

## This time I will give thanks. (29:35)

*Rashi* explains that Leah *Imeinu's* present expression of gratitude coincided with the birth of her fourth son, Yehudah, because she now realized that she had received more than her equal share. Since Yaakov *Avinu* had four wives and was destined to have twelve sons, each wife would be expected to have three sons. With the fourth son, Leah had taken more than her share. In the *Talmud Berachos 7b*, *Chazal* make what seems to be an enigmatic statement. "From the time that Hashem created the world, no one had come forth and thanked Hashem until Leah came along and offered her gratitude." Does this imply that Avraham *Avinu*, Yitzchak *Avinu* and the matriarchs did not offer gratitude? How are we to understand this?

Obviously, the commentators explain this, each in his own manner, thereby teaching a lesson concerning the significance of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude. The **Ksav Sofer** offers a practical understanding of Leah's gratitude. The *Avos* and *Imahos*, Patriarchs and Matriarchs, certainly expressed their gratitude to Hashem for the many *nissim*, miracles, which they had experienced. Leah went one step further: She thanked Hashem for what is a natural experience. Childbirth, albeit dangerous, is considered natural. There is pain involved; unquestionably, things can go wrong, but this could occur anytime, anywhere. One must praise Hashem *al kol neshimah u'neshimah*, "For each and every breath," because each breath, although accepted as natural, is a miracle. One lives only through the will of G-d. Leah taught us the critical importance of recognizing G-d in *teva*, nature. Do not wait for the miracle to occur before you say thanks. Life is a miracle and we must learn to appreciate and savor it – not simply take it for granted.

Perhaps we might take this further, along the same lines. A young couple marries and is shortly thereafter blessed with a child. This is cause for great celebration, as both parents are "treated" to something new, something transformative. They are no longer a couple; they are a family. They are now parents. What a wonderful blessing for which they are thankful.

Shortly thereafter, number two is born. The joy is definitely great, but less of a novelty than number one. When number three arrives with no complications, the excitement is beginning to be taken for granted. Leah taught us that everything is a gift from Hashem – regardless how often and with what ease. We thank Hashem for number four in the same manner as we expressed our gratitude for number one. When Hashem's blessings arrive with comparative ease, we begin to take them for granted. How different things would be if the "ease" was not there, if the blessing had involved some sort of adversity. We must never take our blessings for granted. Every gift that we receive from the Almighty is accounted for on a Heavenly computer. There is a reason behind everything that occurs. Nothing should be taken for granted. Everything should be appreciated.