

Grateful for Being Spared: Prayers and Commentaries

The Gomel Blessing (traditional blessing, recited during the Torah reading, for coming through a dangerous passage in safety)

Those reciting the blessing say:

*Baruch ata adonai eloheynu melech ha'olam,
ha-gomel lachayaveem tovot, shehg'malanee kol tov.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, Sovereign of all time and space,
Who graciously bestows favor even when we haven't "earned" grace,
and Who has been gracious to me.

The congregation responds:

Mee shehg'malchem kol tov, hoo yigmalchem kol tov, selah!

May the One who has been good and gracious to you this time,
be good and gracious to you at all times. Amen!

Rabbi Joseph Karo, codifier and kabbalist- 16th Century

The word *chayim* [life] serves to remind us of four situations when a person must give thanks. Chavush: one who was released from prison. Yesurim: one who was healed from illness. Yam: one who survived an ocean voyage. Midbar: one who crossed a desert. – Shulchan Aruch 119:1

Rev. Robert Fulghum – best known as the author of *All I Really Need to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten*

[When might we feel grateful?] When small miracles occur for ordinary people, day by ordinary day; when not only did the worst not happen, but maybe nothing much happened at all, or some little piece fell neatly into place. The grace of what-might-have-been-but-wasn't, and it was good to get off scot-free for once. The ecstasy of what-could-never-happen-but-did, and it-was-grand-to-beat-the-odds-for-a-change. Or the bliss of just what-was-for-a-day when nothing-special-took-place and life-just-worked

My grandfather says he blesses God each day when he takes himself to bed having eaten and not having been eaten once again. "Now I lay me down to sleep." In the peace of amateurs, for whom so many blessings flow, I thank you, God, for what went right today! Amen. – Robert Fulghum

Fanny Neuda, liturgist - died 1894

Adonai punished me severely, but did not hand me over to death - Psalm 118:18

Eternal Sovereign, full of mercy, how I thank you
For the healing you have allowed me to receive.
Seriously ill, tortured by pain and suffering,
I was laid flat, drained of strength,
Surrounded by fears of death.
But in the narrow place,
I called out to you, and you helped me!
From death's murky alleyways
You have guided me back
Into life's gleaming meadow.
Instead of the shadow of death
You have given me the cheerful light of day.
You have not separated me from my friends
And all those who are so beloved and near to my heart.
In your mercy, you have given us back to one another
And reunited us. With such delight,
I feel myself growing stronger each day.
I feel health streaming through me.
Praise and thanks to you, Most High.
Every new heartbeat is a prayer
Of thanks and praise to you.
Every hour of my existence
Is dedicated to you in love and gratitude.

All-compassionate One, you have given me life
For the second time,
Even though I don't greet it now
As I did the first time,
With a child's innocence and purity,
Yet I hope that through my suffering
I have been able to atone for some things.
I hope I have been purified and cleansed,
So I might begin my life anew.

How precious life is!
Until this moment I have often spent my days
Frivolously, without much use or piety.
I often frittered my time away
In idleness or worthless diversions,
Occupying myself with activities
That are total strangers to life's true purpose.

From now on I resolve
To pay better attention to my time.
No day shall be lost to me.
Each day shall be of value for my work on this earth,
For my soul's redemption, for my heart's fullness –
And every night I will ask my inner judge
To assess my day's work.
From now on I will open my heart
To every joyful influence.
I will celebrate the good
That the Holy One provides for me.
Even when that good is but a small one.
I will rejoice in the good fortune of my neighbors,
And I will be happy for whatever chance I may have
To do something useful for them.

I will struggle with strength and endurance
Against everything that is hard and unholy in my life.
With courage and with patience,
I will strive to lighten and improve it.
And when my struggle feels hopeless,
I will bring my concerns and worries
To the Parent of All, the One who cares for me,
The One who helps me carry heavy burdens,
The One who supports me when I falter,
The One who gives me confidence
And grants me redemption.
To the Holy One, I entrust my way,
And God guides me in safety.
When all forsake me, when no one can or will assist me,
Then you, O God, are my never-tiring help and rescue.
I hope for your eternal help. Amen.

– **“Thanksgiving For Recovery”** by Fanny Neuda, died 1894; *Hours of Devotion: Fanny Neuda's Book of Prayers for Jewish Women*, Dinah Berland, editor.