

Weekly Teaching

November 4, 2016

The Psalmist wrote: *"It is good to give thanks to the Lord..." Psalms 92:2*

The fundamental notion of Jewish tradition is that God put us on this Earth, has sustained us, and given us the ability to help sustain ourselves.

We therefore have an obligation to express gratitude to God for the blessings of our lives.

But, the obligation to give thanks goes well beyond God because there are so many people who help us through life and also deserve our gratitude.

We have family and friends who help and support us in our time of need, and we are supposed to thank them for sharing their blessings with us.

Rabbinic Judaism teaches that the mindset of thankfulness is so important that we should even cultivate the ability to be thankful towards inanimate objects.

The Talmud cites an example as a midrashic commentary on the Biblical verse:

"When it came time for the first plague, God instructed Moses to have Aaron strike the water with Aaron's rod." (Ex. 7:19)

According to the midrash:

God tells Moses to include the water for the first sign of God's miracles to be shown to the Egyptians because it was the water that had saved Moses when he was put into the river in a tiny basket many years before. God felt that Moses owed a duty of gratitude to the water, and therefore it was most appropriate for the water to be the first sign of God's miracles in Egypt.

The mitzvah to give thanks is called: *Hakkarat Hatov* (Recognizing the Good).

The act of giving thanks helps us recognize those things that are truly good in our lives.

This is specifically what is being noted by the Psalmist when he said: *"Give thanks to the Lord, for it is good." (Ps. 136:1)*

Giving praise and thanks is how we recognize the things that are good in our lives.

In Judaism, like all Godly religions, we possess the "Golden Rule:" "to Love our neighbor as ourselves...This is the whole of Torah; the rest is commentary."

The Golden Rule assumes that we already know what is good and how we wish to be treated.

If we're to succeed in fulfilling the Golden Rule, we have to start by understanding ourselves better, and by better appreciating what is agreeable to us.

We must savor the benevolence bestowed on us by others and in turn to relish the opportunity to show the same kindness to those around us.

It's important that we take the time to recognize the good in our life, the good bestowed on us each and every day by God, by our friends, and by all those who constantly surround us.

As we head into our American "Thanksgiving" holiday season, let's especially take the time during the next few weeks to better cultivate our attitude for gratitude for the many, many blessings that exist within our lives.

Shabbat Shalom,

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