

# Mastering the Gratitude Attitude

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By Joseph F. Dumond

June 17, 2011

**(Extracted from News Letter 5847-014)**

**15th day of the 3rd month 5847 years after the creation of Adam  
The 3rd Month in the Second year of the third Sabbatical Cycle  
The Third Sabbatical Cycle of the 119th Jubilee Cycle  
The Sabbatical Cycle of Earthquakes Famines, and Pestilences.**

**June 18, 2011**

It was just over two weeks ago that I did the talk with Jono at <http://www.truth2u.org> / about living with an unconverted mate. Before it aired and then more so after, I have been asked so many questions about this or that in relation to living with our husband and or wife who just so happen to be non-believers. Some of the situations have been heart breaking. You can read some of the comments that I have received at Jono's site. We are going to do a follow up show on this subject very soon.

But here is something for all spouses to read which also contributes to the squabbles we have in our marriages.

Great article....(Jewish wisdom/values)

## **Gratitude Opens Every Door**

By Sara Yoeved Rigler

One of the most moving scenes I ever witnessed took place at Gate B2 of the Baltimore airport. In a chair-studded corridor leading from Security to the departure gates, I had set down my carry-on and taken out my prayer book in hopes of reciting my morning prayers. A denizen of dozens of world airports, I suddenly heard a sound I had never before heard in any airport: applause.

Are people greeting a rock star? I wondered. Don't rock stars fly in private jets? The applause subsided, and I continued with my prayers. Two minutes later, however, I again heard clapping, accompanied by cheers and ululations. I suppressed my curiosity and tried to concentrate on my prayers. The noise died down, but a couple minutes later another wave of applause and cheers picked me up and carried me to Gate B2.

A crowd of about 30 people was gathered at the gate, facing the entrance to the jet way. Some were waving American flags. Lined up against the wall leading from the jet way were five uniformed sailors and several sundry civilians, including a black T.S.A. official. A new round of applause and cheers rose up. I weaved my way through the crowd to glimpse the object of all this adulation. At the entrance to the jet way I spotted him: an old man in a wheelchair.

The fellow pushing the wheelchair stopped to let the old man absorb his rousing welcome. The man smiled and weakly lifted his right hand to acknowledge the crowd. As the wheelchair slowly moved past the receiving line, the sailors saluted, the others nodded, and the T.S.A. official stepped forward, shook the old man's hand, and said in a heartfelt voice, "Thank you for your service."

The wheelchair moved past, a quiet lull ensued, and then another round of applause for the next deplaning passenger: another old man, standing wobbly on his own legs, leaning on a cane. He paused, looked up in surprise at his hero's welcome, as if not quite understanding all the hullabaloo, and then continued his limping gait, past the saluting sailors and the waving flags. He stopped only when the T.S.A. official stepped forward, grasped his hand, and said, "Thank you for your service."

"What's going on here?" I asked the young woman beside me. "Who are these men?"

"They're World War II veterans. They've come to see their monument in Washington, D.C. "

Sixty-six years had passed since these men, then mere boys, had come home from the war, having seen their buddies die, perhaps being wounded themselves. Sixty-six years, and here at Baltimore airport, a few dozen cheering Americans, most born long after the war, were still grateful for their service.

I joined the crowd, clapping loudly as each old man, most of them in wheelchairs, paused at the jet way entrance for his moment of glory. My eyes filled with tears. Something profound was taking place here at Gate B2.

When the last wheelchair rolled off toward baggage claim, I approached the T.S.A. official. "I want you to know that I was very moved at how you thanked each and every veteran," I told him. "We all clapped, but you were the only one who put the gratitude into words. And words are very important."

He appreciated my appreciation. "Well," he said humbly, "I myself served, so I know what they've been through."

### Opening Doors with Gratitude

Gratitude is the skeleton key that opens every door: faith, love, joy, even success in marriage. Gratitude is what distinguishes a mensch from a wretch.

Madelyn Weiss, a Miami lawyer specializing in divorce mediation, took a post-graduate seminar on the subject of divorce. At the first session, the professor went around the room and asked each student, "What is the main cause of divorce?" Some students answered, "Finances." Others answered, "Infidelity." Finally, the professor shook his head and declared, "The main cause of divorce is ingratitude."

"When the husband isn't grateful for all that the wife does for him," Madelyn explained to me, "or when the wife isn't grateful for whatever the husband does, despite his faults, the marriage just spirals down into criticism and back-biting."

The Bible records that in Egypt at the time of the Ten Plagues, God instructed Moses to tell Aaron to strike the earth with his staff in order to initiate the plague of lice. Jewish sages explain that it would have been wrong of Moses himself to strike the earth because decades before the earth had benefited him when he used it to bury the body of the Egyptian taskmaster he had killed. They infer that if Moses had to show gratitude to the earth, an inanimate object that had helped him involuntarily one time decades before, how much more so must we all show gratitude to every human being who helps us voluntarily, even once, even long ago.

The essence of every Jew is the ability to be grateful. But that ability exists only in potential. Gratitude, like gymnastics, is an acquired skill. Even if you're agile, if you don't work hard at it, you'll never be a gymnast. Even if your mother told you a million times, "Say, 'thank you,'" you'll never be a grateful adult unless you develop your gratitude muscle. The aerobic exercises for developing gratitude are:

1. Recognizing the good
2. Perceiving everything as a gift
3. Expressing gratitude

## **Related Article:**

### **Mastering The Gratitude Attitude**

#### Recognizing Good

The Hebrew term for "gratitude" is "hakarat hatov," which literally means, "recognizing the good." With many people and situations, it's as hard to find the good as to find Waldo amid 200 tiny figures. Gratitude requires:

- Entering the three-star hotel room your spouse reserved for your anniversary and focusing on the beautiful view instead of the garish furnishings.
- Noticing all the toys that your child did pick up rather than the five Duplo pieces that he didn't.
- Focusing on how well your housecleaner cleans the floors and windows even if she's a little lax with the dusting.

For those who object that noticing the good while ignoring the bad is a Pollyanna-ish failure to see the whole picture, let's be humble enough to admit: No one ever sees the whole picture. Human beings are complex. Even if you have lived with a person for decades, you cannot see all of his depths or all the secrets of his past (let alone his past lives). As I learned in Perceptual Psychology 101: Human beings see what they want to see. Choosing to see the good—recognizing the good—may be the best choice you'll ever make.

#### The Entitlement Poison

Nothing kills gratitude like a sense of entitlement. If I'm entitled to quiet neighbors, then I'll never be grateful for the tranquility in our building until the noisy new neighbors move in —and then I'll be irate at their loudness. If I'm entitled to good health, then I'll never be grateful to God for the flawless functioning of my myriad cells and systems until I get a bad diagnosis — and then I'll ask, "Why me?"

The antidote to a sense of entitlement is a sense of gift. The person to whom every sunset, every wonder of the body, every bag of groceries packed up by the supermarket bagger is experienced as an unearned gift will always be happy.

Developing a sense of gift requires:

- Being grateful to the taxi driver for getting you to your destination even though you paid for the ride.
- Being grateful to your spouse for doing the laundry or dishes, even though you agreed that that was his/her job.
- Being grateful to God that you can see to read this article, even though you've always had the gift of sight.

## **Related Article:**

### **Path of the Soul #3: Gratitude**

#### Expressing Gratitude

Unexpressed gratitude is like a gift purchased and wrapped, but never given. Once we've noticed the good and experienced it as undeserved, we have to express it in words.

Recently I asked my teenage son to put away two cans of spray paint he had used in a project. Five minutes later I walked by and saw that the cans were indeed put away. I called out to my son, "Thank you for doing what I asked the first time I asked you."

He replied, "Thank you for saying that."

With a jolt I realized how rarely I thank my children for doing "what they're supposed to do." His gratitude for my gratitude woke me up and made me want to express my appreciation much more often.

That's why I expressed appreciation to the T.S.A. official for his saying, "Thank you for your service" to each veteran. As I ran off to catch my flight at Gate B9, I passed two soldiers in grey camouflage fatigues. I stopped and said to them, "Thank you for your service." Why should they have to wait 66 years?

To bring Sara Yoheved Rigler's Gratitude Workshop to your community, contact [slews@aol.com](mailto:slews@aol.com).

This article can be read on-line at: [http://www.aish.com/sp/pg/Skeleton\\_Key.html](http://www.aish.com/sp/pg/Skeleton_Key.html)

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Sara Yoheved Rigler is the author of the new *Battle Plans: How to Fight the Yetzer Hara* (with Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller), as well as the bestsellers *Holy Woman* and *Lights from Jerusalem*. She is a graduate of Brandeis University. After fifteen years of practicing and teaching meditation and Eastern philosophy, she discovered "the world's most hidden religion: Torah Judaism." Since 1985, she has been practicing the spiritual path of Torah. She is a popular international lecturer on subjects of Jewish spirituality and also presents two highly-acclaimed workshops for women. To invite her to lecture in your community, please write to [slews@aol.com](mailto:slews@aol.com). She resides in the Old City of Jerusalem with her husband and children.