

בס"ד
ח' כסלו תשפ"ב
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פרשת ויצא

Of all of the origins behind the naming of each of Yaakov's children, it is usually Yehuda's "הַפְּעָם" "אֹדָה אֶת ה'" that garners the most prominence, providing an origin to the foundational Jewish tenet of gratitude. However, there is another child whom Leah names in this week's parsha that teaches a similar lesson: the birth of Gad, after which Leah proclaims, "בָּא גָד,"¹ acknowledging what great luck has befallen her.

Rabbeinu Bechaye remarks that this reflects a tremendous attitude of Leah from a psychological point of view. After giving birth to four sons in a short period of time, she stopped conceiving, but soon realized the real purpose of her children: to provide continuity to the nation. Upon such an understanding, Leah immediately decided to continue to try to have children and pick up where she left off at the same source of her childbearing: prayer. She began to daven "גַּד גָּדִי," that her good fortune be restored to her as she waited to have more children, and the birth of Gad represented a continuation of her tremendous fortune. Rashi² comments that Gad's birth brought "מִזֵּל טוֹב," and this was yet another acknowledgment from Leah of all the prosperity that Hashem had brought her. In fact, Rabbeinu Bechaye adds that this element of gratitude is a major factor behind the naming of Asher, intertwining the gratefulness for both luck and fortune in hopes of more children, which she was then granted; evidently, Leah's attitude of gratitude towards her prosperity enabled her to flourish even more.

Obviously, thankfulness is a core component of Yahadus on a daily basis, but many tend to forget just how crucial it is. In a Medrash in *Vayikra Rabba*,³ R' Pinchas, R' Levi, and R' Yochanan all say in the name of R' Menachem that in the future, all *korbanos* will be rendered null and void — except for the *Korban Todah*, the offering of thanksgiving. Likewise, all of the tefillos will be removed — except for that of *Hoda'ah*, which will never be made obsolete.

Two psychologists, Dr. Robert A. Emmons of the University of California, Davis, and Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami, asked all participants to write a few sentences each week, focusing on particular topics. One group wrote about things they were grateful for that had occurred during the week, and the other group wrote about daily irritations or things that had displeased them, while the third wrote about events that had affected them (with no emphasis on them being positive or negative). After 10 weeks, not only did those who wrote about gratitude become more optimistic and feel better about their lives, but they also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those who focused on sources of aggravation.⁴ When a person decides that gratitude will become a focal point of their day, it manifests itself in a myriad of ways and has the potential to absolutely transform a person's lifestyle, making them better not only emotionally and mentally but even physically.

As Rav Avigdor Miller has said, "*The great joy of the revelation of Hashem in full illuminated clarity is the reward of Olam Haba. Only to the extent that a person toiled to know and revere Hashem in this world*

¹ בראשית ל:יא

² רש"י בראשית לא:יא ד"ה בא גד

³ ויקרא רבה ט:ז

⁴ *Giving thanks can make you happier.* (2021, August 14). Harvard Health Publishing. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

will he merit this reward in Olam Haba, [and] this is the meaning of the Gemara in Maseches Sanhedrin "Whoever sings praises to Hashem in this world will merit saying it in World-to-Come".⁵ The more we develop our recognition of Hashem's greatness in this world and praise and sing before Him, in Olam Haba this ability will be strengthened, and there we will merit praising Hashem with elevated exhilaration and pleasure."⁶ It is by virtue of our expression of gratitude that we are given more things to express gratitude, and it is our acknowledgment of good fortune that enables us to enjoy even more good fortune, serving as a gift that truly never stops giving.

⁵ סנהדרין צא.

⁶ [http://g-ddirectorah.com/images/articles/146 THANKING HASHEM with Rabbi Miller.pdf](http://g-ddirectorah.com/images/articles/146_THANKING_HASHEM_with_Rabbi_Miller.pdf), p.