

What is the Importance of Thanksgiving?

Contributed by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi
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We see in the creation of the world that its beings are arranged as though in a circle with life as its central point. All beings look to life, and serve life, and produce the necessities of life. That is to say ...

Through repeating verses like, "Will they not then give thanks? (36:35)", "Will they not then give thanks? (36:73)", "And we shall surely reward those who give thanks. (3:145)", "If you give thanks, I shall increase [my favors] to you. (14:7)", and "Worship God and be of those who give thanks (39:66)."

The Holy Book of Miraculous Exposition shows that the most important thing the Most Merciful Creator wants from His servants is thanks. The Holy Book, the All Wise Distinguisher between Truth and Falsehood, calls men to offer thanks, giving it the greatest importance. It shows ingratitude to be a denial of bounties, and in the Chapter of the Merciful, utters a severe and fearsome threat thirty-three times with the decree, "So which of the favors of your Sustainer do you deny? (55:13, etc)" It shows that ingratitude is denial and negation.

Indeed, both the All-Wise Book shows thanks to be the result of creation, and the Mighty Book of the universe shows that the most important result of the creation of the world is thanks. For if the universe is observed carefully, it is apparent that all things result in thanks in the way each is arranged within it; to a degree each looks to thanks and is turned towards it. It is as if the most important fruit of the tree of creation is thanks, and the most elevated product of the factory of the universe is thanks. The reason for this is as follows:

We see in the creation of the world that its beings are arranged as though in a circle with life as its central point. All beings look to life, and serve life, and produce the necessities of life. That is to say, the One Who created the universe chose life from it.

Then we see that He created the animal kingdom in the form of a circle and placed man at its center. Simply, He centered the aims intended from animate beings on man, gathering all living creatures around him, and subjugating them to him. He made them serve him and him dominant over them. That is to say, the Glorious Creator chose man from among living beings, and willed and decreed this position for him in the world.

Then we see that the world of man, and the animal world too, are formed like circles, with sustenance placed at their center. He has made mankind and the animals enamoured of sustenance, has subjugated them to it, and made them serve it. What rules them is sustenance. And He has made sustenance such a vast and rich treasury that it encompasses His innumerable bounties. Even, with a faculty called the sense of taste, He has placed on the tongue fine and sensitive scales to the number of foods, so that they can recognize the tastes of the many varieties of sustenance. That is to say, the strangest, richest, most wonderful, most agreeable, most comprehensive, and most marvelous truth in the universe lies in sustenance.

Now we see that just as everything has been gathered around sustenance and looks to it, so does sustenance in all its varieties subsist through thanks, both material and immaterial and that offered by word and by state; it exists through thanks, it produces thanks, its shows thanks. For appetite and desire for sustenance are a sort of innate or instinctive thanks. Enjoyment and pleasure also are a sort of unconscious thanks, offered by all animals. It is only man who changes the nature of that innate thanks through misguidance and unbelief; he deviates from thanks to associating partners with God.

Furthermore, the exquisitely adorned forms, the fragrant smells, the wonderfully delicious tastes in the bounties which are sustenance invite thanks; they awake an eagerness in animate beings, and through eagerness urge a sort of appreciation and respect, and prompt thanks of a sort. They attract the attention of conscious beings and engender admiration. They encourage them to respect the bounties; through this, they lead them to offer thanks verbally and by act, and to be grateful; they cause them to experience the highest and sweetest pleasure and enjoyment within thanks. That is, they show that, as well as a brief and temporary superficial pleasure, through thanks, these delicious foods and bounties gain the favors of the Most Merciful One, which provide a permanent, true, boundless pleasure. They cause conscious beings to ponder over the infinite, pleasurable favors of the All-Generous Owner of the treasures of mercy, and in effect to taste the everlasting delights of Paradise while still in this world. Thus, although by means of thanks sustenance becomes such a valuable, rich, all-embracing treasury, through ingratitude it becomes utterly valueless. When the sense of taste in the tongue is turned towards sustenance for the sake of the Almighty God, that is, when it performs its duty of thanks, it becomes like a grateful inspector of the numberless kitchens of Divine mercy and a highly-esteemed supervisor full of praise. If it is turned towards it for the sake of the soul, that is, without thinking of giving thanks to the One Who has bestowed the sustenance, the sense of taste falls from the rank of being a highly-esteemed supervisor to the level of a watchman of the factory of the stomach and a doorkeeper of the stable of the belly. Just as through ingratitude these servants of sustenance descend to such a level, so does the nature of sustenance and its other servants fall; they descend from the highest rank to the lowest; they sink to a state opposed to the Creator of the universe's wisdom.

The measure of thanks is contentment, frugality, and being satisfied and grateful. While the measure of ingratitude is greed, wastefulness and extravagance; it is disrespect; it is eating whatever one comes across, whether lawful or unlawful.

Like ingratitude, greed causes both loss and degradation. For example, it is as though because of greed the blessed ant even, which has a social life, is crushed underfoot. For, although a few grains of wheat would be sufficient for a year, it is not contented with this, and collects thousands if it can. While the blessed honey-bee flies overhead due to its contentment, and through a Divine command bestows honey on human beings for them to eat.

The Name of All-Merciful -the Greatest Name after the Name of Allah, which signifies the Divine Essence and is the Greatest Name of the Most Pure and Holy One- looks to sustenance, and is attained to through the thanks provoked by sustenance. Also, the most apparent meaning of the All Merciful is the Provider.

Moreover, there are different varieties of thanks. The most comprehensive of these and their universal index are the prescribed prayers.

Furthermore, within thanks is a pure belief, a sincere affirmation of God's Unity. For a person who eats an apple and utters, "Praise be to God!" is proclaiming through his thanks: "This apple is a souvenir bestowed directly by the hand of power, a gift directly from the treasury of mercy." With saying this and believing it, he is surrendering everything, particular and universal, to the hand of power. He recognizes the manifestation of mercy in everything. He announces through thanks a true belief and sincere affirmation of Divine Unity.

Of the many aspects of the great loss which heedless man incurs through ingratitude for bounties, we shall describe only one. It is as follows:

If someone eats a delicious bounty and gives thanks, the bounty becomes a light through his thanks and a fruit of Paradise in the hereafter. Through thinking of it being a work of the Almighty God's favor and mercy due to the pleasure it affords, it gives a true, lasting delight and enjoyment. He sends kernels and essences pertaining to its meaning, and immaterial substances like these, to the abodes above, while the material husk-like residue, that is, the matter that has completed its duty and now is unnecessary, becomes excreta and goes to be transformed into its original substances, that is, into the elements. If he does not give thanks, the temporary pleasure leaves a pain and sorrow at its passing, and itself becomes waste. Bounty, which is of the nature of diamonds, is transformed into coal. Through thanks, transient sustenance produces enduring pleasures, everlasting fruits. But bounty, which is met with ingratitude, is turned from the very best of forms into the most distasteful. For according to a heedless person such as that, after a temporary pleasure, the end of sustenance is waste-matter.

For sure, sustenance is in a form worthy of love, and that form becomes apparent through thanks. While the passion of the misguided and heedless for sustenance is animality. You can make further comparisons in this way and see what a loss the heedless and misguided suffer.

Among animate species the most needy for the varieties of sustenance is man. The Almighty God created man as a comprehensive mirror to all His Names; as a miracle of power with the capacity to weigh up and recognize the contents of all His treasuries of mercy; and as His vicegerent on earth possessing the faculties to draw to the scales all the subtleties of the different manifestations of His Names. He therefore gave him a boundless need, making him needy for the endless different varieties of sustenance, material and immaterial. The means of raising man to 'the best of forms,' which is the highest position in accordance with this comprehensiveness, is thanks. If he does not give thanks, he falls to 'the lowest of the low,' and perpetrates a great wrong.

I n S h o r t : The most essential of the four fundamental principles of the way of worship and winning God's love, the highest and most elevated way, is thanks. These four principles have been defined as follows:

Four things are necessary on the way of the impotent, my friend:

"Absolute impotence, absolute poverty, absolute fervor, and absolute thanks, my friend."