



November 29, 2025

VaYeitzei

29 Kislev, 5786

The Thanksgiving Jew

You may be surprised to hear that the word “Jew” does not appear in the Five Books of Moses. The Torah refers to our people as the Children of Israel, for we are the children of our patriarch Jacob, who was given the additional name “Israel.” Israel fathered twelve children, who became the twelve tribes of Israel.

The name “Jew” comes from the name “Judah,” which means “thanksgiving.” Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and his wife Leah. As we read in this week’s Parshah, “And she conceived again and bore a son, and she said, ‘This time, I will thank [odeh] the L-rd!’ Therefore, she named him Judah [Yehuda].”



Why, then, are all Jews called by the name of just one of the tribes, Judah? What is it about thanksgiving that captures the essence of the Children of Israel?

Thanksgiving is easier said than done.

We often look around and wonder why some of the people around us are so ungrateful. Why don’t our children appreciate all that we do for them? Why does our spouse not show gratitude? Why do our co-workers take us for granted?

To understand why the feeling of gratitude is so elusive, we must examine the Hebrew word for “gratitude,” *hodaah*, the root of the name Judah. *Hodaah* also means “to acknowledge,” as in acknowledging that another’s opinion is correct.

Why do these two seemingly distinct ideas, thanksgiving and acknowledgment, share the same word? What possible connection do they share?

The answer is that the key to being thankful is acknowledging the other’s perspective. To illustrate: a mother does so much for her child, yet does the child really appreciate it? The child may take the mother for granted, thinking that she is just doing what she is supposed to do as a mother. After all, argues the child, isn’t this her job? The only way the child can genuinely feel grateful is if he adopts her perspective, if he appreciates all her sacrifices and all the time she lovingly dedicates to him.

The same is true of a spouse. We can say thank you for an act of kindness. But to truly feel grateful, we need to see the picture from the perspective of our spouse. We need to appreciate all the thought, feeling and energy that was invested in this one act. Only when we acknowledge and appreciate the other’s point of view—*hodaah*—can we say *today*, “thank you.”

To be a Jew, then, is to possess the ability to see beyond the obvious, to acknowledge the other’s perspective. To be a Jew is to experience the pain of others, as well as rejoice in their happiness as if it were our own. To be a Jew is to acknowledge and accept the perspective of hope and joy even in the midst of great hardship.

There is an ongoing and long-standing dispute between the creation and the Creator. Our perspective is that our life, health and success is due to our independent efforts, and that the only one we need to thank is ourselves. From G-d’s perspective, however, the entire Universe is being brought into existence every moment by the word of G-d. From His perspective, the only true reality is the G-dly vitality within every created being.

The Jew has the responsibility to see the world from G-d’s perspective, to cultivate the point of view that focuses on the spiritual rather than on the physical. The Jew possesses the gift of acknowledgment—and can therefore experience genuine thanksgiving.

(by Rabbi Menachem Feldman from www.chabad.org)

Our Story

Our Parashah relates the beginning of Yisrael's exile, in the face of its first enemy, R' Baruch Leizerowski z"l (1908-2000; rabbi in Lodz, Poland; post-war Munich, Germany; and Philadelphia) noted in a 1954 Derashah. Esav wanted to kill Yaakov, so Yaakov needed to flee. Esav hated Yaakov because he claimed that Yaakov took the blessings that belonged to him, and so it has been in every generation since: Esav's descendants hate Yaakov's descendants and claim that the latter have stolen their wealth, their business opportunities, and so on. Based on these and similar excuses, they aim to wipe out Yaakov and his family. Yaakov, having no choice, must flee from one enemy—Esav—to the land of another enemy—the destructive and deceitful Lavan.

Along the way, "He encountered the place and spent the night there, because the sun had set" (28:11). Our Sages teach that the sun set early that day. While it was still bright outside, it suddenly, unexpectedly, became dark. This, too, is the story of the Jewish People in exile: on the one hand, the world seems to be enlightened by science and technology, but, on the other hand, we sense that darkness pervades the world.

In the midst of all this, Hashem shows Yaakov what he desires most to see: the place of the Bet Hamikdash (see 28:17). Hashem is telling Yaakov, "In this bitter and dark time, take refuge in My holy place—in My Shuls / synagogues and Batei Midrash / Torah study halls." That is where Hashem is directing us, Yaakov's children, when He brings darkness in the middle of the day. (Ta'am Baruch p.139)

(by Rabbi Shlomo Katz from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Community Information of Interest

November 29: Prelude to October 7. But Who Knew?! Disaster: The War with Hezbollah in Lebanon 2006. Winter Lecture Series by Rabbi Dovid Katz. These lectures are given on Saturday nights and are held at Congregation Shomrei Emunah. This lecture will begin at 8:00 p.m.

We happily wish Mazel Tov to
Eli and Mali Cline
on the **Birth of their Daughter,**
Dina.

Eli and Mali Cline are sponsoring Kiddush after daveing
this Shabbat in honor of their Simcha.



Kol Hanaarim – every Friday evening during the winter at **7:30 p.m. in The Shul**. Cholent and pastries are served. Each session is 'topped off' at the end with a fascinating story by Rabbi Eli Itzkowitz. For any questions, please see Rabbi Itzkowitz.

DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 11/28 — 8 Kislev

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 4:26 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:25 p.m.

Shabbat, 11/29 — 9 Kislev

Shacharit 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:28 a.m.
Minchah — 4:15 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Shkiah — 4:44 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 5:28 p.m.

Sunday, 11/30 — 10 Kislev

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.

Monday, 12/1 — 11 Kislev

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, 12/2 — 12 Kislev

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, 12/3 — 13 Kislev

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.
Tanya Shiur: 2nd part of Tanya Shaar HaYichud
V'Emunah which deals w/the nature of creation
and the unity of Hashem — 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, 12/4 — 14 Kislev

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.
— **ותן טל ומטר** starts with Ma'ariv

Friday, 12/5 — 15 Kislev

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 4:25 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:25 p.m.