

## Yom Kippur Family Service Skit/ Sermon 2017 Gratitude



I want to talk to you today about gratitude.

Now, you may already be feeling thankful. I get it. We've got a good thing going on in here. Almost makes you forget about the chaos of the world out there.



We need tools to be able to live in this messy, unpredictable world.

Tools that can ground us in goodness each night, and help us wake each morning to see the world as a gift waiting to be opened.

We need tools that are easily accessible, memorable, and meaningful...tools that work for kids and adults.

Guess what? We have them ready for you.



I know we're used to skits with dragons and glo-sticks and Olaf. We're trying something new today. This is a 10 minute sermon. No props. No costumes.



Start your watches – we’re about to upload our best Jewish toolkit for living lives that are grounded in gratitude. Tools that can help connect us to something larger than ourselves. Tools that will remind us that it’s not all about us (and that’s a good thing!)

If we do our job well, by dinner tonight, or breakfast tomorrow, you will be talking about using the following tools:



**1. How to acknowledge amazement with blessings.**

**2. How to turn ordinary moments into something extraordinary.**



**Tool #1: Acknowledge amazement with a blessing.**

Okay. Picture this: You are at the beach. Or hiking on a mountain. You are driving West on the 10, and you're watching sunset...a beautiful sunset.



Let's call this a moment of Radical Amazement.

And it's not just about nature: You see a child comfort a parent who is in tears. You notice the kindness exchanged between two strangers. Radical Amazement for our capacity to love. Radical Amazement for what we have the privilege to see.

Judaism prepared for these moments of awe and wonder by giving us prayers and blessings. "Here!" yell our ancestors, "Take these words and place them in your mouth and on your heart and deep in your kishkes (that's your belly), and when you have one of these heart-achingly beautiful moments, use them!"

## MAH GADLU: Psalm 92:6

Mah gadlu maasecha Adonai,  
m'od amku machsh'votecha.

מֵהַגְּדֹלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ, יְיָ,  
מְאֹד עֲמֻקּוֹ מַחְשְׁבֹתֶיךָ.

How great are Your works, Adonai, how very subtle  
Your designs!



So, here's what you say: Mah Gadlu Ma'asecha Adonai – From Psalm 92. Translation: “Wow, God, the stuff you make is really great!” For short, practice saying “Mah Gadlu” – How great!

Joel: *Look a beautiful sunset!*

Zoe: *Mah Gadol!*

Joel: *Ummm...Gadlu. It's Gadlu.*

Zoe: *Oh. Mah Gadlu!*

Tifani: *Look, everyone in our family is around the table tonight to celebrate Shabbat.*

*Even our Bubbe who is 90 years old!*

Danny: *Woo-hoo! Baaaah Gadlu!*

Tifani: *Mah, Danny. Mah. Not Bah.*

Danny: *Oh. Mah Gadlu!*

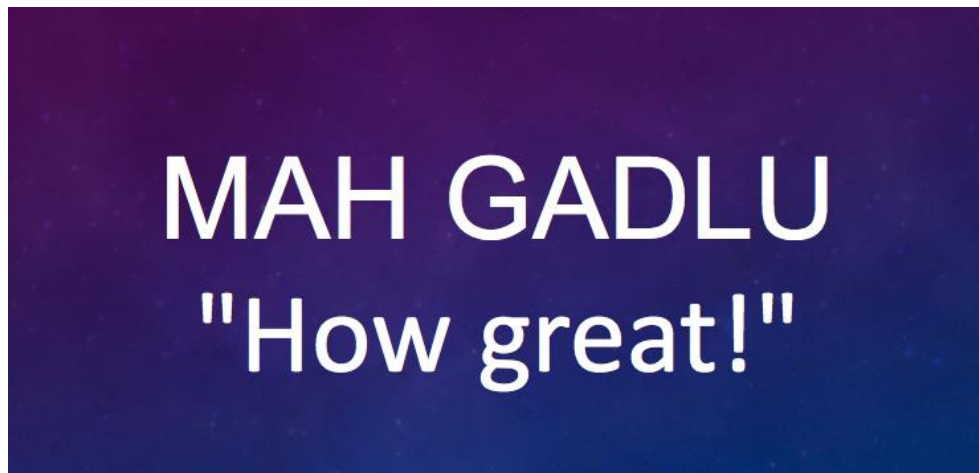
With practice, these words of gratitude can anchor us to goodness and beauty, even as the moments fade.

Blessings like Mah Gadlu can help us focus on what's important: NOT the traffic on the 10, but the Sunset. NOT the food being served for dinner but the guests who have arrived.

This year, we want you and your family to feel anchored by the weight of a tradition that has guided our people for thousands of years. It's still guiding us today, if we're ready to listen.



Here's your first High Holy Day Challenge: Start the practice of connecting your moments of radical amazement with words from our tradition.



Mah Gadlu. (Practice one more time.)

Okay. I think you got it.



Now, it turns out, Judaism pays as much attention to the Days and Moments of Awe, as it does to the **Days of Moments of Ordinary**. Surely, you're familiar with the Days of Ordinary.



How many of you practice the same routine each day? Wake up. Make breakfast. Get ready to leave the house. Same traffic. Same stress. Same dinner routine. TV. Homework. More emails...and then sleep. Maybe.

It's familiar. It's ordinary. It's unchanging. It's uninspiring. And much of the time, it feels like it's not enough.

And that's dangerous. Dissatisfaction can gnaw at us. Make us irritable. Make us short-tempered. Make us quick to blame others for why we feel unfulfilled.

This practice of gratitude is not just for the amazing moments when we are aware of our blessings, it's also for moments when we have forgotten what we have...when we think we have nothing...when we long for something more.

In those moments, our tradition offers the practice of gratitude to reframe and rename that which lies before us.



The way we say gratitude in Hebrew is breath-taking: the term is *hakarat ha'tov*, literally, 'recognizing the good'. To practice gratitude is to be fully aware of the good stuff that is already yours!<sup>1</sup>

This is one of the many reasons to learn Hebrew. Built into the Hebrew word for gratitude is the secret to how it works.

Let's talk truth: We have a bad habit of paying attention to what we're missing rather than what we have.

Zoe: *I need a new iPhone!*

Tifani: *No. Your old one is fine.*

Joel: *I want a new car.*

Tifani: *We just bought one a few years ago.*

Danny: *I must have this guitar.*

Tifani: *Danny, you have 6 guitars at home and 2 at work.*

Danny: *But, I neeeeeeeeed it!*

Sound familiar?

So, here's the offer: Learn how to see abundance not scarcity. Learn how to signal to your friends and family, "Hey, look over here! You thought it was nothing, but this is some good stuff!"

And just as we linked radical amazement to Mah Gadlu, we're offering you a short and very efficient prayer to punctuate these moments:



Hal'lu Yah – Praise God. Look at all that we have.

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Morinis



Joel: *Scrambled eggs for breakfast again?*

Zoe: *Hal'lu Yah! How good it is to have this food before us and to join in a meal together as a family. Can I get an Amen?*

Joel: *AMEN!*

Tifani: *Ugh, this traffic is terrible. What a waste of time.*

Danny: *Hal'lu Yah! We have a car to sit in. There's great music on the radio. And look, that guy just let you merge without protest. Can I get an Amen?*

Tifani: *AMEN!*

“Judaism is all about taking the mundane and making it sacred. Practicing mindful eating, mindful speaking, waking up in the morning and singing (not complaining)... It is about not being bored, but being floored by the wonder of it all.”<sup>2</sup>

This year, can you and your family work harder to see ordinary moments as extraordinary? Clean water and electricity in our homes. Food in our fridge and on our table. Parents and siblings and friends who show up day after day and offer us love and support.

We spend a lot of energy noticing the laundry, the dishes, the homework, the grocery list. This year, can we learn to look again and see the blessings that surround us every day?



Here's your second High Holy Day Challenge: Practice using Hal'lu Yah to reframe and rename the ordinary moments. Turn them into a moment for gratitude and blessing.

All right. Let's review.

1. Mah Gadlu

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<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Zoe Klein

## 2. Hal'lu Yah

And, now, one more: Todah Rabah. Thank you very much.



A practice of gratitude changes the way we see the world. And when we begin to see the world differently, we change how we live within in.

Imagine waking up in the morning and instead of saying, “I didn’t sleep enough” or “I don’t have enough time,”<sup>3</sup> we choose a different response. We choose gratitude.

Todah Rabah. Thank you.

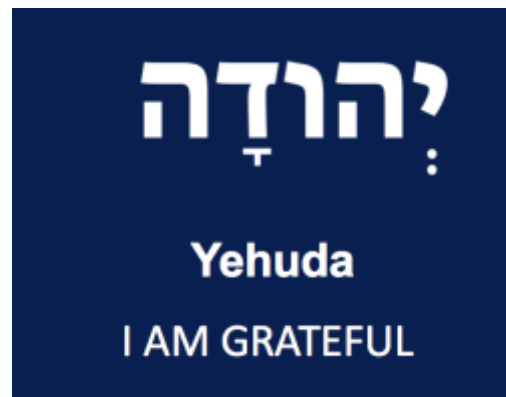
*Zoe: For the morning sun and the chance to start again, todah rabah.*

*Joel: For coffee and cream, todah rabah.*

*Tifani: For the embrace of a toddler still in pajamas, todah rabah.*

*Danny: For my voice, for my breath, for all my guitars...todah rabah.*

We are the Children of Israel – Israel, whose Hebrew root means “to wrestle”. We love to wrestle. It’s a big piece of our identity. But the name Jew derives from Yehudah...



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<sup>3</sup> Summary of online article Two Toxic Thoughts You Accidentally Think Every Day

Yehuda, Hebrew for the name Judah, literally means “I am grateful.” Are any of you named Judah or Judith? Your parents were very grateful!

Yehuda was the name given to Jacob and Leah’s 4<sup>th</sup> child in the book of Genesis. We are the descendants of Judah, the Yehudim. Therefore, we are not only the children of Israel, we are the children of gratitude. We are the inheritors of awareness and appreciation...and, parents...we are the teachers, as well.

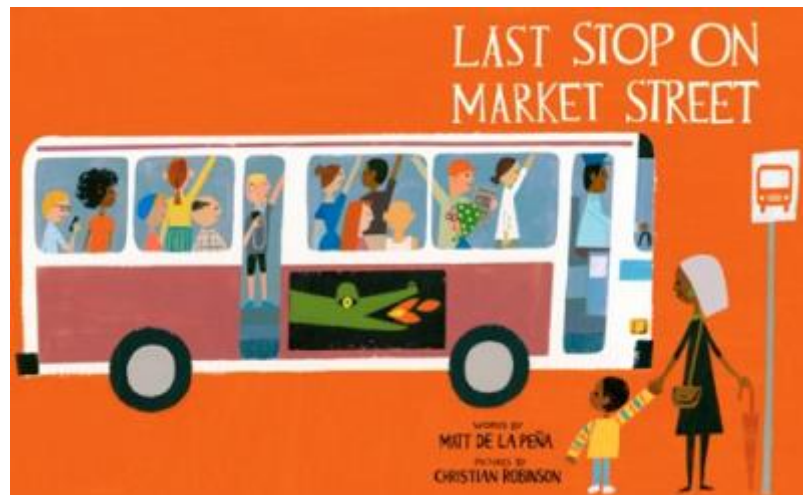
Parents, you’ve got to model this for your kids. They learn by watching you. They notice when you bang the steering wheel because of traffic. They notice your frustration when the day doesn’t go as planned. This year, Reframe and Rename.

Hal’lu Yah. We are safe in this car and I hope there hasn’t been an accident.

Todah Rabah. Thank you for the time we do have together.

Mah Gadlu. Help us to look at our life through the lens of gratitude, hakarat hatov, and recognize the good.

A practice of gratitude helps us see the full picture: the yearning and the sadness, the frustration and the failing, AND the beauty and the goodness.



In the children’s book, Last Stop on Market Street, CJ is amazed that his Nana “always found beautiful where he never even thought to look.” That’s what we’re offering through this ancient practice of gratitude: Learn to see the beautiful and the blessed wherever you look.

We’re almost done. Time to review:

**Mah Gadlu.**  
**Hal'lu Yah.**  
**Todah Rabah.**

Turning these words into a daily practice is a challenge, but we think you're up for it. Try doing it this way:

1. Assign one expression of gratitude to each member of the family. It's that person's job to find an appropriate moment to use the phrase at least once a day.





- Put a notecard on the wall in the kitchen as a reminder for blessings at meals. You can see my notecard behind the twins – it says Buckle them in...and say a blessing of gratitude. It scrappy, but it works.



- When you're feeling overwhelmed, that is exactly the time to reach for hakarat ha-tov: Recognize the good. Your health depends on it. Your kids depend on it.

You model. They follow. You reframe. They rename. You sing out Hal'lu Yah. They echo.

