

Accessing more

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Rosh Hashana 2018 fell out on a Sunday night. I left to Uman on Thursday night and had the most uplifting last *shabbos* of the year there. Some time later, when talking to my wife, I noticed that she was upset at me. She couldn't believe that I just assumed it was ok to leave the family for shabbos too. I didn't even discuss the idea with her. She said, "It's already hard enough that you leave the family for Rosh Hashana, but when you leave for the shabbos before too, it makes me feel unappreciated".

I sat there listening to her and I knew that she was right. Of course, I said I'm sorry and I'll try to be more appreciative. The next week, during *hisbodedus*, I was praying to be more grateful and I noticed something profound. When we're ungrateful, we are very much unaware of what's happening around us. Conversely, when a person is appreciative, he

notices a lot of the good in his life. In Hebrew it's called **חַסְדֵּי חַיִּים**, which literally means recognizing the good. When we're grateful, we're significantly more alert and aware of what's going on in our life.

Reb Nosson develops this idea ([Kilei Beheima 4:6](#)):

King David sings in *Tehillim* (Psalms 3) "A song by David, as he was escaping from his son [Absalom](#)". The Talmud asks (Brachot 7b), "A song? [Who sings a song during such a calamity?], he should of said "A dirge by David"! The Talmud answers, that David knew that a son has compassion on his father, so he was at least happy that it was his son who who made him a fugitive. Reb Nosson explains: David was in such a state of distress, fleeing from Jerusalem for his life from his traitorous son, that his mind was warped and he literally couldn't cry out to Hashem, as he was used to doing. He became so infatuated with his stress, that he was losing his mind. But because of his great righteousness, Hashem lit up his eyes with an idea. He could at least thank Hashem for all the good that he had until now. Little by little he started to feel grateful until, amazingly, he was actually able to see something good about the situation he found himself in; that at least his son might have compassion on him, as opposed to a stranger trying to usurp his kingdom. **בְּחִסְדֵּי חַיִּים** **חַסְדֵּי חַיִּים** **חַסְדֵּי חַיִּים**, even in the most difficult position, he found space to praise Hashem. Only through this meditation, did his mind open up. He found a part of himself that he was previously unable to access.

This is why we sing [Psukei D'zimra](#) before we pray each morning, (and the [Amidah prayer](#) itself also starts with praise of Hashem). In order to access our deepest place of need, we must first – as my friend Reb Leibish says – "bliss out" on Hashem. That intense exalting, which takes work, is a key to a deeper place in our soul. When we're ungrateful, we're unaware. It's like walking in the dark. We don't see everything that's being done for us, and Reb Nosson is saying,

we don't even know ourselves. But when we work on finding the good in all the situations, it's like turning on the lights and we're able to see clearly what's happening on the outside and simultaneously deeply access what's on the inside.

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