

## “BEGINNING WITH GRATITUDE”

The first words we are instructed to recite upon waking in the morning?

“I am grateful to you Oh God for restoring my soul to me.”

Before we are grateful for any blessing, we are grateful for life, the capacity to receive blessing in this world. Thankfulness is the fundamental religious posture; ingratitude the foundation of sin.

Most of what we have we did not earn: our intelligence, creativity, upbringing, the functions of our bodies, the solicitude of others. We are born into a world where medicine, food, communications, clothing, homes -- all exist without our creating them. We are the beneficiaries of freedoms for which we did not sacrifice and institutions we did not build. Still, we are obsessed by the idea we have not gotten what we deserved.

In Yiddish, writes I.B. Singer, “There is a gratitude for every day of life, every crumb of success, each encounter of love.” In the Talmud Rav declares thanks to God for the ability to give thanks. The New Year has begun, and it will be filled with difficulties, with trials, with pain. Alongside lavish blessing will be tests of our patience, wisdom, and fortitude. Has life ever been without such things? Could it be? Thank God we are alive to face challenges, able to feel, able to thank.