every day making a chaeshbon hanefesh, counting his mitzvos and aveiros. As he grew older, he would raise his voice and could easily be overheard. Once we heard him saying, "Yisroel Meir, you ate matzah, you shook the lulav, you wrote the Mishna Brura ... but where is your excitement and joy in performing mitzvos ... ?!"



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