

GRATITUDE – A BLESSING FOR THE NEW YEAR

By Yehuda Tagar

Happy new year to everyone.

For my first Vitalita article of 2020 I chose a blessing: an act of conscious appreciation for all the human and natural resources that I have as a step in my own personal development, to share with you.

I found myself on the 2nd of January, in the middle of intense preparation for the new term that is about to start – overwhelmed by the gratitude of what 2019 has given me, and what so much in and around me are giving me continuously, and I felt so grateful. And with this gratitude in me I could communicate with all the elements of my life, thinking of the great resources that sustain my life and relationship and development and work, and I wrote a prayer for the resources of my life. I called it: *'Resources – a prayer for the new year'*. I add this prayer at the end of this article in English and Slovak.

We are so used to wanting to have more, to try to improve our circumstances, to aspire to be more than we are, to be successful. We are disappointed when we are not successful, critical of ourselves, life and everyone in it for our many disappointments. We are very critical people and we appreciate our critical thinking so much. It gave us the state of human civilization that we have and the science and technology that we are so proud of.

But our critical capacity has a cost, and our commitment to have more than we have is unsustainable. There is a deeper dimension of personal development than the aspiration to be more and to have more: the aspiration to appreciate more what we already have, and to experience conscious gratitude for it. The evolved human being is not only the one that is a more powerful, successful, and capable person – but also the one that is more respectful, appreciative and grateful for all that we already have, personally and collectively.

Sustainable personal development requires a growing appreciation for the gifts of nature and of the human community that enabled us to be here alive and in existence at all and which keep us alive and in existence now. Out of waking up in appreciation to the gifts of creation that we already have – our contributions for future creation will be informed and educated by the wisdom of creation itself, so that what we do today will be a good gift for the future, as beneficial for the long-term development of humankind – as the best of what was given for us in the past is a good basis for who we are today. The evidence of the irresponsible aspects of human unsustainable development of the past 100 years are in front of all of us now, on the front pages of all the newspapers: Australians are becoming environmental refugees in their own country as a lot of the 10% of what is left of the original Australian great forest is now burning at an unprecedented rate due to the long term dryness of the soil, which is due to man-made global warming; Jakarta, a metropolitan of 30 million people is sinking at an alarming rate as sea levels are rising everywhere, the Amazon forest, humanity's spare lungs, is burning irreparably and soil, air, water, forests, oceans, rivers, the food chain, biodiversity, flora and fauna are disappearing at an alarming rate due to irresponsible human activities. In our rush to have more of everything – we forgot to appreciate what we already have and to take care of it, and we are losing the foundation of our earthly human experience which we took for granted for hundreds of years. Our biosphere on which all earthly life depends is a result of countless balancing acts of all aspects of earthly existence, all inter-connected, which, without appreciation – we progressively destroy. If planet Earth was a bit too close to the Sun – everything here will dry and burn. If it was a bit further away from the sun – everything would freeze. Hot oxygen and frozen oxygen are both un-breathable. The 'Sweet Zone' of Earth's existence is not less than a 'coincidental'

miracle, and we are destroying it by not appreciating the miracle that it is. Sustainable development requires appreciation of what we have.

The same applies to the human body: thousands of systems work synchronistically, continuously, day and night, to make our life in the body possible. We have not created this apparatus, we do not manage it, we are not repairing it, all this is done for us unconsciously. Just stopping and thinking about the genius of the human body for a moment is enough to be flooded with gratitude.

The same applies to cultures, languages, families, communities and work, all human creations. The human condition is robust but fragile. We owe so much to what was already created in human evolution by the time we only started this life on earth. I spent the last few days studying the incredible contribution to human development of the early scientists of the renaissance who risked their life and often paid with their lives in order to free humanity from the prisons of old dogma and to create a new understanding of reality on the basis of their personal observations and their new independence of thought: where would we be without them paving the way with their blood and toil for the creation of the free individuals that we take for granted today? and if you remember for a moment the pioneers of the reformation before them and the enlightenment leaders that followed them, the great creators of the Greek and Roman classics before all of it and the huge steps of development on all levels of the 19th and the 20th centuries, the freedom fighters and the liberators of women and of repressed communities - alongside all their associated disasters, the inevitable price of progress – you will be filled with owe and overwhelming appreciation for the people who created the cultural ground that we are standing on today.

Gratitude nurtures and cleanses the human soul, even the human blood. A moment of true gratitude is one of the most effective anti-stressors and antidepressant medication, and the healthiest one.

On the basis of appreciation of a person, a situation, and community, a country – you can come to truly know them intimately, and on that basis – everything you will do with them will be more relevant, beneficial, effective, fruitful, sustainable – in comparison with the same interaction without gratitude. Slovakia is my adopted country for the past seven years and for the rest of my life. It has been so good for me, for my work and for my family. I experience continuous gratitude for this country, this beautiful land and these kind, open people. I believe that experience enables me to be a constructive, fruitful contributor to this country, even though I came here in my mature age and I do not yet speak the language.

So this is my blessing for you all for this new 2020: in the middle of the business of your life, while you are trying so hard to achieve something more – stop from time to time for a moment and appreciate what life and people have already given you, and nurture yourself with this most beneficial of human emotion: gratitude.

RESOURCES

Prayer for the new year

I say to sleep:

Please do for me what only sleep can do for me
The bathing in the fullness of reality
Renewal of my tired exiled being
Into being here at home again.

I say to food:

Please do to me what only food can do for me -
The stream of earthly products of creation

To re-create me in the image
Of the purity and innocence of sun-kissed life on earth.

I say to my body:

Please do for me what only body can do for its dweller -
The re-arrival through the sinews and the muscles and the bones
And through this cosmic architecture of the organs
Into the full nobility of the human form
A living spirit in the flesh.

I say to my friends:

Please do for me what only friends can do for me
And please let me do for you what only I can do for you
And let us be in an intimate circle
the special loving community which one day in the future
Will be the human home for all.

I say to intimacy:

Please do for me what only intimacy can do for me
And let me do for you what only I can
And teach me constantly how to touch
So to create the blossoming that touch can do
And let it be a blessing.

I say to thoughts:

Please do for me what only thoughts can do for me
And let me serve you as only I can,
And may your wings spread to catch the sunlight
For me, for us, for all
And let me stream you through the flesh
So you can walk on Earth and create here
What only you can create here
Through me.

I say to soul, feelings and emotions:

Be for me what depth of soul can be for me
And let me be for depth of soul what only I can be
And may the richness and the depth of soul for us
Become the biosphere and ocean
Where we swim and dive and rise and grow
Into our full humanity.

I say to will:

Please be for me what only will can be for me –
The power of the bull, the lion and the eagle
But guided by the sun light of the heart of man
A unity of heaven and of earth
Through me.

I say to pain:

Please be for me what only pain can be -
A reminder that this place is not yet fully what it can
That this people not yet expressing full potential
That our meeting is not yet the home that it can be for us
And let us rises to ourselves above you pain
Through the grounding that only pain can do
And let us heal.

I say to spirit:

Please be for me what only spirit can be
And wake me up
And move me without breaking me
And change me without burning me
And make me into a candle for your burning.

I say to the elements:

Earth - ground me without burying me
Water – enliven me without flooding me
Air – revive me without scattering me
Fire- warm me without scorching me
Light – enlighten me without fading me out of existence.

I say to beauty:

Please be for me what only beauty can be for me –
A sense-celebration of true being in the flesh
And blow into my slumbering ashes with new life
That will renew my fire of being a lover of life
Continually falling in love with life
And teach me how to sing your praises
So as to be constantly transformed
From the consumer and the refugee
Into your pilgrim.

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