

A hand is shown holding a piece of paper against a teal background. The paper has Hebrew text at the top, followed by the word 'MEBASSER' in large, bold, black capital letters. Below that, in a smaller, italicized font, is 'Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of India Publication'. In the top left corner of the paper, the number 'U2' is handwritten in blue ink.

# מבשר

## MEBASSER

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## “GRATITUDE”

### I. A Rational Principle

A thousand years ago, the great Rabbi Saadia Gaon thought that our Torah is reasonable and that the human intellect, by itself, can ultimately discover the great truths taught in Scripture. As an example of how reason can provide us with these principles, he offers: gratitude. The very first thing our reason tells us is that one ought to be grateful. Hence, from this principle of gratitude, we learn that a man ought to pray. It is reasonable that we pray to G-d out of gratitude to Him.

Intelligent people should not be ingrates. That is why Jews recite the *Modeh Ani* immediately upon arising, why they say the *Modim* as part of their prayer, why they recite the *Birkhat ha-Mazon* after eating. It is the first dictate of human reason.

It is all the more amazing, therefore, to learn of a remarkable comment of our Rabbis on the Bible's narrative concerning the birth of Leah's fourth son. She called him *Yehudah* (Judah) because “this time I shall thank the Lord” (Gen. 29:35). Our Sages say, “from the day G-d created the world no one had thanked Him until Leah came and thanked Him upon giving birth to Judah, as it is said, ‘this time I shall thank the Lord’” (*Berakhot* 7). Noah, Shem, Eber, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—the founders of the true religion—were they so callous and indifferent that they never acknowledged G-d's gifts to them? Were they, then, unfeeling, unthinking ingrates?

Indeed not. For a deeper understanding of gratitude reveals that there are two levels of gratitude. Gratefulness can be understood as courtesy—or as conscience; as a social gesture—or as sacred grace; as a way of talking—or as a state of the soul; as an aspect of personality—or as a part of character.

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