

# EXPRESSING GRATITUDE TO OTHERS/ HAKARAT HATOV

Psychological studies show that expressing gratitude and receiving thanks from others makes a person happier and healthier. Saying thank you means you are grateful for the things that happened to you or were given to you, as a result of someone else's effort. Practicing gratitude means being fully aware of the good that is already yours.

The word Judaism means gratitude in its etymological root.

ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר הפעם אודה את ה' על כן קראה שמו יהודה ותעמוד מלדת.

*She conceived again and bore a son, and declared, "This time I will praise \*I will praise God. Therefore, she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing. Genesis 29:35*

Who is the rich one? He who is happy with his lot. Pirkei Avot 4:1 איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו (משנה אבות ד:א)

ואמר רבי משום ר"ש בן יוחי מיום שברא הקב"ה את עולמו לא היה אדם שהודה להקב"ה עד שבאתה לאה והודתו שנאמר (בראשית כט:ל) הפעם אודה את ה' (ברכות ז ב:ה)

*And Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai: From the day the Holy One, Blessed be He, created the world, no one thanked the Holy One, Blessed be He, until Leah came and thanked Him, as it is stated: "And she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and she said, 'This time I will give thanks to G-d,' and thus he was called Judah" (Genesis 29:35). Berakhot 7b:5*

*The fact is, however, that many people find it easier to thank God than to acknowledge the gifts received from other people. People are complex, and they give in such confounding ways. This can make it so much harder to feel grateful for their gifts or to thank them. But we need to be ready to give thanks to a fellow human being, even if he or she has not done anything special for us. Why? Because the soul-trait of gratitude holds the key to opening the heart. (Everyday Holiness, Morinis)*

## CONSIDER:

- Are you familiar with the phrase Hakarat Hatov? Literally it means "recognizing the good" and it refers to gratitude.
- Why according to Judaism is it important to have an attitude of gratitude?
- How do you think the origin of the word in Hebrew. 'odeh, guide the essential Jewish concept of gratitude?
- How does the concept of saying blessings to God inform our expression of thanks to our fellow person?
- How can the Mishna of being "happy with our lot" inform our expression of thanks?
- How do you think having a tradition of actively expressing thanks affects the person receiving and the person giving?
- How does the tradition of actively expressing thanks impact the community?
- How do you feel after you say "Thank you" to someone for a kindness or a gift?
- How does it feel when you do something nice for a friend and they don't say "Thank you"?
- Do you think that God needs our thanks? If not, why do you think we thank God?

## NEXT STEPS:

- Take the time to call/write/reach out to everyone who does something for you or gives you anything. Look for ways to express your gratitude to anyone you meet.
- Be mindful to always show your appreciation and gratitude.
- Model an attitude of gratitude so that your family, friends and peers can learn and be inspired by your personal example and leadership.
- Think of ways fun, creative, meaningful and memorable ways to teach the young people in your life to have Hakarat HaTov and express gratitude.