

Dvar Torah Outline — Tehillim 118: “Hodu LaShem,” Shared Gratitude, and the Non-Coincidental Nature of Divine Good

Abstract

Rabbi Shulman explains a teaching of the Maharal on why Tehillim both opens and closes with “הודו לה,” framing the entire chapter as an exercise in הודאה (gratitude). He then traces a Gemara in Pesachim that assigns successive verses to different figures around David HaMelech (David, Yishai, Shmuel, and David’s brothers), showing that the goodness of Hashem is not “mainly” for one person with incidental spillover to others. Rather, every beneficiary is intentionally included in Hashem’s ordered plan, and therefore each one has a distinct obligation to thank—while all ultimately unite in gratitude to the single Source.

I. The Maharal’s framing: Tehillim begins and ends with “Hodu”

A. The literary structure is a message

- Rabbi Shulman cites the Maharal: we **begin with** “הודו” and we’re **ending with** “הודו” to teach that the theme of the perek is fundamentally הודאה.

B. Chazal’s derashah: the perek’s lines are spoken by different people

- Rabbi Shulman introduces that Chazal “darshen” parts of the perek as being said by different participants in the Davidic story, not all by one speaker.
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II. The Gemara in Pesachim: attributing each verse to a different figure (0:30)

A. Source and method

- Rabbi Shulman references **Gemara Pesachim (Arvei Pesachim)**: each line in the section is attributed to a different person connected to David HaMelech's ascent.

B. The sequence of speakers (as Rabbi Shulman reports it)

- **David HaMelech**: "אוֹדֶךָ כִּי עֲנִיתָנִי" (I thank You because You afflicted/answered me)
 - **Yishai (David's father)**: "אֶבֶן מַאֲסוֹ הַבּוֹנִים" (The stone the builders rejected...)
 - **David's brothers**: "מֵאֵת ה' הֵיטָה זֹאת" (From Hashem this came...)
 - **Shmuel (who anointed/coronated David)**: "זֶה הַיּוֹם" (This is the day...)
 - **David's brothers**: "אֲנָהּ ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא" (Please Hashem, save us)
 - **David HaMelech**: "אֲנָהּ ה' הַצְלִיחָהּ נָא" (Please Hashem, grant success)
 - **Yishai**: "בָּרוּךְ הַבָּא" (Blessed is the one who comes...)
 - **Shmuel**: "בִּרְכֻנוּכֶם מִבֵּית ה'" (We bless you from the House of Hashem)
 - **All together**: "אֵל ה' וַיֵּאָר לָנוּ" (God is Hashem and He illuminated for us)
 - **Shmuel**: "אֶקְרֹה חֵג" (Bind the festival offering... / join in celebration)
 - **David HaMelech**: "אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי אֲתָה" (You are my God)
 - **All together (conclusion)**: "הוֹדוּ לָהּ" (Thank Hashem)
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III. The Maharal's central idea: Hashem's goodness is not "incidental spillover" (2:30)

A. The mistaken assumption Rabbi Shulman rejects (from the Maharal)

- Rabbi Shulman explains: a person might think,
 - Hashem's "good" was **intended for one main person**, and
 - if others benefited, it was just **coincidence** or a side effect.

B. The Maharal's claim: Divine good is "מסודר בתכלית הסדר"

- Rabbi Shulman quotes/echoes the Maharal:
 - Hashem's goodness is **perfectly ordered**—not random.
 - Therefore **each recipient** of the goodness was intended to receive it.

- Practical framing Rabbi Shulman gives:
 - Even what looks like a “fringe benefit” is not accidental; it is part of Hashem’s design for that person too.

C. Resulting obligation

- Because each benefit is intentional,
 - “וְרָאִי לְהַלֵּל לֵה’ יִתְבָּרַךְ עָלָיו” — it is fitting that each beneficiary praises Hashem for *his* portion.
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IV. Applying it to David’s kingship: multiple beneficiaries, multiple thanksgivings (5:00)

A. The “good” of Malchut Beit David spreads across a network

- Rabbi Shulman explains how one event (David becoming king) contains distinct “tovah” for different people:
 - **David:** the personal good of becoming king.
 - **Klal Yisrael:** the national good of having a king.
 - **Yishai:** the familial good that the king emerged from him.
 - **David’s brothers:** the benefit of being close relatives of the king (“קרובים אל המלך”).

B. Why each person speaks “his verse”

- “וְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד דִּבֶּר מִיָּחִיד בְּפִנֵּי עַצְמוֹ”
 - Rabbi Shulman emphasizes: each one receives a **unique** good.
- Therefore,
 - each gives **his own הודאה**, appropriate to his role and benefit.

C. Clarifying Shmuel’s role

- Rabbi Shulman notes: although the Gemara’s list is focused on individuals around David, **Shmuel** is understood to be speaking **on behalf of Klal Yisrael**.
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V. Why everyone ends together: many gifts, one Source (6:30)

A. Different “amounts” don’t change the core recognition

- Rabbi Shulman illustrates:
 - one person may receive something enormous,
 - another a smaller, “secondary” benefit,
 - but both can recognize the same אמת: it all comes from Hashem.

B. The unifying conclusion

- “וּבְאַחֲרֵיהֶן נִתְּנוּ כָּלֶם הַוְדָּאָה בְּיַחַד”
 - Rabbi Shulman explains: they thank together to declare that all outcomes flow from “פֶּעַל אֶחָד”—one Divine Actor.
 - In that final recognition,
 - “וְאֵין כָּאן חִלּוּק” — there is no distinction: everyone stands equally before the one Source of good.
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X. In Summary

- Rabbi Shulman, citing the Maharal, frames Tehillim 118 as a chapter whose opening and closing “הוֹדוּ לָהּ” teaches that the essence is הוֹדָאָה.
- The Gemara in Pesachim assigns verses to David, Yishai, Shmuel, David’s brothers, and ultimately all together—reflecting multiple stakeholders in one salvation/story.
- Hashem’s goodness is not “main character benefit” with incidental byproducts; it is **ordered** so that each recipient’s benefit is intentional.
- Each beneficiary therefore has a personal obligation to thank, and all unite in concluding gratitude because all good comes from **one Source**.