



Institute for Jewish Spirituality™

Cultivating Mindfulness. Deepening Connection. Enlivening Jewish Life.

Omer 5781: ***Hodayah: Cultivating Gratitude*** ***with Rabbi Myriam Klotz***

This week the river banks of our Omer practice steer us from the steady, bold waters of *Netzach*—that capacity to persevere with conviction and strength—into the waters of the *sephirah* of *Hod* (“Splendor”). Here in the flow of *Hod*, we put down the paddle with which we have steered our kayak. Here, *Hod* invites us to ride with the currents of what is happening, just as it is. As the energetic compliment to *Netzach*, *Hod* asks us to surrender our ideas of how things could or should change or be. Instead, we not only loosen our grip on the paddle. We put the paddle down. We practice being right here, right now. Can I yield my wants, desires and convictions, set them aside and let the changing currents take me on this river of living? Can I soften around my willful efforts and simply be present to what is, right now, just as it is? Can I trust that this moment, this breath, this being, *this*, is enough, and offers me fullness and aliveness, just as this is?

It is not always easy to yield and receive what is, in all of its imperfect wholeness. It can be difficult to accept a person or situations just as they are, as part of creation’s manifestation right now. Especially if the situation, relationship, or condition is unpleasant or painful, or if we see an injustice we want to interrupt or suffering that we want to alleviate, we might resist mightily the surrender or yielding to what is beyond our control.

Or if something is pleasing and going according to our hopes we might want to hold onto that experience, person, or commodity, forever. We may try to persevere at keeping a dream alive when it no longer serves. We may fear that what we now have is not enough and we grasp at it in hopes of bringing more so that we will feel satisfied and secure.

Hod invites us into the quiet grace of a surrender supple enough that through it we can yield our opinions; loosen our attachments; acknowledge, and even appreciate the ever-changing nature of our existence and our experiences.

Connected to the *sefirah* of *Hod* is the quality of *Hodayah*, gratitude. If I find myself up the proverbial “creek without a paddle”, can I, paddleless, practice accepting what is? First, I acknowledge the reality of the moment: I am up the creek, in a kayak, and I don’t have a paddle. Deep breath. I acknowledge that this is so. No paddle. Now, enter the practice of *Hodayah*: what is it that I AM grateful for in this moment? I have a kayak. I have a life jacket. I have clothing on my body. There is sky above me, creek banks to my left and right. I have shoes on my feet. I have food in my belly. I have this breath. There is no alligator snapping at the stern. I have this body. I am, gratefully, alive. I am here, right now, to experience this moment in its imperfect wholeness.

Rabbinic Judaism offers a practice guide for cultivating gratitude through the *mitzvah*, the sacred act, of offering one hundred blessings each day. The obligation to find one hundred actions or moments to bless in a single day requires that we bring attention to what is happening in the everyday ups and downs of our lives. If we wait until just the right conditions arise in order to feel and express gratitude, we would likely never reach a goal of 100 blessings in a day, 100 moments of pausing to say to our Creator, “Thank You”.

So, this week is an opportunity to practice saying “thank you” more than usual. “Thank You” for this apple, even if it has a brown spot. “Thank You” that I am alive just as I am, even with fatigue or frustration or my foibles such as a forceful inner voice that says I am not enough. “Thank You” for the bright sunshine even if the temperature outside is too hot or too cold. “Thank You” that I have teeth in my mouth even if I have a toothache in one of them today.

This week, we focus on our capacity to accept life on its own terms, softening around our desires, cravings, aversions, delusions and perseverative habits of wanting it to be otherwise. Even if we haven’t perfected our expressions of *Chesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferet* and *Netzach* yet, this week is a great time to practice accepting where we are, where others are in their human journeys, just as they are. Practicing graceful acquiescence, like water that flows or pools in accordance to what is driving it or containing it, let us seek to cultivate gratitude, *hodaya*, finding something to be grateful for in the blessing that is manifesting even in the midst of this imperfect, ever-changing constellation of conditions.

May you feel satisfied with what you have, with who you are, and what you encounter.



May you be blessed in your surrendering with the sense of it yet being ok. That there is something to be grateful for, even so. May you find in the yielding, in the stillness of soft presence, your own emergent, authentic “Thank You’s”, awaiting your gaze and your embodiment, just as you are.

Kein y’hi ratzon: may it be so for us, and for all beings, in this fifth week of the Omer.

