

THE BLESSED PRESENT

by Rabbi Label Lam

See I place before you today blessing and curse... (Devarim 11:26)

All the days of the impoverished (of the mind) are bad while the one with a good heart - (mind) is always drinking. (Mishle' 15:15)

Why is it often so hard to see the blessing? Why do we tend to obsess with - "what's wrong with this picture?"

One of the three reasons offered by the Chovos HaLevavos - Duties of the Heart is that HASHEM is so consistently good that by the time we are old enough to intelligently appreciate what is happening we are already accustomed to it. However magnificent it may be most goes unnoticed.

He gives an example of a child left on a door step. A couple had mercy and raised this child from infancy to adulthood having cared for him by executing countless acts of goodness. Now that child is a married adult with a job, a house, and family of his own. The couple also took pity on an adult prisoner. They negotiated his release. They rehabbed him and eventually found him a job, a house, and wife. Who will be quicker to express gratitude? For whom was more deeds done? For the prisoner dramatic change was experienced when his adult eyes and ears were plugged in. Similarly men tend to quietly believe that socks are born in the sock drawer. You put them down the chute and they magically reappear clean and coupled, and so too that orb of light will rises in the east and dances overhead daily and those orange globes of sweetness will predictably dangle from the ends of woody branches each year.

We find ourselves in the as if in the following surreal scene. At exactly 9:00 AM a knock comes to your door. There stands a man who hands you an envelope. Inside you find \$100. Wow! The next day, there you are sipping your coffee and there's that knock and the stranger with \$100 in the envelope. Each time now you chase him down the driveway with calls of thanks.

This continues every day. After 12 months it is perceived as a problem. "Can't he come a little earlier on Tuesdays? Why not just leave it in the mail slot? The envelopes are piling up like fall leaves and I'm concerned rain forests are being depleted. Can't he give smaller bills!? I can't get coffee or pay my cleaning lady with \$100 bills!" One day he knocks on the door and leaves an empty envelope. He gets a shout out, "Thief!"

The numerical value of the word HaTevah - Nature is the same as Elochim - G-d! Therefore our

definition of "nature" is repeating miracles. When something happens once we call it miraculous. If the sea splits once we sing, if we were there and if not there's room for major skepticism. If the sea splits daily, and twice on Saturday for a matinee, many of us would postpone seeing it until retirement and/or rely on some National Geographic special to tickle our fancy. If a baby would grow on the edge of a tree the world would be crazy to follow the growth and development of the "tree baby". If they start sprouting on trees across the Americas and Europe and Asia we would begin emergency measures to prune and curb the growing nuisance.

Most of the 100 blessing we recite daily are expressed in the present tense. "You HASHEM are the source of blessing ...Who creates the fruit of the tree!" We are less interested in the historicity of this fruit as we are in recognizing often and profoundly that what looks like still life is being willed into being fresh and anew each moment, as we say twice daily, "Who renews each day constantly the action of creation!"

We are like the proverbial birthday boy at his party tearing open boxes and shaking checks out of envelopes with appetite until a wise parent reminds him to open the note that comes with each gift. Then, when read aloud, there is that tender moment when the soul of the event is revealed and we realize that the gift was only a pretense, an elegant excuse to unify the giver and the receiver in the blessed present. Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.