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The Executive of the Union of Orthodox  
Jewish Congregations of India wishes its  
constituents, well-wishers, and Jewish  
Communities in India and abroad, a  
Happy New Year, 5723-(1962-63).

# "Gratitude"

## V. Thankfulness as Confession

Ultimately, the ability to achieve this higher form of gratitude is an integral aspect of character—it requires a humility based upon deep insight. That insight is—our own weakness and inadequacy in the presence of Almighty G-d. When we are grateful to Him, we are cognizant of the infinite distance between our moral failings and His exalted spirituality. Basically, gratitude to G-d means acknowledging our dependence upon Him. We confess our need of Him, our inability to get along without Him. No wonder that in Hebrew the words for "I thank"—*Modeh ani*—also mean: "I confess!" I confess my need of You, I thank You for coming to my assistance! The *Modeh* prayer we recite upon arising each morning means not only "thank You, G-d" for returning my soul to me; it means also, "I confess, O G-d," that without You I would never wake up alive!

This gratitude, the kind we have called thankfulness rather than mere thanksgiving, is what we Jews have not only been taught by our Tradition, but what we bear as a message to the world by our very names. The concept and the practice are deeply ingrained in the very texture of the Jewish soul, and this is reflected in the name "Jew." For the word "Jew" comes from "Judah," which is the English for *Yehudah*—meaning "thank G-d." This is the name of Leah's fourth son, at whose birth Mother Leah reached the heights of sublimity in fashioning, for the first time, an expression of thankfulness issuing from a profoundly religious personality. "Jew" is a name that we ought, therefore, bear with great pride and a sense of responsibility.

We conclude with the words of David: *Hodu la-Shem ki tov, ki le'olam hasdo*. Usually this is translated, "Give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His love lasts forever." I would paraphrase that, in a manner that is consistent with the syntax of the Hebrew verse: "Give thanks to the Lord, for it is good," i.e. it is good for the heart and soul of the thankful person to be grateful, "for His love is over all the world."

Wherever man seeks, no matter how desolate the landscape of his experience and environment, he will find evidence of the great goodness of Almighty G-d.

NORMAN LAMM