

KOL TODA



Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem

DAYS OF GRATITUDE

In the Beis Hamikdash, the Thanksgiving Sacrifice (Korban Todah) was offered with four kinds of breads, three matzah and one chometz.

The Tur (Orach Chaim 475), tells us that the three matzos displayed and eaten at the Seder represent the three kinds of matzah offered with the Korban Todah. The fourth kind of bread offered with the Korban Todah, the chometz that we are not allowed to eat on Pesach, we reserve for the holiday of Shavuot. On Shevuot we conclude our thanksgiving by offering the Korban Shte HaLechem, the sacrifice of two breads, which are chometz.

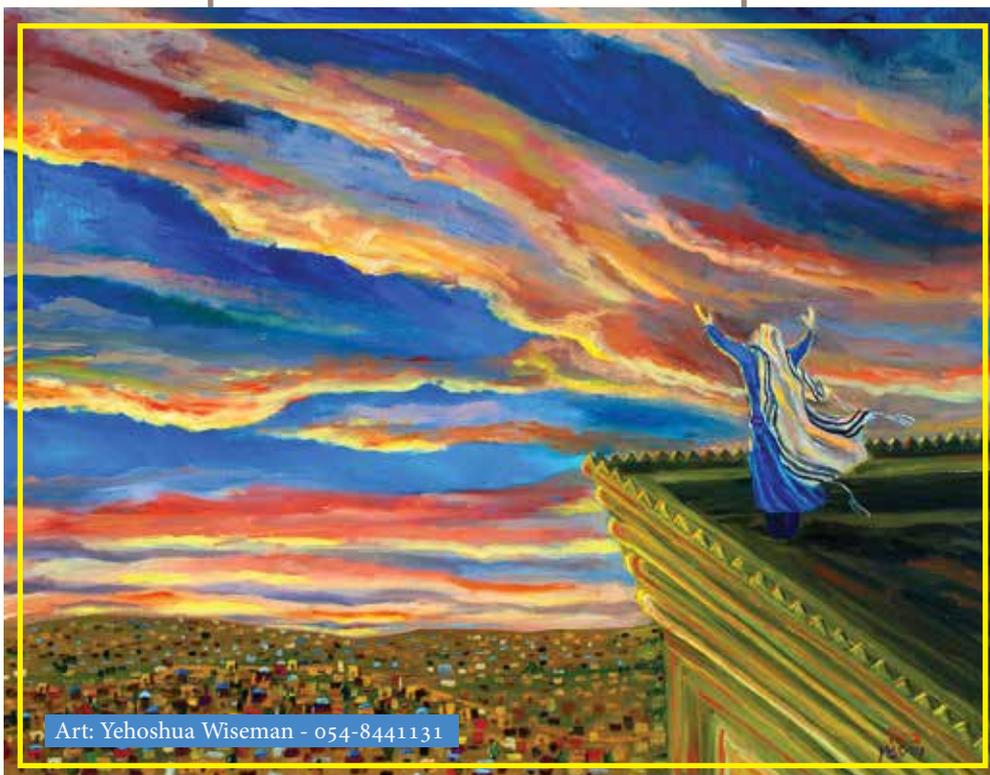
The month of Iyar is situated in the midst of these days of thanksgiving, between these two features of the thanksgiving offering, starting with Pesach, the beginning of our redemption, and ending in Sivan with the receiving of the Torah at Sinai. The counting of the Omer connects these two aspects of thanksgiving, urging and encouraging us to climb higher and higher each day, intensifying and developing our feelings of gratitude to

Hashem. So this is the ideal time to contemplate the fundamental nature of the Korban Todah and to learn from it how to thank Hashem.

When the Beis Hamikdash was standing in Jerusalem, whoever was

publicizing the goodness of Hashem to others. Therefore, Hashem stipulated that anyone who brings this sacrifice should also bring a large number of breads. To consume all this food within the required timeframe – until

midnight of the day of the sacrifice – he would have to invite many people to help him. By inviting these guests to the thanksgiving meal, the person bringing the korban publicizes the kindness of Hashem that he experienced, as it says in Tehillim: “And they slaughter sacrifices of thanksgiving, and relate His deeds with song” (Tehillim 107:22).



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saved from adverse situations would offer a thanksgiving sacrifice. This sacrifice was accompanied by 40 breads. Why does this sacrifice require so many breads, unparalleled in any other sacrifice? The Netziv of Volozin explains that what Hashem really wants from a person who merited special Divine kindness is for him to share with everyone his feelings of gratitude –

This idea is found also in Tehillim (Ch. 100), the chapter dedicated to thanksgiving, recited when bringing a Korban Todah. In this chapter, we surprisingly find no mention of personal thanksgiving, the entire mizmor consists of calls to the public to praise and thank Hashem. This teaches us that true gratitude to Hashem should arouse in the person commiseration with

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Hashem's objective that all of mankind feel appreciation toward Him and love Him. The Rambam tells us in Sefer HaMitzvos that the commandment to love Hashem stated in the Shema includes the mitzvah to urge others to love Hashem. It is the natural tendency of a person who loves someone else to publicize and proclaim to others the good qualities of the person he loves.

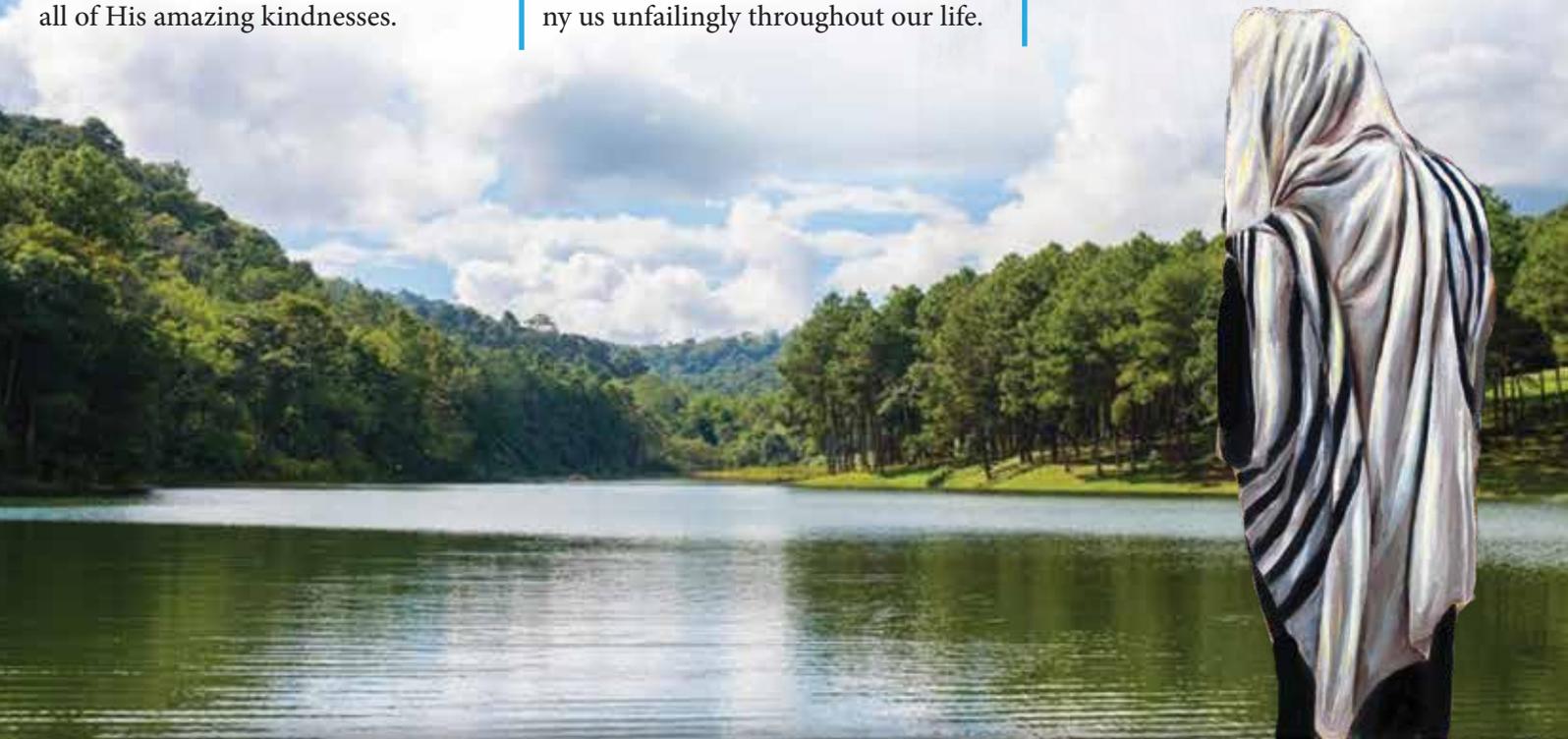
Similarly, in the blessing of Modim and the blessing after meals, after recounting all the kindnesses that Hashem does for us, we say, "And for all this, may Your Name be blessed by all living beings ..."

With this in mind, the next time we recite "Mizmor LeTodah" (chapter 100 of Tehillim), we can add a dimension of prayer to our feelings of gratitude. When we say the words "Call out to Hashem all of humanity ...", we can pray : May the saying of these words arouse feelings of gratitude in all of mankind, and may everyone merit to sing songs of gratitude to Hashem for all of His amazing kindnesses.

Reciting this chapter in this manner has the propitious capacity to reverse all harsh decrees. This is evident from the Gemara (Shabbat 119b): "One who answers amen yehey Shmey rabah with all his strength causes harsh decrees to be annulled." Rabbi Yehuda Leib Bloch in Shiurei Da'as explains the meaning behind the words "with all his strength." The intention is to recite the words with excitement and deeply felt aspiration. When all of a person's being is filled with longing for the sanctification of Hashem's Name, and the cry of amen yehey Shmey rabah bursts forth from the depth of his being, this elevating heartfelt aspiration has the strength to annul the harshest decrees.

May we merit to recite Mizmor LeToda with enthusiastic feelings of gratitude to Hashem and with the deeply felt aspiration that the entire world awaken to feel love for their Father in Heaven and thank Him for all the many kindnesses that accompany us unfailingly throughout our life.

True gratitude to Hashem should arouse in the person commiseration with Hashem's objective that all of mankind feel appreciation toward Him and love Him.



A Word of Gratitude

“And they sang aloud with praise and with thanks to Hashem for it is good, for His kindness is eternal over Israel...”(Ezra 3:11). The Metsudas explains: “... it is good to thank Hashem because He bestows incessantly and unremittingly kindness on Israel.”

This is the Life

A wealthy man traveled to Paris. He entered a small shop and came out carrying a small cage with a tiny bird. His wagon driver was very surprised and said, "You came all the way to Paris just for this? For one small bird?"

The wealthy man answered, "This bird is no simple bird. It is a nightingale!"

But the simple wagon driver still couldn't understand. "And how much does it cost?" he asked.

"Five hundred gold coins," the wealthy man replied.

When the wagon driver got home, he told his wife about the rich man's strange journey. "He went all the way to Paris just for one little bird! Could you imagine? And it cost so much! That bird must have the taste of Gan Eden. My dear wife, a person only lives once. We have saved three hundred gold coins. Let's borrow another two hundred coins so that we can also enjoy that rich and otherworldly flavor!"

At the first opportunity, the wagon driver traveled to Paris and bought himself a nightingale. He brought it home and told his wife to prepare a big pot with potatoes and grain, hoping that the miraculous bird would diffuse its divine flavor into the entire pot of food. "Cook only a half of the bird in the pot," he warned his wife. "We want to prepare the second half in a different

way and enjoy our good fortune to the utmost."

When the pot was ready the wagon driver and his wife sat down to the delicacy, but the food was absolutely tasteless.

"We must have cooked it wrong," said the wagon driver. "It was a mistake to try and mix the flavors of potatoes and grain with this otherworldly flavor. Cook the other half of the bird by itself."

The wagon driver's good wife cooked also the second bird. But when they sat down to feast, the second half was as tasteless as the first.

"Woe to me!" cried the wagon driver. "I wasted all of my savings, and even took some loans, and in the end, I got nothing at all! Perhaps we didn't cook the bird properly? Maybe there is some spice that we can add to save the day. The wagon driver walked over to the wealthy man's manor and knocked on the door.

"I saw that you bought a special bird when we traveled to Paris," he told him. "It was very expensive and I also wished to taste it. I went back to Paris and bought the bird with all of my savings and some loans, but when I cooked the bird it was tasteless! A two-penny goose tastes much better than this dry bird!"

"Oh, you fool," laughed the man, "The bird is not for eating. It's a songbird. You're meant to enjoying its

melodious voice. If you are looking for good meat, there are plenty of birds that are much more delicious than the nightingale, but no other melody can compete with the melody that the nightingale sings!"

The above parable was told by Rabbi Gedlaya Silverstone zt"l. He explained that just as the wagon driver mistook the purpose of the bird, many people mistake their own existence. Some people think that the purpose of life is to fill themselves with pleasures. But they are quickly disappointed because nobody can be satiated from earthly pleasures.

Human beings were created for song, for praise and gratitude. These feelings and expressions are what make life in this world the greatest pleasure. We must tune into the pleasure of enjoying Hashem's kindnesses. As the Malbim describes in his explanation on the verse of Tehillim (63:4) "For Your kindness is better than life; my lips praise You." The Malbim writes: "The immense value of the gift of life is that by being alive Hashem has granted us the possibility to appreciate His kindness and thank Him. Thus: Your kindness is more valuable than life itself, because by being alive my lips are able to praise you and thereby achieve the true purpose of life."

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