

KOL TODA



Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem

THE HOLY CITY OF PRAISE AND GRATITUDE

The month of Tammuz, in which we begin days of mourning the destruction of the Temple and the glory that was Jerusalem, is an appropriate time to investigate one of the unique facets of the Temple and the Holy City.

David Hamelech in Tehillim reveals an effective way of enhancing the power of prayer and extricating oneself from difficult situations - to include in one's prayer, the resolution that when relief comes, to wholeheartedly thank Hashem for it. Many times in Tehillim he prays to be saved in the merit of the gratitude he will express when the deliverance arrives. See Tehillim (30:10,13) and (142:8). Also, in our prayers, we ask Hashem to send us the redemption in order that we will be able to thank and praise Him. We say: "Hoshe'enu Hashem... Redeem us Hashem, and gather us from the nations to give thanks to Your Holy Name, and praise Your Glory." We entreat G-d for salvation, for the ingathering of the exiles, in order to allow us the opportunity to offer thanks and praise. We are in fact asking Hashem to help us in the merit of this future praise.

The Kaf Hachaim brings this auspicious program, in the name of Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid, and adds that it is enhanced if the person accepts on himself to express the gratitude in public. He recommends resolving to say "Nishmas" when he will be saved, with song and praise, in a group of ten men. He testifies that many merited deliverance by adopting this mode of prayer and gratitude.

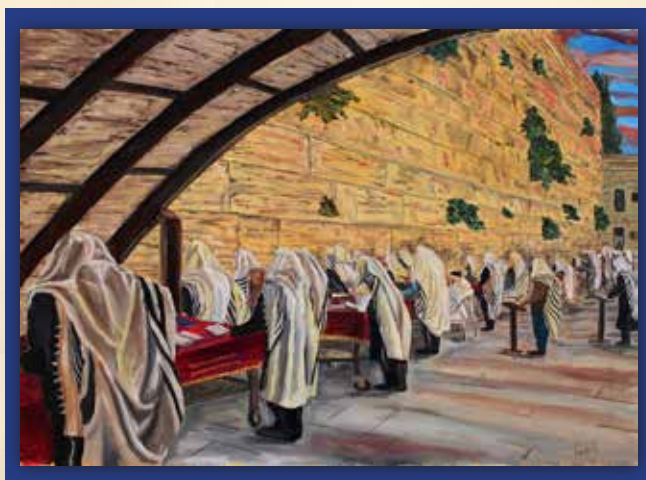
There is another way of increasing the affectivity of this program, to make the gratitude more genuine and spiritually arousing, by thanking Hashem in an especial spiritually elevated location. This we learn from Ya'akov

Avinu. On his way to Lavan he promised to thank Hashem by sacrificing a thanksgiving offering on the place where he was then situated - Har Hamoriah (now The Temple Mount). When he returned safely he sacrificed an offering in Shechem. The Malbim points out that immediately afterwards Hashem revealed Himself to him and told him to go to the original place, Har Hamoriah, and to thank Him there, since the sanctity of the location affects significantly the level of the gratitude.

We can learn from this, that there is special significance to resolve to express gratitude in a place of special holiness - such as the Kotel. This is confirmed by the prayer of David Hamelech in Tehillim (9:14-15) "Be gracious to me, O Hashem, see my affliction from my enemies, You Who raise me above the gates of death; so that I may tell all Your praises in the gates of the daughter of Zion, (there) I will rejoice in Your salvation". Radak explains: "When I will be saved from my enemies I

will proclaim Your praise in the Gates of Zion, for that is the place of gratitude and songs of praise, for there resides the glory of Hashem." The Gates of Zion are the most fitting place to express praise of Hashem and gratefulness to Him.

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Gratitude to Hashem was the essence of the city of Jerusalem. King David, describes the ascent of the Jews to Jerusalem for the festivals: “Our feet were standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. The built-up Jerusalem, that is as a united city. There ascended the tribes, the tribes of G-d, testimony to Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Hashem” (Tehilim 122:2-4). Malbim explains, this city, Jerusalem, was a place of ingathering, of hearts connecting, where Jews joined one another on the three festivals for the explicit purpose of thanking Hashem.

The Sefas Emes corroborates this in his work on the chumash: (Chanukah): “Undoubtedly, the foremost Hallel is the Hallel recited in the Mikdash as the verse says: ‘Open for me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter them and thank G-d’ (Tehilim 118:19). Therefore, when the nation ascended to Jerusalem on the holidays, their main objective was to praise and thank Hashem.”

Similarly we are told about the mitzvah of netah revai – after the fruits of a tree are forbidden for the first three years, the fruits of the fourth year must be brought and eaten within the gates of Jerusalem. Ramban explains the reason for this mitzvah: “We do not eat from the tree until we bring the fruit of one year in gratitude to G-d. The fruit in the first three years is not worthy of being used in the service of Hashem, for it is sparse and the fruit does not yet have its full scent or flavor. Many trees do not even produce fruit until the

fourth year. Therefore, we wait and do not partake of them, until we bring all the fruit of one year before G-d, and eat it there and praise G-d.” The fruit of the fourth year is eaten in gratitude and praise – in Jerusalem.

From what has been described above it would seem that even today despite the fact that we, unfortunately, do not have the Beis Hamikdash, it is nevertheless most appropriate for someone who wants to express gratitude to Hashem in the most ideal way, to make the effort to travel to the Kotel and express gratitude there. The Shelah writes “even in its state of destruction a facet of the spirituality of the Beis Hamikdash remains within the Kotel”. Chazal also tell us the Shechinah never left the Kotel. Even today, the poskim bring that it is commendable to visit the Kotel during the festivals, since there is a mitzvah to “receive the Shechinah” on yom tov, and in our time the greatest presence of the Shechinah is at the Kotel.

Therefore, when one visits the Kotel it is commendable to utilize the opportunity to express gratitude to Hashem as was done in the Beis Hamikdash. Jerusalem, is the place to connect with Hashem through praise and gratitude. This power is inherent in the city and the Kotel – whatever their state – destroyed or rebuilt.

Let us offer praise and thanks for every detail in our lives - wherever we may be, and pray to merit the opportunity to do so in the Beis Hamikdash, where we will all unite in gratitude, appreciation and joy.



“A Word of Gratitude

“Rav Chaim Vital zt”l writes: Do not be ungrateful and deny Hashem the blessing that is rightly His. Bless Him with great joy as one who has received a gift, and in this merit He will open his treasury of goodness for you (Sha'arei Kedushah 1:6).”

TZADDIKIM THANK HASHEM

Thanking At The Kotel

When the son of one of the tzadikim in Yerushalayim became of eligible age and had not yet found his match, his father resolved to go every day, for forty days, to pray for him at the Kotel. Every day, rain or shine, the father was there, at the Kotel, to pray for his child's shidduch. On the fortieth day, the son baruch Hashem found his bashert. The morning following the engagement, his surprised children saw their father rising early in the morning for his daily trek to the Kotel.

"What are you doing, father?" they asked. "Why are you still going to the Kotel? Our brother is engaged, he is no longer needs your prayers?"

"Children," said the tzaddik, "if I prayed forty days at the Kotel for the shidduch, is it not fitting to also thank Hashem forty days for it?"



The chairman of "Ezra U'Marpe", Rabbi Elimelech Firer, was sitting late at night in his office in Bnei Brak, meeting with a big philanthropist. After the meeting, the wealthy donor, who was about to leave the country, asked Rav Firer if he would accompany him on a short trip to the Kotel. Rav Firer agreed.

As they approached the holy stones, they couldn't help overhear the heartrending sound of a grown man sobbing. It was an older middle-aged man, crying loudly, clearly totally devastated.

The two magnanimous devotees of kindness looked at each other. They were both accustomed to seeing people in times of need and requiring help. "Let's go up to him," said Rav Firer, "If it is medical help he needs, I'll try to help him, and if money is the problem, you step in."

The two walked up to the man and Rav Firer introduced himself.

"Is there any medical help you are in need of?"

"No! No! Baruch Hashem everyone is well."

"Is perhaps money the problem?"

"No, Baruch Hashem I have everything I need!"

"So what is the problem? Why are you crying?" asked Rabbi Firer.

"I, Baruch Hashem, am blessed with everything. Last night I merited marrying off the youngest of my twelve children, and I came here tonight to thank Hashem for this amazing kindness and all the other many gifts He granted me throughout my life. Tell me, when thanking Hashem for it all, is it possible NOT to cry?!"

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