

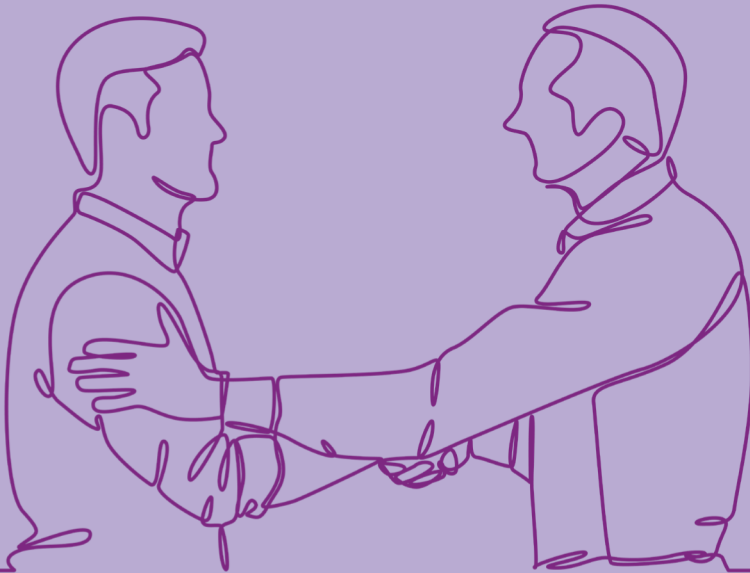
Including daily family
story section & challenges



CLEAN SPEECH PROJECT UK 2025

WORDS OF GRATITUDE

THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY GRATEFUL PEOPLE



10 DOSES OF DAILY STUDY INSPIRATION



This publication is dedicated in the memory of
David Gallick.

Throughout his life David was intrinsically involved in the
Jewish community, giving of his time and resources
in a very unassuming manner.

He was softly spoken yet always managed to
communicate effectively and respectfully to all.
It is highly appropriate that this publication of the
Clean Speech Project is dedicated to his memory by his
wife Gill and his children Saul and Sasha.



For more Clean Speech Project UK resources or to receive the
daily video to your phone, visit www.cleanspeech.co.uk

WELCOME TO YOUR CLEAN SPEECH UK STUDY GUIDE

THIS BOOK CONTAINS ONE IDEA TO READ FOR EACH DAY OF THE PROJECT

**YOU CAN FIND MORE CLEAN SPEECH PROJECT RESOURCES
AT WWW.CLEANSPEECH.CO.UK OR
FOLLOW @CLEANSPEECHUK ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Dear Reader,

The past tends to feel like it goes by quickly, the future tends to feel like it goes slowly. This year the world feels very different – and we are in a very different place.

Jewish thought teaches that there are three parts to our internal makeup, and in many ways we experience the world on these three levels. These are: who I am, what I want and what I do. In other words, my real self, my drives/ambitions and my actions. In an effective, stable world, my actions are an expression of what I want, which is in turn an expression of who I am. Internal friction is caused when actions are thoughtless, whimsical and do not truly express my wishes or true self.

This book and project aims to bring about a crucial attitude and desire-shift in a key area of our lives – one that will hopefully lead to action!

Previous editions of the Clean Speech Project UK have involved thirty days of videos and an accompanying book. Past topics have been the power of speech, avoiding lashon hara and hurtful words. This year the positive muscle we are building is ‘expressing gratitude.’ And we are going for ten days, not thirty to build this positive muscle. In journeying through this book, you will pick up keys to meaningfully express gratitude. You will follow the journey of a remarkable cup of coffee, explore some remarkable studies and teachings. But first here are some important things to know:

-
- Daily inspiration piece on each page, including daily challenge
 - Accompanying educators' video with a story for each day's theme (click on the QR code or visit www.cleanspeech.co.uk)
 - Family section with a story to read to the children and daily family challenge
 - Guest Articles section

In Jewish thought, gratitude is more than saying thank you. It is an admission that we are not independent – we need others and we need Hashem. Gratitude is not about manners, politeness, quaint thank yous or redressing a favour imbalance. Gratitude is the staple diet of a person who is able to acknowledge and connect. And the Chovos Halevavos writes that gratitude obligates – it obligates a person to acknowledge, act and express real gratitude verbally. Gratitude also underpins our religion – why can't I simply ignore God in this world? Because that would subvert my natural gratitude obligation to a Being Who gives me so much. The goal of this book and project is to develop our sense of gratitude and then move from mind to mouth in expressing gratitude in a profound and impactful way.

On that note I'd like to express a huge special thank you to my Clean Speech UK colleague Rabbi Avrohom Zeidman whose educational creativity underpins the project. May all your amazing work in general and this project in particular be an ilui neshama for your mother Yocheved bas Aaron Hakohen.

Wishing meaningful reading,

Rabbi Daniel Fine

Seed Director of Education, On behalf of Seed & GIFT

The Clean Speech Project UK is a joint initiative of Seed & GIFT about the power of words and positive communication. The project is now in its fourth year, having seen dozens of schools and communities take part in the project with parent-child learning, programmes and resources.



GR-ATTITUDE: FROM GREAT *EXPECTORS* TO GREAT *APPRECIATORS*

Have you ever seen someone get flustered over something that doesn't really matter? Has that person ever been you?

In a thesis called 'experience stretching hypothesis,' psychologists from the University of Liege, Belgium, proposed that our over-focus on luxuries has ruined our sense of pleasure in life. Since most of the simple joys in life tend to be the more 'mundane' things like the gifts of the senses, spending money on luxuries is not making us any happier. Our overindulgence on luxuries means that we have created a sense of entitlement and heightened expectation. A child who walks around a school feeling like they own the place will not get the most out of school – their sense of entitlement will cloud the experience. The world is a beautiful place with lots of opportunities. If lived right. Our Rabbis teach us that 'jealousy, indulgent desire and pride remove a person from this world' – this sense of entitlement and inflated expectation prevents us from enjoying of the world.

If only there was a muscle we could develop, a switch we could flip, that could move us from entitlement to appreciating life's beauty. That muscle is called gratitude.

When we develop and express gratitude properly, we acknowledge the gifts in our lives. A rainy day no longer becomes cause for complaint – it means that plants are getting what they need to grow. Challenges and difficulties are seen against a totally different backdrop: a tapestry of gratitude. Building this muscle requires consistency. And as the Rambam writes about mitzvot in general, the more profoundly and regularly we perform the mitzvah, the more it impacts us. In fact, there is a strong Jewish practice to make 100 blessings a day – now that's a gratitude workout!



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

**"There are two ways to live.
You can live as if nothing is a miracle.
Or you can live as if everything is a miracle"**

- Albert Einstein



Clean Speech Project UK 2025 is about positive words of gratitude. Our first two days build the foundations of gratitude, we then shift to seven keys to express gratitude.

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Take stock before the gratitude journey: Pay careful attention to the way we express gratitude. Can you mentally rate your expressions of gratitude out of ten!? Let's see if your score improves as we continue the project!

Were there any moments today that someone did something for you that you took for granted – how could gratitude have been better expressed?



GRATITUDE & ME

Here are a couple of very handy life rules. First, as Rabbi Bachaye writes nine hundred years ago, things that are important in life will reoccur in various parts and patterns across your life. Second, if something is central to our life's wellbeing, God must see it as tremendously valuable. With those lenses in focus, let's look at how important gratitude is in our lives:

- Many neuropsychologists call gratitude a 'natural antidepressant.' Gratitude acts as a catalyst for the core positive neurotransmitters of serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine. These are the hormones that help manage our emotions, relieve our anxiety and control our stress responses. People who feel grateful have lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Grateful individuals have better cardiac functioning and are more resilient, as well as having a higher volume of grey matter in the brain (see McCraty & colleagues, 2004, also Zahn, Garrido, Moll & Grafman 2014).
- In Grateful Brain, author Alex Korb explains that our brains are conditioned to function in repetitive patterns. He suggests that the mind cannot focus on both positive and negative information at the same time. Gratitude focuses on the positive and rewires the brain to set up a pattern of repetitive positivity.
- A study conducted by Wichita State University found that the top 5 of 65 motivating factors in the workplace were "praise related". Asked why they quit their jobs and many employees – up to 79% in one study – cite a lack of appreciation.

"Lay praise on people and people will flourish"

- Richard Branson



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

Gratitude is crucial for our selves. It is crucial at home. It is crucial at work. It reappears across our lives. And it is crucial spiritually too. It is one of the foundations of Judaism – a basis for our relationship with God is our gratitude. Over the next few days we will explore the keys to express gratitude in a profound, meaningful and impactful way.



DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

When thanking people today, focus on how it feels for you. Can you hold that feeling and describe it?



KEY ONE: SEE THE NEED / DAY 3

SEE THE NEED

Welcome to our keys of profound gratitude. Over the course of the next seven days we will be collecting and developing these keys to build our 'expressing gratitude' muscle. The first three keys are the cognitive processes that lead to expressing gratitude:

1. Recognise our needs
2. See good
3. Say good



Human beings are unique. The Gemara comments 'just as two people's faces are not alike, so too are people's characters and qualities not alike.' **God made each of us unique with our unique set of skills and talents to bring to the world's table; our personalised mission.** We celebrate that and we are grateful for it.

Uniqueness also breeds interdependency. We rely on each other to complement each other's skillsets. The parent needs the teacher. The teacher needs supermarket worker. The supermarket needs the farmer, the farmer needs the teacher. The loop can be as long as you want. We lean on each other.

Only when we are aware of our needs can we profoundly express gratitude. How can a child genuinely thank their parent for making supper if the child is unaware of their basic need to eat? Thus, the word to *thank* (*le'hodot*) in Hebrew also means 'to admit' – thanking is an admission of a need.

As the Gemara writes 'if a blessing is recited *after* eating when one is full, all the more so should a person make a blessing *before* eating, when one is hungry.' The premise is that acknowledging a need leads to and in fact requires gratitude. And once we recognise those needs, we feel empowered.



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

"Grateful living is possible only when we realize that other people and agents do things for us that we cannot do for ourselves.

Gratitude emerges from two stages of information processing—affirmation and recognition"

- Robert Emmons, psychology professor

Rabbi Noach Weinberg used to challenge people by asking them 'what would you say to a person who feels that the world has let them down?' He'd answer that you have to explain to the person that they are a walking billionaire! 'You see, those two eyes that are looking at me right now. How much would a blind person pay for eyes that work like yours? How much would they pay for a day of the gift of vision? Hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of pounds! And how much would a deaf person pay for ears that can hear? And a lame person paying for one jog around the block? If you are blessed with a body that functions regularly, you are a walking millionaire. You've just never paused to think about it.'

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Make a list of your daily needs. Pick something to forgo for a certain amount of time. Then when you re-indulge in that need, focus on the depth of gratitude you feel. We recommend closing your eyes for 90 seconds, then reopen and appreciate sight. And perhaps hold off from eating chocolate for a week, then take in how that first chocolate feels...



KEY TWO: SEE THE GOOD / DAY 4

SEE GOOD

Today's expressing gratitude key is 'seeing good.' We've worked on recognising our needs. Seeing good is about recognising the good that others do for us. At this moment there are police forces making sure people are safe, trucks delivering good to people's homes and shops, teachers educating generations, pilots flying thousands of people to their destinations. That's a lot of good being done without us realising!

**"The man who has forgotten to be thankful,
has fallen asleep in the midst of life."**

- Robert Louis Stevenson





SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

Here's a story about someone who *made it their business to realise, recognise and express thanks!*

Bestselling author A J Jacobs went on a remarkable gratitude journey in his book *Thanks a Thousand*. He traced his cup of coffee, on a mission to thank everyone who was involved in producing the 'simple cup of caffeine.' He thanked the person serving the coffee behind the counter, he located and thanked the truck driver that brought the coffee to the store (and the music star whose music the truck drivers were listening to in order to keep them awake during their early-morning mammoth drives), he even flew to the factory that produced the coffee beans to thank them! A thousand thank yous for his cup of coffee! In his own words:

Yes, it was weird and awkward at times. The reactions were mixed, because I was thanking people out of the blue. I called or emailed or visited them in person. Sometimes people were very suspicious. They'd be like, "Is this a pyramid scheme? What are you trying to sell me?" But I will say, the good part is the majority, the vast majority, were very receptive once they got used to the idea. I mention in the book, that scene where I call the woman who does pest control for the warehouse where my coffee is stored. And I said to her, "I know this is weird, but I want to thank you for keeping the insects out of my coffee." And she said, "Yes, that is weird but I really appreciate it." I compared it to an anti-prank phone call, like I was paying penance for the obnoxious calls I made in high school.

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Focus on a banana. Can you outline its steps from its formation to your home? How many people were involved in that process? Think about an item you appreciate in life and see how far back you can trace it – how many people did it take to put it together, bring it to you, etc?



SAY GOOD – GOING FROM THINK TO THANK

Our third key for expressing gratitude is ‘saying good.’ We’ve acknowledged our needs, we’ve recognised the good in life. Now we need to express those sentiments in words. We will go into more detail about the choice of words tomorrow but today is about that jump between thought and speech. In plain English, it’s not enough to think gratitude, you have to express it!

The process of acknowledging needs, recognising good and expressing thanks is taught throughout the texts of prayer. We cited above the Jewish practice to recite one hundred blessings a day. The morning blessings itemise this process too – we thank Hashem for giving us the ability to discern between day and night, for our freedom, for our religion, for our senses, for the clothes we wear, our ability to walk and so much more. It is a paradigm of expressing heartfelt gratitude.

“We are genetically predisposed to pay more attention to the bad than the good. For sound biological reasons we are hyper-alert to potential threats and dangers.” It takes focused attention to become aware of how much we have to be grateful for. That, in different ways, is the logic of prayer, of making blessings, of Shabbat, and many other elements of Jewish life”

- Rabbi Lord Sacks z'l



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO



In our daily prayers after the silent Amidah, we stop and listen to the Chazan as he recites the repetition of the Amidah – this repetition is the communal prayer, which the Chazan recites for us. When the Chazan says the paragraph of Modim, the congregation recite a paragraph known as Modim Derabanan. Why? The Abarbanel commentary explains that the paragraph of Modim is all about expressing thanks, gratitude. And it's not right to outsource our thank you. For the Chazan to express gratitude on our behalf is improper – we must instead say our own paragraph; the beautiful paragraph of Modim Derabanan. We will finish today's key with the English translation of this paragraph:

We thank you, for you are Hashem, God of our forefathers. You created us and the world. Blessings and thanks are due to Your great and holy Name. For You have sustained us and kept us alive. So too may You continue to sustain us and give us life, gather our exiles to Your holy court to observe Your decrees and perform Your will, so we can serve You wholeheartedly. Thank You for inspiring us to thank You. Blessed is the God of thanks.

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Make a gratitude goal for today. Thank ten people today, especially at least one person you have not thanked or even reached out to in a long time.



THE RIGHT WORDS

Our next four keys are tips for expressing gratitude:

4. Use the right words
5. Even if it's their job
6. Gratitude and difficult relationships
7. Making it meaningful; mushy is ok!

Every teenager (and many a husband) has been told at some stage 'it's not what you said, it was the way you said it.' Because communication is made up of both the words themselves and the sentiments accompanying the words. Building the Expressing Gratitude muscle requires both a genuine sense of feeling grateful and also the right choice of words. Back to our teenager. Teenagers often specialise at being monosyllabic, often accompanied with a grunt or two. 'How was your day at school?' 'uh, good.' 'How did you do in that important test?' 'Fine.' 'What are you doing this evening?' 'Stuff.' The sophisticated adept lyrical mastery can be somewhat nuanced, you see...!

When it comes to expressing gratitude, it's not just about opening your mouth. It's about the choice of words. Here are some key tips:

1. Choose specific over generalised – be specific about what you are grateful for and about what you benefited from. 'Thanks for the shopping' is nowhere near as profound and impactful as 'I really appreciate you bringing those ten bags full of shopping, it must have been heavy to lift. It saves me so much time and allows me to spend more time with my family.' It doesn't have to be a novel, but personalise it. When thanking a speaker, mention something you will take with you from their class, it is more meaningful that way.



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

2. Itemise the thank you. If a person has done a few things for you, mention them. 'Thank you for driving here, bringing the shopping and unloading it.'
3. The communication method. We are so used to just sending an email, whatsapp or voicenote – they are easier but that don't mean that they are gratitude-suited. A real expression of gratitude should often be done either in person or through a call. The more direct the gratitude communication, the better.

The Dayeinu paragraph from Seder Night teaches us to itemise our gratitude instead of keeping it general

The great sage and leading Jerusalem Rabbi, Yosef Shalom Elyashiv underwent an important operation in his late nineties. The operation was performed by an American surgeon, whilst Rav Elyashiv did not speak English. Any pre-operation communication was done through bilingual go-betweens. When Rav Elyashiv recovered, he made sure to ask how to say a full 'thank you' in English so he could say it in a language that the surgeon would appreciate the most.

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Itemise three thank yous today - say details about what you are expressing gratitude for.



EVEN IF IT'S THEIR JOB

When you are into something, you differentiate, categorise and subcategorise. Eskimos have many words for snow / ice because the differences and nuances are important. We have very few little words for ice and snow because the differences are irrelevant and therefore unnoticed. Much Jewish ink has been invested in exploring the trait of gratitude. The sefer Chovos Halevavos devotes several pages to it, exploring questions like 'what if someone benefited you unintentionally, or even tried to do you harm but ended up helping you. Is there a debt of gratitude in those situations?' People who are invested in gratitude will ask such questions.

Here's something I hear often from children who wish to avoid a debt of gratitude: 'but it's their job to do that, why should I thank them?!' That's incorrect.

A person with a gratitude growth mind-set will express gratitude to someone who assists them, regardless of whether the person *had* to do that favour.





SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

Why not thank the postman, the rubbish collection team, the cleaner, the teacher, the policeman, etc? Yes, it's their job but you benefitted from them!

Aharon performed the initial plagues instead of Moshe because the plagues involved hitting the river and the river had played a role in saving Moshe as a baby. This was an 'expression' of gratitude even to inanimate objects! For gratitude is not about 'paying somebody back for what they've done for me,' – it's a measure of your own mind-set and attitude of the recipient.

We had a neighbour who owned a climbing frame – which my children decided they would offer to purchase! After all, the neighbour's children were now too old for it. My wife went round to enquire, to which to her surprise my neighbour said 'the guy who used to own your house spent an hour helping me put this climbing frame up. Out of gratitude for that, I'm happy to give it to you for free!' That's joined-up gratitude thinking.

'Even if it's their job' means expressing gratitude to the person irrespective of it being their duty to help. In fact, often it's more difficult to do things when they are a person's duty – there is a natural pushback that does not occur when a person voluntarily wishes to do something out of pure benevolence. There are lots of people we owe that debt of gratitude to.

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Leave a gratitude card for the postman or rubbish collection team





GRATITUDE CARD

Cut out the card below and leave it for for someone you'd ordinarily not be able to thank.



Dear

From





GRATITUDE AS THE GREAT DIFFUSER

‘The Torah was not given to angels.’ This is a line mentioned at various points in the Gemara and commentary. And it is a concept we all know very well – and we have plenty of people who serve as reminders of this! We are human beings with wants, drives, cravings and yearnings. We don’t allow these to overpower our decisions, but we must also not delude ourselves into thinking that we are beyond their reach.

We also have a natural predisposition towards ourselves. It’s a projection of healthy self-esteem to a degree. It also means that my interpersonal progress involves expanding my sense of self to include others. It’s not ‘me versus them,’ it’s that ‘part of my sense of self expands to include others’ – love your neighbour as yourself. But this self-predisposition can also be a barrier to some relationships.

Our individuality and sense of self can mean that whilst there are people who we warm towards, there are also people who we quite frankly may not get along with. There is that colleague who always seems to be too critical, that relative who just never relaxes, the employee who is out to outdo. In navigating these tricky relationships, gratitude can be a godsend. There can also be times of stormy friction in our close relationships too. Gratitude can navigate a person back to calm waters.

Doctor Gordon's study in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology explores the role of gratitude and appreciation in maintaining long and healthy relationships. In the study, 50 committed couples were given a week to fill out appreciation journals. On days when one partner reported feeling more appreciated, he or she tended to appreciate his or her partner more the next day.



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

A spin-off of this is that even when a person has made a mistake, gratitude will allow them to focus on the bits they did right. I once asked a group of men I was teaching ‘what is the worst item to forget from a shopping list your wife has sent you to buy?’ The answer the group came up with was ‘any item you forget is the worst – it’s the one you will get flack for!’ It was in jest, but the point is still a good one: gratitude will at least insert a sense of perspective: ‘thank you, you got 19 out of the 20 items I asked for!’

Gratitude can provide some crucial relationship backdrop. Expressing a quality that the person excels in, or something that they have achieved acts as an ice-breaker, relationship-maker or a bedrock for positive collaboration.¹



¹ The Ohr Hachaim commentary writes that Moshe employed a similar tactic in summoning Dasan and Aviram separately to try and stave off Korach's rebellion – Moshe hoped that a recognition of Dasan and Aviram's importance may provide the foundation for them to diffuse their quarrel.

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Insert an expression of gratitude in the next conversation with someone with whom you want to build a relationship



MAKE IT MEANINGFUL – IT'S FINE TO BE MUSHY

Our final key to expressing gratitude is to 'make it meaningful.' Sometimes our barrier to effective gratitude is feeling a bit unable to emotionally unlock ourselves to express heartfelt gratitude. We may feel that we become vulnerable or lose our self-made visage if we allow our emotions out too much. Effective gratitude means putting some welly emotion into it! Going through the mechanical motions of saying words of gratitude is a start. But the words must carry meaning, genuine meaning. Put some emotional welly into it! As one educator put it, 'it's okay to be mushy when expressing gratitude.' Crucially, there is a great amount of pleasure our selves derive from that body-soul intellect-emotion cohesive fusion of doing the right thing.





SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO



Parenting expert Rav Yechiel Yakobson speaks about the concept of 'spiritual enjoyment' (*hana'ah ruchanit*). This means focusing on the genuine pleasure a person gets from doing the right thing. If you ask your children what feels better, giving or receiving, in a moment of self-reflective maturity they should admit that giving feels better. It's more cogent, refined and elevates a person. I know someone who refuses to take a seat on his daily bus commute – for he assures me that the pleasure he derives from offering someone else a seat is more than the pleasure he gets from sitting down himself.

But we have to become adept at recognising this pleasure. Rabbi Yakobson told a group of particularly badly-behaved teenagers about this 'spiritual enjoyment' concept, illustrating it with the bus seat example. A week later one of the boys came back to him saying 'are you a magician or something?! I was on a bus and decided to offer my seat to somebody – I've never done that in my life – and it actually felt good.'

When we express gratitude in a deep and profound way we should feel some of that pleasure.

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Express gratitude to someone with all your heart! Write down how it felt. Can you upgrade those sentiments by focusing on other moments of 'spiritual pleasure' in your day?



GRATITUDE IS THE CAKE, NOT THE CHERRY

You've made it through the course! You've travelled through the keys of gratitude; you are on the home stretch! We have learnt that gratitude is not a cursory thank you – it's a perspective, a way of life, a muscle to be developed and expressed. But how do we make sure that we are continuing to develop this muscle?

First is the willpower to go beyond habit, second is the acknowledgment that gratitude is not the optional icing or the cherry, it is in fact the obligatory cake itself...

I was flying from Israel to England on El Al. I know the drill on a flight very well. The air stewards serve refreshments and then the meal relatively early into the flight, and then they get a rest at the back of the plane. It's during this break that the air stewards are most available, though they don't particularly like to be disturbed. This was my chance. I walked to the back of the plane and very politely asked one of the stewards if he minded me asking him a question. He kindly agreed, whereupon I asked a question that had been bothering me for a while. With the Sefer Hachinuch's principle of 'what you do impacts who you are' in mind, I proceeded to unload my question. 'I notice that you are very kind and courteous throughout the flight. You answer people's questions, bring them food and don't get angry even at difficult passengers. Tell me, does this impact on your life in general – have you become a kinder person since working for El Al?' The air steward paused for a few moments and thought, then confidently answered 'Not really, but I like the question.'

So there it was, the Sefer Hachinuch's theory dashed. Here was someone who was doing many kind actions each day, but it wasn't impacting him whatsoever. Why, I wondered?



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

In order for an action to really impact us, we need cognisance and willpower. We need to be aware of the mitzvah we are doing, and we need to want it to impact us. This air steward was kind to people simple because it was his job. He didn't actively want or need it to impact his life. If we want our ten days to impact us, we have to make sure we want to be impacted.

Second, the Chovos Halevavos writes the key line that gratitude obligates a person. Gratitude is a responsibility no less than one must pay for an item that one purchased.

When a person goes into a shop and picks up an item (to purchase) they must pay for it. When someone does something for you, gratitude obligates us. Gratitude underpins commerce, it underpins relationships, it underpins our connection to Hashem too: Hashem is the Eternal Giver, our treasured obligation to play our part in the relationship comes through gratitude for all He does for us.

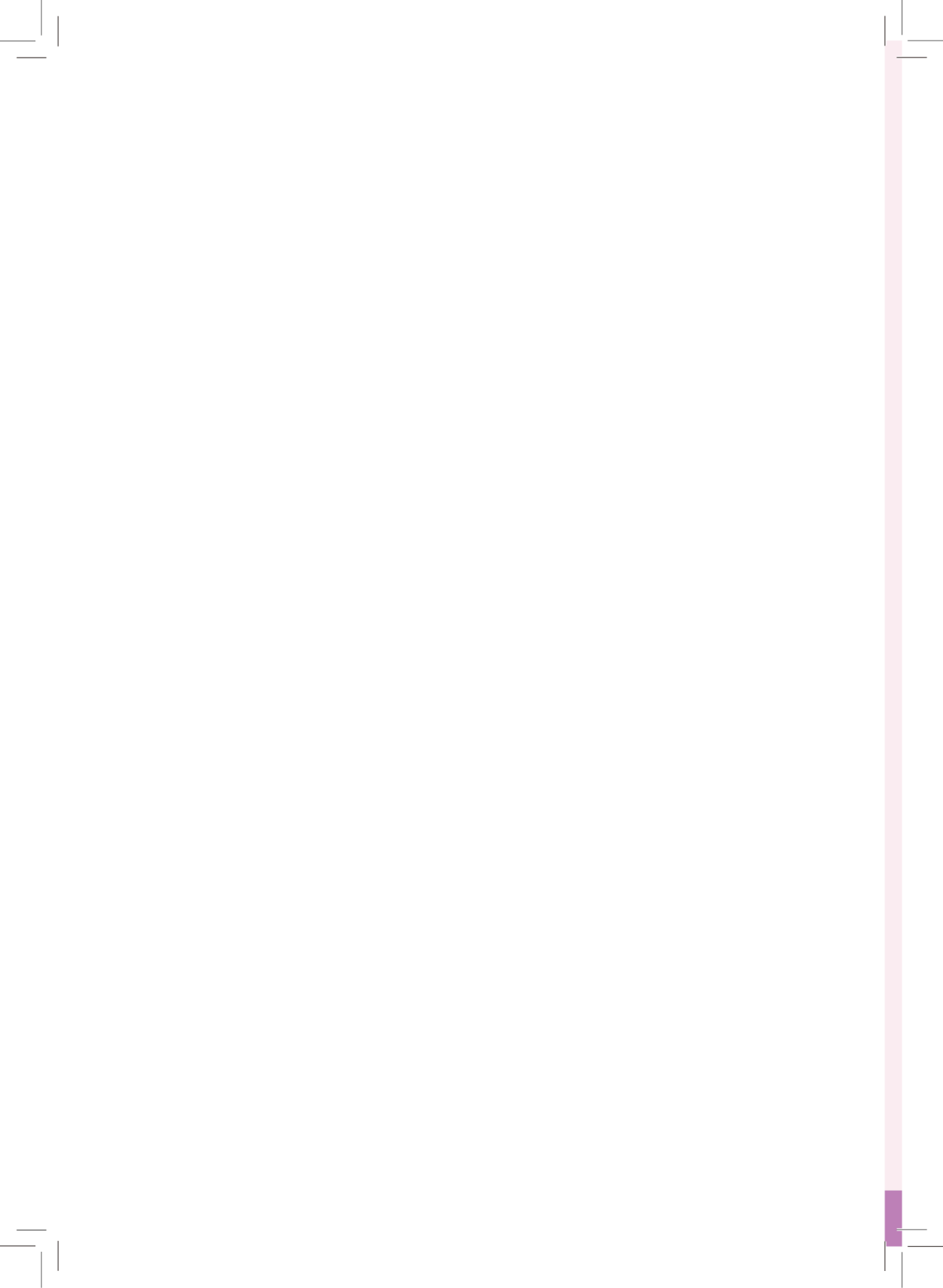
On Chanukah when we light a candle at home each night, our gratitude for the miracle is cumulative, each day builds on the previous day. Gratitude is not a one-off act or feeling. It is a perspective on life.

And we must be role models for our children in this crucial area. If our children see us as bastions of gratitude, then they will naturally warm towards being grateful people themselves. If they hear parents saying things like 'I know it's not been a good day, but I'm grateful for everything else...' that goes a long way to create a gratitude legacy.

DAILY GRATITUDE CHALLENGE:

Using all the things you have learnt about gratitude, can you now direct that gratitude to Hashem and thank Him for 5 things?







FAMILY SECTION

A story for parents to read with their child(ren)
each night, with a daily family challenge



THE UNGRATEFUL NOTE



It was a busy day in the playground. It is always busy in the playground. There are the year one children throwing a ball for others to catch, the year two group on the hopscotch, next them there are some year three girls skipping – the other half of year three are sitting in a circle and chatting. But the centrepiece of the playground is always the

football pitch in the middle. Here each lunchbreak five children from year five are chosen to play against five children from year six, cheered on by anyone who has gathered around the pitch to watch and hope that their teams win. It happens every Tuesday and it's a highlight of the week. Nobody remembers how many matches each team has won in the past – some say it's 10-7 to year six, others say it's 9-8. But it's all about what's happening now – who will win the current game? For the players and the fans, it's fantastic. Seeing the children run around after the ball, pass, dribble, shoot and sometimes score is the best lunchbreak social activity. But there are always one or two people for whom the match is not enjoyable. These are the substitutes. Two from each team. They sit there on the side looking on, hoping there is a chance that they will take part in the match, that they will be cheered on by their classmates. But the substitutes are rarely used – they sit and wait in hope. One afternoon that all changed.

Bradley from the year five team had just scored to put his team 3-0 up. Bradley heard everyone cheering but felt that something was not right. He then looked to the substitutes bench and saw Ashley sitting there – from the same class

but not cheering happily. Ashley was waiting in hope like the other subs. And Bradley realised it. **So Bradley decided to become a real hero.** He walked over to Ashley and asked him to get on the pitch: 'I need a rest, my leg hurts' said Bradley. Ashley almost couldn't believe what he had heard. He ran onto the pitch as quickly as he could to play his part in what turned out to be a memorable victory for year 5.

The next day in school something was up. Bradley was looking at Ashley all funny. Something was not right. Ashley tried to approach Bradley but Bradley kept ignoring Ashley. Everyone noticed but nobody could figure out why. After all, Bradley had been so kind to Ashley in lunchbreak yesterday. What could have gone wrong? In the end, the teacher got the two together. And remarkably, this is what they said:

'You see, I went out of my way to let Ashley play yesterday. I gave up ten whole minutes of football. And he didn't even thank me!' said Bradley

Ashley replied: 'wait, of course I said thank you. It was just a bit quiet. And I even wrote a note and put it on your desk this morning.'

'Well I never received a note or heard a thank you. And if I didn't receive it, you should have done more to give it.'

Ashley realised that though he'd tried really hard to thank Bradley – twice – Bradley had not heard or received his thanks. And Bradley thought Ashley was ungrateful.



What do you think? *Is Bradley right for not feeling thanked?
Or is Ashley right because he tried to thank Bradley?*

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Our story involved a note that did not reach the recipient. Can you write a thank you note that does reach the recipient?



SAVING THE DELIVERY VAN!

This story was told by Rabbi Daniel Fine:

One evening, I was driving home from teaching when I saw a delivery van in front of me. As I watched the van cross the lights just before they turned amber, the van's back doors swung open, and out spilled bottles of water and boxes of food. **I was faced with a dilemma – should I help the delivery man pick the boxes up?** It was in the middle of a large road, and it was not the kind of place you want to stop your car! Also, my wife was waiting for me at home and had told me to be on time! In the end, I decided that I would stop and help.

I drove up behind where the food had spilled and turned on my warning hazard lights. Once I ensured that the cars behind were passing into the other lane, I got out to help the frazzled driver. I was a hero! I had stopped my evening, stopped my car and saved this driver's stock and night! I imagined that I'd receive a gigantic thank you, perhaps a gift, some free stock, a selfie, the local news...

Yet though I got a meek thank you from the van driver, it wasn't quite as warm as I had expected... I guess the driver was still in shock about his mishap. When everything was safely back in the van, I drove off, happy to have made a kiddush Hashem.

The next day, I was driving back from Shul when I noticed a very similar delivery van! The same man was getting out of it, delivering food locally. I wound down my window to say hi, sure that he would now say a huge thank you for the night before, but it soon became clear that he did not even recognise me! I had thought that I was a hero, but this fellow did not even acknowledge me at all...



?

Was Rabbi Fine right to be upset?

What lesson can we learn from the story?

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

At home, pick a time to thank somebody meaningfully. Has there been a time you did not manage to thank someone for what they did for you? Can you feel the difference?

Now take that thank you and elevate it by thanking the person for doing other things for them...



THE FARMER WHO WENT ON STRIKE



Millie and her husband Brian are farmers. They love what they do. There's nothing they enjoy more than getting up early to milk the cows, check on the wheat and all the hard work and fun that comes with owning a farm (can you name ten jobs a farmer has to do on the farm?). Of course, it can get more difficult at times – wading through the dark and mud in large wellies winter is not quite as enjoyable as seeing the crops grow in the spring. But the effort, reward, hope and prayer is all part of farm life. And Millie and Brian loved it. **After all, their farm was a key part of the community – they supplied the milk to the local stores, the pharmacy and the school in their small village.** And the children from the school would tour the farm every few weeks. Life was bliss! Until things changed, that is.

Because though things had been wonderful for years, Brian and Millie were shocked to see a letter from their local shop saying that they had now decided to buy some of their milk elsewhere. And soon the school visits became less

and less frequent – the teachers felt that it was too much effort to tour the farm and instead played some videos about farms to some of the classes. Enough was enough for Millie and Brian. They had been such a key part of the community for so long and now they were slowly being pushed aside. Who was this new milk provider anyway? Some international milk company? Yes, the large company was probably selling at a cheaper price, but they aren't part of the community!

So Millie and Brian decided to go on a one-week strike! They gave a week's notice and then they stopped providing milk. They stopped providing tours of the farm. The school was in uproar – they couldn't get their milk! Parents had to come and collect their children early from school as a result. The local cheese company had to stop some of their production, which meant that families across the country couldn't buy their favourite cheese that week. All because Brian and Millie's farm went on strike! The local community even feared that the animals would not be looked after, so they arranged a rota to take care of the animals.

What do you think happened after the strike? I think everyone realised how much they needed the farm after all. And slowly but surely, they repaired their relationship with Millie and Brian and things got back to normal. But they did learn a lesson!



*In our story, people began to realise how much they depended on Millie & Brian's farm. **Can you list all the things the farm provided for people?***

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Can you discuss and then list ten things that you need each day for your day to run smoothly? Who helps provide you with the ten?



THANKS A THOUSAND – THE STORY OF A CUP OF COFFEE

AJ Jacobs is a Jewish bestselling author in America. He decided to go on a thank you journey. You see, Manhattan is a really busy place in New York. People work long hours and the shops and restaurants are open the whole time. And early in the morning many people queue outside coffee shops to buy a cup of coffee to start their day. Sometimes the queue reaches around the corner!

AJ Jacobs decided to thank everyone involved in making his cup of coffee. And that meant everyone. When the woman at the till handed him his cup of coffee he asked for her name and said ‘thank you so much for my cup of coffee.’ **The woman was astounded – ‘nobody ever thanks me; they just grab their cup of coffee and dash to work!’** AJ Jacobs then continued to walk into the kitchen and thanked all the kitchen staff for making his cup of coffee. He thanked the cleaning staff for keeping the coffee store (and his cup) clean. But now he had a problem. He had thanked everyone in the coffee shop, but where to now? Who else was involved in producing his cup of coffee.

He made a list. How does the coffee get to the shop? There must be trucks that deliver really early in the morning. This means that they must be driving through the night. ‘Where do these drivers park and where can I find them?’ He managed to track them down. He thanked them. In fact, he even asked them what music they listen to them to keep them awake when driving and called the music artist for the part she played in his cup of coffee arriving safely at the shop! AJ Jacobs tracked down the factory, he flew abroad to thank the coffee plant that supplies the beans – he even thanked the cleaning staff there for keeping bugs out of his coffee!

His book is rightly called 'Thanks a Thousand.' It's the story of being truly grateful for a cup of coffee!



FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Look around the room and name two items. Can you list all the parts of the item? Where did it come from? How many stages and people did it take to make the item and have it reach your home?



SAY GOOD!

This story took place in Jerusalem in an era before mobile phones. Phone boxes (public payphones) were the norm, and to pay for a phone call you'd go to the shop to buy a special type of token called an assimon coin. This assimon coin was a smallish coin with a divot in the centre. There was a professional gardener in Jerusalem who used to buy twenty assimon coins from the local makolet store every Friday. He would then proceed to use the payphone outside the makolet for an hour or so. This repeated itself week after week, with the store owner increasingly curious as to what these regular phone calls were.

Eventually, the store owner's curiosity got the better of him, and one Friday he stationed himself quite close to the payphone so he could hear the conversation. It turned out that the gardener was making calls to prospective clients offering his services as a gardener. As the store-owner continued to hear, each time the gardener was rejected. Each person told the gardener that they had no need for a new gardener – they already have an excellent gardener.



But week after week the gardener was determined – he kept making the calls and kept getting rejected each time. Feeling sorry for the man, the storeowner decided to try and step in and help the sorry gardener. Approaching his best assimon customer, the storeowner sheepishly made the gardener an offer: I have a balcony with a small garden on it – can I employ you to do the gardening there? Surprisingly, the gardener spurned his offer: ‘I’m sorry, but I don’t have time – I have enough clients and gardens to look after, thank you.’ The storeowner couldn’t help but admit he had overheard the conversations each week and that the gardener clearly needed the business. The response he got was astounding and also shows a lot about human nature.

“You don’t understand,” said the gardener. “I am a specialist gardener, and I work for the wealthy – those who have lovely, large beautiful gardens. But I never actually meet my clients – they give money to the maid or workers to pay me. I don’t actually know whether they appreciate my work or whether I’m doing a good job. So each Friday I call my clients pretending to be a different gardener and I offer them my services. One by one they refuse, saying that they already have a great gardener. That way, I know I am doing a great job!”

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Say five really good gratitude thank-yous today!



THE RIGHT WORDS

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv was a leading Rabbi who lived in Jerusalem. He lived until 102 years old (!) and was the source of guidance and wisdom for thousands of people from around the world. People would travel to him to ask for advice and questions from so many different areas of Jewish life. Rabbis would flock to his modest Jerusalem home to ask him complicated questions. The general population would come to ask him for blessings or guidance. He was the leading Rabbi of the generation, who would study Torah uninterrupted for hours on end. He would wake up early in the morning well before dawn (often without the need for an alarm clock!) to study Torah each day. As you can imagine, he was an expert in various parts of Jewish law – he had mastered the study of the many books it takes to achieve this level.

When he reached his late nineties, Rav Elyashiv needed an important operation. The operation was performed by an American surgeon, whilst Rav Elyashiv did not speak English. When they spoke before the operation, the words were told to Rav Elyashiv in Hebrew so he could understand. Thankfully, the operation was a success. And when Rav Elyashiv recovered, **he wanted to thank the surgeon.** But Rav Elyashiv felt that it would not be adequate to thank the surgeon in Hebrew, for that was not the surgeon's first language. Instead, Rav Elyashiv asked how to say a full 'thank you' in English so he could say it in a language that the surgeon would appreciate the most.



Do you think it was important to thank the surgeon in English?
Why?

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Make your words of gratitude meaningful by itemising them – say exactly what you are grateful for and what the person did for you



A TEACHER PERFORMS WONDERS...

DANNY AND THE APPRECIATION NOTES

This story has been told at multiple teacher training conferences.

The angle of the story is normally to emphasise the opportunity that teaching presents to really impact others' lives. But I'd like to gloss over the first part and instead focus on the end of the story: the appreciation factor – especially towards those who are 'just doing their jobs!'

Regardless of whether this oft-repeated story is fully accurate or not, we can put ourselves in the position of someone who has done so much to help a particular individual and appreciate how good it feels to be thanked.

Danny was a child who used to be top of the class, but soon sank towards the bottom. It wasn't his fault. Danny had a difficult family situation and things seemed to be going from bad to worse. Yet, his Grade 4 teacher Mrs Jones refused to give up on him. Putting in extra hours during lunch break to teach and re-teach him, and help him with his homework, Mrs Jones finally got Danny to the same level as the rest of the class and gave him a platform from which he could push on and succeed. It took a lot of extra work, but it was worth it. As Mrs Jones was clearing out her drawer at the end of the year, she took a moment to proudly reflect on how much progress Danny had made. And then something hit her. Or more accurately, she hit something. In her drawer she spotted an envelope. An unusual finding in her private school drawer, Mrs Jones opened the envelope to find a scribbled note that read,



“Thank you Mrs Jones, you are the best teacher ever and Grade 4 was the best year of my life – from Danny.” The moment complete, Mrs Jones saved the note and packed up her things, ready for summer vacation.

The next school year Mrs Jones kept rough tabs on Danny, but she also had a new Grade 4 class to teach, and so Danny in Grade 5 was not in her focus. A year flew by and as Mrs Jones was again doing her end-of-year clear-out she found another note. Echoes of last year going through her mind, Mrs Jones read the note: “Dear Mrs Jones, Danny here. Just to let you know that Grade 5 was really good. But you are still the best teacher and Grade 4 was still the best year.” A year later Mrs Jones was again clearing out her drawer, now almost expecting a note from Danny. But none was forthcoming. For that she had to wait a couple more years, with a note that read: “Dear Mrs Jones, I am now in my new school and flying – I’m doing really well in the work and exams. But you are still the best teacher.” Having nearly forgotten Danny, this was a welcome reminder. But there was one note left to come.

Ten years later, Mrs Jones received a final note. “Dear Mrs Jones, I’m now in college studying law in one of the best places in the land. I’m getting married soon and I enclose an invitation to my wedding. Because you are still the best teacher.”

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Find someone to express gratitude to for a job ‘they have to do anyway.’ We have included a card you can write to them.





GRATITUDE CARD

Cut out the card below and leave it for for someone you'd ordinarily not be able to thank.



Dear

From





THE THANK YOU THAT MELTED...

In the winter the road was packed with cars. In the summer the pavement was packed with children. That was the life outside Hillel High School. Though all the families lived locally, in the winter it was just too cold to walk – everybody drove to school. And in the summer everybody loved to walk to and from school. The students would skip gleefully away from school – loudly singing and joking with each other, in no rush whatsoever.

Until they passed Mrs Shoutalot's home. Nobody knew her real name, but she did shout a lot, so they called her Mrs Shoutalot. They never dared call it to her face, but they all thought that it wouldn't make a difference anyway. Mrs Shoutalot lived by herself and she didn't seem to like the noise of the boys and girls heading past her house on the way back from school. In fact, she hated it. And she made no secret of it. First, she would begin to shush, next she



started calling from her window for people to be quiet, and then she began screaming at everybody to be quiet. The routine was pretty similar: shush, call, scream. And it instilled fear into the children. They would rush past Mrs Shoutalot's home as quick as possible to avoid making any noise. Not that it would help – their rushed footsteps would get on Mrs Shoutalot's nerves and the shush, call, scream sequence would get even quicker.

But one day one of the brave children had an idea. It was Friday. The children were on the way home from school, looking forward to Shabbat. This child, Adam was his name, hatched a plan. Checking everything with his parents, Adam decided to go big and go bold. But he didn't tell any of his friends of his plan, just in case it would backfire. He bought a box of chocolates and left it outside Mrs Shoutalot's home. He attached a note that said 'Dear our wonderful neighbour. We really appreciate you allowing us past your home and are sorry if we are sometimes a bit noisy.'

On Monday afternoon the children dashed past Mrs Shoutalot's house as normal, expecting the regular hiss-to-scream express. But nothing happened. All was quiet. But there was a note left outside the door. Just that nobody dared to fetch it. Apart from Adam. And it read 'Dear Adam. I can't begin to say how much your box of chocolates means to me. You see, I've had a difficult life, especially when I was younger. It's not easy for me to hear the children being noisy. But from now on I won't shush or scream any more. Just do me a favour – don't call me Mrs Shoutalot!'

And that was the story of the time a simple gratitude note melted a heart.

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Thank somebody you don't normally get along with



THE LOUDEST ANIMAL IN THE JUNGLE



Once upon a time there was a competition in the jungle to see which animal could make the loudest noise. There were trials, rounds, quarter-finals, semi-finals and then finally three competitors made it to the final. The assembled crowd of animals (think the Lion King...) watched eagerly as the monkey, elephant and lion made their way to the stage to see who would be crowned decibel king of the jungle. Now they didn't possess sophisticated noise-measuring equipment, so the system they devised was to station judges at various distances from the podium; if the judge would hear the noise they would raise a flag as an indication. The sound that travelled furthest would thus garner the most raised flags. And so the competition began. First up was the monkey. Looking around and surveying the scene, the monkey let out his

best screech – and the judges 50 metres away raised their flag. Next up was the elephant, her trunk waving back and forth – and her bellow reached 75 metres. Finally, up strode the lion, with an almighty roar that shocked the crowd – and promptly saw the 100 metre flag go up. That was it. The judges were about to award the trophy to the lion – which was just as good as nobody wanted to become lion's supper should the lion be told that he had lost!

Just then a bird flew onto the stage. Ever so polite, the bird asked the judges if she could have a turn. Everyone looked and tried to stop themselves from laughing – what could this little bird achieve?! But out of a combination of curiosity and empathy, the judges waved the bird to start. The little bird puffed out its little lungs and emitted a little tweet – a flag went up 20 metres away. The animals could barely control their laughter. But just then another bird 20 metres away heard the call of the competitor bird and reciprocated – letting out a tweet too. 20 metres away from the second bird, a third bird heard the call of its compatriot and let out its own tweet. And slowly but surely, 20 metres by 20 metres, the bird's call reached the end of the jungle – over a kilometre away. The judges had to play by the rules – the winner was the bird.



If we want our words to have an impact, they must be genuine and meaningful

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

When thanking somebody today can you be fully focused and mindful of every word you are saying?



THE GRATITUDE LIFT

We will end our last day with two stories! But before that, can you think back to all the lessons you have learnt from this book so far? Which has been the most memorable and why?

There was a millionaire who built a new building. It took lots of investment but the building was finally ready. And what an impressive building it was. 100 floors and beautifully designed. To mark its opening, the millionaire decided to run a competition. Whoever could reach the top floor in the first hour would get \$50,000! As you can imagine queues of people lined up for the race. Within 20 minutes people were dropping out all over the place! They realised that the steps were so tiring and there was no elevator in use. It took them 20 minutes just to reach the 10th floor! By a further 20 minutes there were only two people left, and they were only on the 20th floor. They kept going, however, and with 5 minutes to go they had made it to floor number 35. They looked at each other and one pulled out. With 5 minutes to go the remaining competitor decided he would try muster up the energy for 2 more floors. And that's what he did. With 2 minutes left he reached floor number 37..and he saw an elevator ready which took him straight to the top floor! He won the competition!



In life we do our best to reach the highest level possible. But Hashem can lift us up to a higher level than we imagined. When we want to become the most grateful people possible, do your best and let Hashem do the rest.

I was flying from Israel to England on El Al. I know the drill on a flight very well. The air stewards serve refreshments and then the food relatively early into the flight, and then they get a rest at the back of the plane. It's during this break that the air stewards are most available, though they don't massively like to be disturbed. This was my chance. I walked to the back of the plane and very politely asked one of the stewards if he minded me asking him a question. He kindly agreed, whereupon I asked a question that had been bothering me for a while. 'I notice that you are very kind and courteous throughout the flight. You answer people's questions, bring them food and don't get angry even at difficult passengers. Tell me, does this impact on your life in general – have you become a kinder person since working for El Al?' The air steward paused for a few moments and thought, then confidently said 'Not really, but I like the question.'

Here was someone who was doing many kind actions each day, but it wasn't impacting him whatsoever. Why, I wondered?

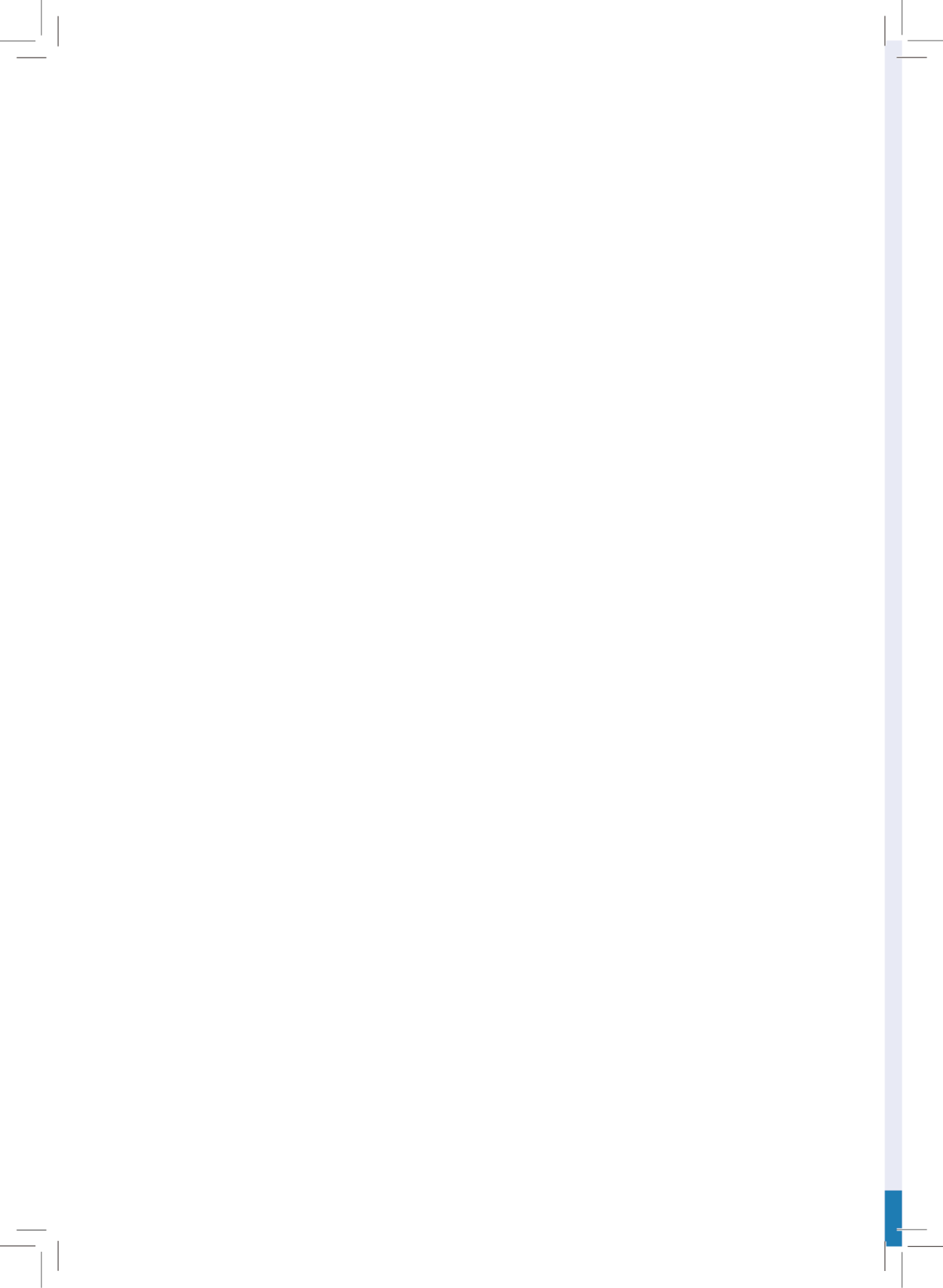
In order for an action to really impact us, we need cognisance and willpower. We need to be aware of the mitzvah we are doing, and we need to want it to impact us. This air steward was kind to people simple because it was his job. He didn't actively want or need it to impact his life. If we want our ten days to impact us, we have to make sure we want to be impacted.

On Chanukah we add a candle each night in our homes, as our gratitude builds up day by day. Gratitude is not a one-off act or feeling. It is a perspective on life.

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

Can you elevate your thank yous and make them more meaningful? And then graduate from thanking others wholeheartedly to thanking Hashem.







GUEST ARTICLES

Articles of gratitude guidance and inspiration from
leading educators and community figures





WHAT WE GAIN FROM GRATITUDE

Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE

Did you know that the word ‘Jew’ is synonymous with the word ‘gratitude’?

The Torah recounts the twenty-two-year journey of Yaacov and his family in Mesopotamia. During that time, his wife Leah had the privilege of giving birth to six children, each of whom would go on to become the head of a different tribe of Israel. Following the births of the first three children, Leah was feeling particularly low, and this was evident in the rationale she described for the choice of their names.

However, when it came to the birth of her fourth son, she was overwhelmed with a feeling of gratitude to Hashem. When she was informed that the child had been successfully delivered, she exclaimed “Hapa’am odeh et Hashem” – ‘this time I will give thanks to Hashem!’ Therefore, she called him Yehuda – coming from the root ‘todah’, which means thanks. As we know, it is to the tribe of Yehuda that nearly all Jews today trace their lineage, which is why we are called ‘Yehudim’.

And so, it makes sense that gratitude is such an essential character trait in Jewish tradition.

For example, whenever we recite prayers of thanksgiving we stand. When the Chazan reaches ‘Modim’ – the part of the Amidah which expresses our thanks to Hashem – he does not recite that prayer on our behalf. Every individual recites it for themselves because we do not ask another person to express gratitude on our behalf – we do it ourselves. If I am truly thankful for something, it is my responsibility to share that gratitude with them directly.



And what do we gain from placing such an emphasis on gratitude?

The Hebrew word for ‘thank you,’ is ‘modeh’, which means ‘admit’. This is because, when we express gratitude sincerely, we acknowledge that we could not have succeeded alone. That is why it is sometimes difficult for people to say thank you – it can be hard to admit one’s reliance on others. But the more we do so, the more we come to value the contribution of others to our lives and the value of our own contribution to theirs.

Gratitude is one of the hallmarks of a healthy society, because it helps to engender trust, love and responsibility. So, with every ‘thank you’, we plant another seed for a more compassionate and considerate world.

Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE



GUEST ARTICLES: DR WARREN GOLDSTEIN



THE GATEWAY VALUE

*Dr. Warren Goldstein,
Chief Rabbi of South Africa,*

Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, Chief Rabbi of South Africa, has a PhD in human rights and constitutional law, is a qualified Dayan (Jewish law judge), a member of South Africa's National Religious Leaders Council and author of five books, including, most recently, Shabbat – A Day to Create Yourself.

I would like to congratulate the Clean Speech Project UK for its bold vision to promote the highest ethical standards of speech in line with how the Torah guides us to relate to others. This year's theme is particularly significant because gratitude is, according to our sages, a gateway value - the gateway to basic moral decency, and the gateway to loving relationships.

Every act or gesture of kindness we acknowledge is a loving reinvestment in that relationship. On the other hand, the more we ignore or undervalue the kindness done for us, even the smallest gestures, the less we'll be able to find love in this world. Gratitude generates love between people.

This is captured very powerfully by King Solomon in the Book of Proverbs where he writes in the spirit of Divine inspiration, "As water is a face to a face, so too is the heart of a person to a person." This refers to the fact that the basic dynamic of any relationship is reciprocal. What we pour in - the love, the warmth, the affection, and the gratitude - is what will be reflected back to us from the other person. The more we show gratitude and express that gratitude in the way that we speak to those around us, the deeper these relationships become.

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, one of the great sages of the post-war generation, whose piercing insights into human nature have given us various treasured works of ethics and personal growth, explains that it is especially important to

show gratitude to those who are closest to us - our parents, siblings, spouses. These are the people that we are most likely to take for granted, from whom we are accustomed to receiving, to the point where we no longer see it as a kindness, but simply as the natural order of things we are entitled to. These small moments of gratitude every day make a marriage and nurture a family.

Rabbi Wolbe gives a very practical and powerful suggestion. He says that every day we should find three opportunities to express our gratitude to someone for something, and that this will be indeed transformative for us and others, creating a world of love, affection and connection.

Of course, in the same way we show appreciation to the people around us, we need to express our gratitude to God. It is not a coincidence that the very first words we utter when we wake up in the morning are “Modeh ani” - “I am thankful” - a deep expression of gratitude to God, not taking for granted the fact that we have woken up fresh and ready to face a new day, blessed with the gift of life itself.

Every blessing we say throughout the day is really an expression of gratitude to God for all of the gifts that He gives us - to the point where our sages require us to recite 100 such blessings a day. We recite blessings of gratitude to our Creator for the food that sustains us, for the wondrous natural world which we inhabit - upon seeing a rainbow, witnessing the awe-inspiring spectacle of lightning, inhaling a beautiful fragrance, or seeing the ocean for the first time in thirty days.

And so, I join the rallying call of this year’s Clean Speech UK campaign to place gratitude front and center, so that it can be our gateway to being more ethical and refined, our gateway to more love and connection in our lives, and, thereby, to more happiness.

Together, through the power of speech, let us create a kinder world with more love and more gratitude.



GUEST ARTICLES: MICHAL OSHMAN



THE 'COMPLIMENTS' GAME AND THE SHABBAT BLESSING

Michal Oshman

Michal Oshman was formerly Head of Company Culture at TikTok and International Leadership Executive at Facebook. Her unique approach to organisation and leadership has seen a successful 25-year career in Tech, Finance, and Advertising, where she has made a mark at global giants like TikTok, Meta, eBay, and WPP. Michal played a pivotal role shaping Tiktok's Global culture, advising to the CEO on all things Company Culture.

One of the most meaningful gifts I gave to myself and my family is deciding to observe Shabbat. Shabbat is the Jewish day of rest. From sundown on Friday until nightfall on Saturday, Jewish people are required to refrain from work, so Shabbat gives me twenty-five hours each week without phone calls, emails, television, shopping, travel, household chores or errands. I have the time and space to truly reflect on my soul and inner life and be present for my family.

Shabbat is the one day a week when my family will sit down to at least two meals together (Friday night dinner and Shabbat lunch). The children are not rushing to finish their food in order to get to their next activity because the next 'activity' is right there at the table - having a conversation with one another. They know that there are no devices and that no homework, writing or typing can be done on Shabbat. There is nowhere to run to or rush to it's all happening at home. Shabbat is a Jewish concept (the word and the idea of a sabbatical originated from it) but in our times, some 'unplugged' family time is something we can all adopt every now and then.

My husband and I are blessed with children who have powerful individual souls and strong points of view. They all want a seat at the table. They want to (and should) be listened to at home and at school. As their parents, Yair

and I try to influence the direction of our family conversations, because they ultimately shape the culture of the ‘company’ we’re leading - our home, our family. A few years ago, I recognised that too many of our family conversations ended up being negative and critical of each other. Saying we were ‘just joking’ wasn’t a solution, because there was always someone who got emotionally hurt. The children were also comparing and competing with each other (not always, but often enough). I reached a point of frustration and decided to take action. I thought about how I would deal with this in a corporate coaching environment, and I used my consulting skills to create a family game that became known as ‘Compliments.’

Friday night became our time for playing Compliments. The game is about introducing the belief that every family member does good and it develops the habit of looking for the good in each other, thereby the improving everyone’s self-esteem. The rule is that during Friday night dinner everyone has to pay at least one compliment to each family member. Every round, one family member is under the ‘compliments spotlight’, and they receive praise from the rest of us, one after the other. When we first started this, it was a real struggle.



GUEST ARTICLES: MICHAL OSHMAN



My eldest daughter and son couldn't possibly find any compliment to give each other, for weeks! They called each other 'enemies' (needless to say how much that annoyed me) and would argue non-stop at the dinner table. There were times we had long silences as we were waiting to hear compliments and sometimes the big children begged us to skip their turn they even offered to sacrifice their dessert for a pass! But I made it clear: saying nothing is not an option.

As the weeks and months went by, there was a real shift in our family. We 'discovered' goodness in each other. My son said to his sister, 'I appreciated your help with homework this week when I was stuck with the history assignment,' and his sister said back, 'I know you gave up football training this week so Mum could take me to my dance show. Thank you, I owe you one. My other son said, 'I saw you helping a child at school during breaktime and I thought that was cool'. And I said to my husband, 'thank you for giving me a hug when I needed it the other day. I know you were crazy busy and left a work call early to see how I was doing.' Yair hugged me again when I complimented him he knew I'd had a tough week.

After the first few uncomfortable weeks of silence and resistance, giving compliments on Fridays became an enjoyable routine. I knew we were doing something right when my youngest son said to me, ‘Mum, I’ve been spending the whole week looking for things that I can share as a compliment and I can see more of them because I know what I’m looking for.’

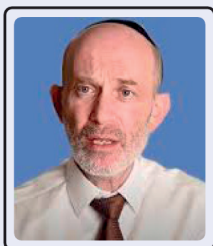
Compliments, gratitude and positive feedback are things we can all do more of. For some reason we hold back on saying something good even when complimentary thoughts about others naturally go through our minds. Judaism has a strong focus on showing gratitude. How will our children grow up to be grateful if they don’t see us as role models for expressing gratitude?

‘I value...’, ‘I thank...’, ‘I appreciate...’, ‘I love....’ By bringing these everyday, yet special words, into the family vocabulary, we can help our children recognise and say good things. Why should we wait for birthdays or big life events like anniversaries or graduations to say all the nice things that are in our hearts? We should say more, today. By making it a family habit to express gratitude and compliment one another, we are not only improving the family experience we have with our Children but also teaching them something they will bring to their future families. And we shouldn’t limit ourselves to only giving compliments at home; why not say something kind and meaningful to your colleague, your neighbour or your friends every once in a while?

By the way, it is said that we need to hear ten positive comments for every piece of criticism we are given. Clearly, criticism affects us so much more than praise, which is why we must make ten times the effort to look for the positives in our children.

With kind permission, from Michal’s book ‘What Would You do If You Weren’t Afraid?’ Creating A Meaningful Life in Uncertain Times, published by DK books.





GIFTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Rabbi Malcolm Herman

Rabbi Malcolm Herman is the CEO of Seed. He spent many years in Yeshiva and Kollel in Manchester, and has a law degree from the LSE. He was the pioneer of Seed's schools programme as well as several other creative initiatives, and co-authored a parenting book with Professor Gersch – "Everyday Parenting for Everyday Parents". He is a sought-after speaker known for his down-to-earth wisdom and Torah ideas, blended with a healthy dose of humour. He is also a parenting mentor advising parents to navigate life's parenting challenges.

It is 7.30 in the morning, the time you normally leave for work. To your surprise there's someone ringing on the front door "rather early" you think to yourself, "I wonder who that could be". You open the front door and to your surprise there was a man standing there in a pinstriped suit and quite unceremoniously he hands you a £10 note. You think to yourself either the guy is not quite with it or it's some crazy promotion, but you don't have time to discuss it, you simply take it, he turns on his heels and walks down the drive, you put it aside ready to return it if necessary. You don't give it much thought during that day until... 7.30am the next morning the doorbell rings, and there he is again with his £10 note, which he places in your hand without saying a single word. By the third day of the week and certainly the fourth you are expecting him, in fact this continues not for one week but for 2 and the weeks stretch into months and the months stretch into years every morning at 7.30am on the dot the man arrives. You begin to incorporate this into your family budget it's quite a useful extra after all. Several years in, it is the first day of term, there is extra traffic on the road and you have an appointment in town. As it happens you had mentioned to him that you had anticipated the traffic and that you had an appointment in town even though he is not the most communicative of personalities. That



particular morning 7.30am comes, but he does turn up! 7.32am you begin to feel slight irritation. 7.35am “this is ridiculous, he’s going to make me late this morning, I told him there was going to be traffic today”. By 7.40am you think to yourself, “you know what forget his £10 note it’s not worth the risk of being late.”

Later you are filling up your car with petrol and who is there at the pump in front? The £10 note man. You stride over to him shout out quite audibly “Where were you this morning? You know you made me late for my appointment?”

If he came for 25 years, would we have a right to remonstrate with him?

Absolutely not. So what happened? This simple antidote (first heard from the great Rabbi YY Rubinstein) illustrates a truism in human nature. Today’s gift becomes tomorrow’s expectation.

There’s a pattern. First we receive, then we become complacent and then we have expectations! As our expectations rise, our sense of gratitude declines. What is the antidote? To train oneself to constantly express gratitude. This simple practice of expressing gratitude is in and of itself an articulation, that I don’t take the gift for granted.

Habit becomes second nature and over time we become people that learn appreciate, not people that live to expect.

So this year in the Clean Speech Project UK we are once again aiming high. In the years gone by we focused on the power of speech and its impact primarily, on the subject of our conversation. When it comes to gratitude the ultimate impact is on the person who articulates the gratitude themselves.



GUEST ARTICLES: JO GROSE



POLES OF GRATITUDE

*Jo Grose, Chief Executive of the
United Synagogue*

Jo became Chief Executive of the United Synagogue in February 2023. Before working for the United Synagogue Jo was in leadership roles, at PaJeS and PJ Library following an earlier career in educational publishing. She is an active member of her local community – where her love of community-building was ignited – and is a trustee of the Yavneh Foundation Trust.

There's a photo on our kitchen wall that often draws questions from visitors. It shows a smiling toddler dressed in a bright blue anorak and shorts standing alongside and pointing to what looks like a lamppost. Why would this feature amongst the photos of family s'machot and baby photos?





SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

The toddler is my son Avi, then aged two. I had picked him up especially from nursery for this photoshoot. The subject of the photo however is not my cheerful son but, in fact the pole. It was the first eruv² pole to have been constructed in Borehamwood. And consequently the photo reminds us not only of a very significant moment for the development of the Borehamwood and Elstree community but also of the gratitude my family feels for those who helped plan and construct the eruv as well as for those who now check and maintain it.

Before the eruv's construction in 2010, Shabbats were lonely affairs for me. With two young boys at the time, no local family and with many of our friends in the same situation, I spent the mornings at home alone until my husband got back from shul. Whilst this did present opportunities for time focused on the children, I have vivid memories of holding a baby peering through the window at the outside world, watching people walk to and from shul and Shabbat meals. It felt as if all young families – and of course also those with disabilities – were excluded from community life.

Immediately, the arrival of the eruv transformed our Shabbatot. Suddenly shul, children's services, kiddush, shared meals and socialising in the park were possible, not to mention opportunities to bring along our third baby that was born subsequently to Shabbat afternoon shiurim. In an instant, Shabbat became both a family and communal experience.

I am deeply grateful to all those who made the eruv a reality. The planners, the campaigners, the funders and, of course, the London Beth Din. I am grateful to the council and the wider community who came to understand and accept its purpose and to all those who donate today to keep it running. Of course, there are times when I take it for granted. Often on returning from a Shabbat visit to a community with no eruv when I have to plan in advance and dig out a Shabbos belt, my gratitude is refreshed. And so to remind me to always show hakarat hatov (gratitude), the photo of the boy and the pole has pride of place.

² An eruv is a boundary recognised by Jewish law within which certain activities are permitted outside on Shabbat which are not permitted where there is no eruv. Examples include carrying items needed for Shabbat such as a Tallit bag or a bottle of wine, or pushing wheelchairs and prams.



GUEST ARTICLES: RABBI DORON PEREZ



GRATITUDE BEGINS WHERE EXPECTATION ENDS

*Rabbi Doron Perez,
Executive Chairman World Mizrachi*

*Rav Doron Perez is the Executive Chairman of the Mizrachi World Movement. Since assuming his position as the head professional of World Mizrachi in 2014, Rabbi Perez has focused on organizational transformation, providing a wide range of inspirational programming with Mizrachi currently active in 32 countries worldwide. He previously served the South African Jewish community for 15 years as the Rabbi of the SA Mizrachi Movement, Senior Rabbi of the Mizrachi Shul and the Head of Yeshiva College schools. Rabbi Perez has a BA in Jewish education and an MA in Jewish history and has authored two books - *Leading the Way* - a collection of writings on some of life's most important issues and recently *The Jewish State - from Opposition to Opportunity* - a manifesto on Zionism and Jewish statehood. The latter book is available in English and Hebrew and is currently being translated into Spanish.*

The very name Jew, Yehudi, reflects the essence of being Jewish. Our sages see a transformative insight into the essence of gratitude in the unusual naming of Yehuda, Judah.

This Time I Will Thank Hashem

After the birth of her first three children, Leah names her fourth child Yehuda which means thankfulness. She says at his birth - “**this time I will thank G-d** and she named him **Judah**” (Bereishit 29:35)

Why does Leah only thank Hashem when her fourth child is born? Often, it is the first child where one feels the most gratitude - all ‘firsts’ transform us in a unique way, not a fourth of anything. Why was Leah so happy when her fourth child was born?

Furthermore, the Gemara (Masechet Brachot 7b) states that until the naming of Yehuda there was not a person in the world who thanked Hashem the way Leah did.

This seems strange - not one of our forebears thanked G-d?



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

Something unprecedented happened at the birth of Yehuda that elicited an unparalleled expression of thanksgiving. What is it?

The answer is found in an incredible comment in the Midrash that Rashi cites on the naming of Yehuda.³

The Midrash states that Leah had a prophecy that Ya'akov was going to have 12 children. Knowing that he had four wives, she anticipated that each wife would have three children - twelve all in all. Therefore, when she had a fourth child, she wasn't expecting or anticipating it at all - only then was she able to truly thank Hashem. What a powerful message - **genuine heartfelt gratitude begins where expectation ends.**

We often are not truly grateful because we think that our blessings are something we deserve. The Hebrew expression is, מגיע לי - I deserve it. Of course, Leah should have three children, because all the mothers deserve three - that's the way of the world. Her first three children were therefore something that she expected and hence she was not genuinely grateful.

What made Leah's expression of gratitude for Yehuda so different from all those who came before was the fact that she thought the prophecy meant that she would not have more than three children. She thought this was absolute and therefore had zero expectation.

An Attitude of Gratitude

This insight transformed my life. I began to see that the enemy of gratitude is expectation - thinking we deserve things. Indeed, only where expectation ends does authentic gratitude begin.

Being a Jew, a Yehudi, as the name suggests, means to see all our blessings as a gift from G-d. If we live life in the present devoid of expectation for the future, focusing rather on service and contribution, we create an attitude of gratitude.

With this mindset, everything we have is an unexpected blessing. Life becomes an ongoing odyssey of deep appreciation and genuine gratitude.

³ Tanchuma 9, Bereishit Rabbah 71:4.



GUEST ARTICLES: RABBI DAVID MEYER OBE



מְזִמּוֹר לְתוֹדָה -

A TIME TO SAY THANK YOU

Rabbi David Meyer OBE

Rabbi David Meyer, the dynamic CEO of PaJeS since 2015, brings over three decades of educational expertise to his role. Renowned for transforming the landscape of Jewish school collaboration, he champions excellence, innovation, and cooperation. In his distinguished career he has been honoured with an OBE for Services to Education in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for 2020, and in May 2024 Rabbi Meyer was selected for the exceptional honour of lighting the torch at the Israel Yom Haatzmaut ceremony.

A few months after the heinous terrorist attack on 7th October, I travelled to the south of Israel to witness firsthand the devastation and brutality of that fateful day. It was a difficult and emotionally challenging visit, as I saw the sheer brutality carried out by those manifesting their hatred against the Jewish people.

We visited Kfar Aza, a kibbutz on the border with Gaza. The first thing that struck me was the beauty and tranquillity. You could imagine walking down the streets as people sat outside their homes, with laughter and music, enjoying each other's company. It had been turned into a scene of total devastation, with homes torn apart, burned, and riddled with bullets, and tragically, the loss of far too many lives. We saw the scene of the Re'im music festival massacre and passed countless other sites that bore witness to the terror.

Our itinerary included a visit to Ofakim, a town with a population of over 35,000 and over 15 miles from the Gaza border. Seemingly a safe, secure, and vibrant place to live, on שמחת תורה, a day of celebration, it was turned into a war zone. Highly trained terrorists, armed to the teeth, in trucks filled with weapons and ammunition, came there with only one intention: to



SCAN ME TO SEE
TODAY'S VIDEO

kill as many Jews as they could.

As we walked through the streets, we heard stories of incredible heroism, of those who fought off the terrorists with light weapons, sticks, and stones. They fearlessly confronted evil, trying to protect their families and their community, and tragically, in far too many cases, at the cost of their own lives.

Each home displayed a picture and a place to light memorial candles. As we roamed through the neighbourhoods, we lit candles until we ran out. At one home, I noticed next to the picture of their fallen hero, the family had displayed a Psalm. I assumed it would be a prayer to G-d for those fallen and for the safety and security of the hostages and those fighting for our Homeland. I was quite astonished to discover that they had displayed the psalm מְזִמּוֹר לְתוֹדָה, a Psalm of thanksgiving. A little further along, there was a huge poster with the same psalm.

How could it be that at a time of such terrible devastation, when people are feeling such a painful loss, they choose a prayer of thanks to Hashem?

Returning from the trip, this was perhaps the most powerful and memorable sight. It reflected the true strength of our nation and how, no matter how dark the times, there are always things to be thankful for.

The Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Mirvis, once pointed out that in the repetition of the עמידה, we answer amen to every blessing. The exception is the blessing of מוֹדִים, where the community joins in with the chazan. מוֹדִים is a prayer of thanks, conveying the important concept that when showing gratitude to G-d, we must all join in.

Especially during these dark and challenging times, it is crucial that we look for positive messages, and appreciate that despite the tragedies, things could have been worse, and despite the destruction, we have a past to celebrate and a future that, please G-d, will be a time of peace and harmony. So let us always make time to show our gratitude and say מְזִמּוֹר לְתוֹדָה.



GUEST ARTICLES: DEVORAH FINE



THE WORLD WITHIN VERSUS THE WORLD WITHOUT – GRATITUDE ON THE FAULT LINES

Devorah Fine

Growing up, we copy things from the world around us. Different cultures have different ways of interacting. But the more we grow and develop, the more we realise that whilst there may be convenient crossover between some Torah ideas and common culture, a deeper look leads us to realise that the things that look the most similar actually show that Torah and common culture could not be further apart. Gratitude is a great example. The world around us tells us ‘say thank you,’ ‘be grateful’ (remember the clap for the NHS?). But Torah has a whole new take on gratitude...

First, the Torah’s gratitude extends beyond simply thanking a person here and now. Torah gratitude applies towards deceased parents and even to inanimate objects, for example, Moshe did not hit the river that saved him. The Torah word for ‘gratitude’ is not ‘thank you’ – classically it is referred to as hakaras hatov, which means ‘recognising the good.’ We zero in on the good; the good we have received, the good that others have done, the good that others are. And we focus on it, then recognise and nurture it by expressing a deep debt of gratitude. We don’t find anyone saying a perfunctory ‘thank you’ in the Torah (beyond some wicked kings saying shallow thank-yous for our dream-interpretations, like Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar). We find role models living with hakaras ha’tov.

This is why the Torah models of gratitude are meant to be upgraded and utilised as launch-pads to serve Hashem. The Sefer Hachinuch writes that the mitzvah to honour parents is on the ‘between man and God’ side of the Ten Commandments, for we are to take our gratitude towards parents and apply this middah and perspective in hakaras ha’tov to Hashem for all He does for us.

But why is the Jewish perspective on gratitude so different to the western view?

The Midrash tells a story of a treasure found in a house that somebody was selling. The house buyer claimed that it belonged to the seller (!), the seller claimed that it was rightfully the buyer's. The judge ruled that the son & daughter of each party should marry, with the treasure gifted to the couple! Alexander of Macedon was attending the case. He remarked 'In my country the treasure would be taken by the Crown, and both parties punished!'

As Rabbi Shimshon Pincus writes, this Midrash highlights a sharp divide. The Western worldview revolves around rights, but the Jewish outlook is to focus on obligations – what I can give to others.

The Western world does not have God in the picture. Judaism does. Therefore, our interactions with the world are opportunities to grow, build ourselves and connect with Hashem. Gratitude is a great example of that.



GUEST ARTICLES: DOV FORMAN



GENERATIONAL GRATITUDE, LESSONS FROM LILY

Dov Forman

Dov Forman is a young author and social media content creator known for his work in the Holocaust educational space. He co-authored the New York Times best seller “Lily’s Promise” with his great-grandmother, Holocaust survivor Lily Ebert, which features a foreword by HM King Charles III. Dov has appeared on all major world news outlets and amassed over 1 billion views online, educating about the Holocaust, Judaism, and related subjects with his great grandmother. Dov is studying history at UCL and works part time for a former cabinet minister in Parliament.

Expressing gratitude is more than a simple thank you; it is a profound acknowledgment of the blessings in our lives, no matter how small. This lesson was instilled in me by my great-grandmother, Lily Ebert, a 100 year old survivor of Auschwitz. Despite the horrors she endured, her life is a testament to resilience, compassion, and an incredible capacity for gratitude and clean speech.

Growing up, I never heard a word of complaint or hatred from her. Instead, she radiated positivity and love, teaching me the art of appreciating even the smallest things in life. “Giving is receiving,” she would often say, emphasising that expressing gratitude is a form of giving that enriches both the giver and the receiver.

My great grandmother’s story is one of unimaginable hardship and loss. She witnessed the worst of humanity, yet she emerged with an unwavering belief in the goodness of people and the power of positive words. She often speaks about how the atrocities of the Holocaust began not with violence, but with words. Before the laws were enacted, before synagogues were destroyed, and before Jews were forced into ghettos, words were used to stoke the fires of hate.

“Auschwitz and the gas chambers did not fall from the sky,” she would say to me growing up. “They were built with words — evil, hateful words. And they were allowed to proceed to violence because of the absence of good words.” This ideology of hatred was cultivated over years, through propaganda and antisemitism, and it culminated in genocide. Her message to young people, like me and those she speaks to in schools, is clear: words and expressions matter.

One of the most poignant moments in my great grandmother’s life came in April 1945, when American Jewish liberators freed her from a death march. These soldiers’ words of kindness and compassion were the first she had truly received since the Holocaust began. “You are free now. Good luck and happiness,” they told her, offering not just liberation, but a reminder of humanity’s capacity for goodness. Those words have stayed with her to this day, a beacon of hope and a testament to the power of clean speech.

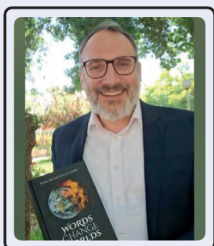
My great grandmother’s teachings remind us that expressing gratitude and using our speech for good are powerful counters to the negativity in the world. It is not enough to feel grateful; we must express it. By doing so, we create a ripple effect of positivity and kindness. Her life exemplifies this principle. Despite her past, she chooses to focus on the present blessings, constantly reminding us to be thankful for the people and moments that make life beautiful.

As survivors grow older and fewer, it is crucial for younger generations to hear their stories and understand the events that led to the Holocaust. The gas chambers and crematoria began with words—words of prejudice and hate. But just as words have the power to destroy, they also have the power to heal and build. By choosing words of gratitude and kindness, we can contribute to a world that values love over hate.

My great grandmother’s legacy is one of gratitude, resilience, and the belief in the transformative power of positive words. Her life teaches us that expressing appreciation is not just a personal act but a necessary one for the betterment of society. It is a lesson that I, and hopefully many others, will carry forward. We all have a choice in life—to act and speak with kindness or with evil. We must choose kindness, for our words have the power to change the world.



GUEST ARTICLES: RABBI MENACHEM SALASNIK



SEEING THE GOOD

Rabbi Menachem Salasnik

Rabbi Menachem Salasnik is a popular international speaker and educator. He is the author of the recently published book Words Change Worlds, exploring what ancient Jewish wisdom has to say about the power of speech. He balances his teaching with his clinic work as a Low Vision and Geriatric Optometrist helping those suffering from eye disease to maximize their remaining vision.

I recently wrote a book called **Words Change Worlds** about the power of speech and its ability to build and destroy. You may think that if I am the author of such a book, I must be a natural at positive speech. But this could not be further from the truth!

For most of my life I was a gossip, digging the dirt on anyone and everyone, especially those in the public eye or who were doing well for themselves. A very good friend of mine strongly encouraged me to learn the Jewish laws of Lashon Hara and negative speech with him (because he could see I needed to!!) and I reluctantly agreed.

I want to share with you one of the ideas I learnt near the beginning of my study that changed my perspective on all of this. There was a Rabbi who lived about 800 years ago in Catalonia called Rabbi Jonah of Girondi. In his book Gates of Repentance, he writes, “There are two negative aspects of the one who speaks Lashon Hara. Firstly, he causes damage and embarrassment to his friend, and secondly, he chooses to portray his friend as guilty and wicked, and rejoices over his misfortune.”

When a person says something negative about someone else, he will sometimes cause them pain and damage. But he will always destroy himself. He chose to be happy over someone else’s misfortune! He danced at someone else’s downfall! How low can one get?

And then Rabbi Jonah continues with a cryptic comment, “The flies always rest on the dirty places.” We will often walk along and see excrement left by a dog on the pavement and one thing that can be guaranteed is that it will be covered by flies! Rabbi Jonah is saying that there are people who are like flies; they live in other people’s filth. But you can’t live in someone’s filth without getting filthy! Would it not be better to be like a bee who spends its life seeking out and choosing the best smelling pollen to take home and make into something even sweeter?

This is our choice in life, to be a fly or a bee. When I learnt this important piece, I suddenly recognised a crucial and personal truth. I was so focused on the negative around me, all the imperfections and ‘half empty glasses’, that it had turned me into a mean spirited, unhappy person. More than any harm I had caused others with my negative focus and speech was the harm I had done to myself.

I realised I had to make a change. I set myself a challenge – every day I would think of one positive aspect of one person (a different person every day) and write it down. I started with people who I was close to, people who I liked, as that would be easier. After doing that for 2 months I moved onto people I didn’t know so well or people I felt neutral about. And after a further 2 months I was ready to write about people who I really disliked and find something positive in each of them too.

After 6 months my whole mindset had changed, I was so much happier because I was surrounded by lovely people (the people hadn’t changed of course, only my thoughts)! But then I realised that this was only the first step. If I could find goodness in others, shouldn’t I be able to see the goodness in myself too? Wasn’t the drive to disparage others just an outcome of my own low self esteem?

Each one of us is a precious and sparkling diamond! It is true that sometimes that diamond has fallen in the grime and it has become difficult to see its shine, but deep down, when you give it a scrub, it is a beautiful and valuable thing. For our own happiness, we need to start learning how to become ‘diamond cleaners and polishers’, both of others and of ourselves.



THE 30-DAY GRATITUDE CHART



Tick off each day that you express proper gratitude to three people

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6
DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12
DAY 13	DAY 14	DAY 15	DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18
DAY 19	DAY 20	DAY 21	DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24
DAY 25	DAY 26	DAY 27	DAY 28	DAY 29	DAY 30