



## Uncomfortable Gratitude: Deliverance from a Flawed Source

Elana Stein Hain & Tamara Mann Tweel

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How do we respond with gratitude toward someone whose values and policies we otherwise oppose?

In this episode of TEXTing IRL, **Elana Stein Hain** is joined by civic educator and Hartman research fellow **Tamara Mann Tweel** to explore what Jewish tradition can teach us about uncomfortable gratitude, the cognitive dissonance created when someone we find morally troubling takes an action we support, and how we can respond when deliverance comes from a flawed source.

*This source sheet is part of the **July 18, 2025** episode of the podcast **TEXTing IRL - Ideas for Real Life** with **Elana Stein Hain**, which explores how classic and modern Jewish texts can help us wrestle with the big dilemmas of our time.*

*Sitting down with guests who are accomplished practitioners in their fields, Elana explores how Jewish wisdom can guide us to act with integrity in the face of complex questions about allyship, gratitude toward flawed leaders, and navigating political relationships.*

**Elana Stein Hain** is the Rosh Beit Midrash and a senior research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, where she serves as lead faculty and consults on the content of lay and professional programs.

A widely well-regarded thinker and teacher, Elana is passionate about bringing rabbinic thought into conversation with contemporary life. To this end, she teaches [Talmud from the Balcony](#), an occasional learning seminar exposing the big ideas, questions, and issues motivating rabbinic discussions. Elana is the author of [Circumventing the Law: Rabbinic Perspectives on Legal Loopholes and Integrity](#) (Penn Press, 2024) which uses loopholes as a lens for understanding rabbinic views on law and ethics.

She earned her doctorate in Religion at Columbia University and is an alumna of the Yeshiva University Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS) as well as the Consortium in Jewish Studies and Legal Theory Graduate Fellowship at Cardozo School of Law. She also served for eight years as a clergy member on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, at both Lincoln Square Synagogue and the Jewish Center, has taught at the Wagner School at NYU, and sits on the board of Sefaria: A Living Library of Jewish Texts.

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**1. Appreciation is Not Full Endorsement - Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, January 15, 1981**

...But such is not the way of Torah. Notwithstanding any past mistakes, Torah bids us to be grateful, to acknowledge those good things which were done. In the eyes of Torah, to be an ingrate is a despicable thing, unworthy of any decent human being. And in the past administration, the outstanding achievement was the prevention of war. There were instances in the past four years, which, but for the endeavors of the President, could easily have led to war. Not only did he thus save millions of Americans from the horrors of such a consequence, but in all probability the rest of the world. And for this he deserves our thanks and gratitude...

**2. Rachel Goldberg-Polin, eulogy for her son Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Jerusalem, September 2, 2024**

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/my-sweet-boy-hersh-we-tried-so-desperately-to-save-you/>

I am honest. And I say, it is not that Hersh was perfect. But, he was the perfect son for me. And I am so grateful to G-d, and I want to do *hakarat hatov* and thank G-d right now, for giving me this magnificent present of my Hersh.... For 23 years I was privileged to have this most stunning treasure, to be Hersh's Mama. I'll take it and say thank you. I just wish it had been for longer.

**3. Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 10b-11a**

כל יומא הוה (שדר) [משדר] ליה דהבא פריקא במטראתא, וחיטי אפומייהו. אמר להו: אמטיו חיטי לרבי. אמר [ליה רבי]: לא צריכנא, אית לי טובא. אמר: ליהו למאן דבתרד, דיהבי לבתראי דאתו בתרד, ודאתי מינייהו ניפוק עלייהו.

Many a time Antoninus sent Rabbi gold-dust in a leather bag filled with wheat at the top, saying [to his servants], "Carry the wheat to Rabbi!" Rabbi sent word to say, "I need it not, I have quite enough of my own," and Antoninus answered, "Leave it then to those who will come after you that they might give it to those who will come after me, for your descendants and those who will follow them will hand it over to them."

כל יומא הוה משמש לרבי, מאכיל ליה, משקי ליה. כי הוה בעי רבי למיסק לפוריגא, הוה גחין קמי פוריגא, אמר ליה: סק עילנאי לפוריגד. אמר ליה: לאו אורח ארעא לזלוזלי במלכותא כולי האי. אמר ליה: מי ישמני מצע תחתיד לעולם הבא.

Every time [he called] he used to attend on Rabbi and wait on him with food or drink. When Rabbi wanted to get on his bed Antoninus crouched in front of it saying, "Get on to your bed by stepping on me." Rabbi, however, said, "It is not the proper thing to treat a king so slightly." So Antoninus said: "If only I would serve as a mattress for you in the world to come!"

אָמַר לֵיהּ : אָתִינָא לְעִלְמָא דְאַתְיָ? אָמַר לֵיהּ : אֵין. אָמַר לֵיהּ : וְהָכְתִּיב "לֹא יִהְיֶה שָׂרִיד לְבֵית עֲשׂוֹ!" בְּעוֹשָׁה מַעֲשֵׂה עֲשׂוֹ...

Once Antoninus asked Rabbi, "Shall I enter the world to come?" "Yes!" said Rabbi. "But," said Antoninus, "is it not written, 'There will be no remnant to the house of Esau?'" "That," he replied, "applies only to those whose evil deeds are like to those of Esau. . . ."

#### 4. Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 11a

"וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לָהּ, שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם בְּבִטְנֶךָ." אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב : אֵל תִּקְרִי "גוֹיִם" אֶלָּא "גֵּוִיִּים", זֶה אֲנִטוֹנִינוּס וְרַבִּי, שֶׁלֹּא פָסְקוּ מֵעַל שׁוּלְחָנָם לֹא חֲזָרָת וְלֹא קִישוּת וְלֹא צָנוֹן, לֹא בִּימֹת הַחֲמָה וְלֹא בִּימֹת הַגָּשָׁמִים...

And the Lord said to Rivka: Two nations [*Goyim*] are in your womb. Said Rav Judah in the name of Rav: Read not *Goyim* [nations] but *Ge'im* [lords]. This refers to Antoninus and Rabbi from whose table neither lettuce nor radish nor cucumber was ever absent either in summer or winter. . . .