



All of the service of Hashem is dependent upon the improvement of one's character traits.

Vilna Gaon - Even Shleima, Chapter 1

Hakaras HaTov Module Packet 1

***עבודה והודאה חדא מילתא היא
רש"י : חדא מילתא היא - אף הודאה עבודה של מקום הוא***

***The Temple service and thanksgiving are one
Rashi: Thanksgiving is also a form of service of G-d.***

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah, 18a

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Use of Material

The material in this *ACTT Module Packet* is intended for the use of the ACTT organization’s members and any other individuals interested in creating and sustaining meaningful changes in their lives. If an organization is interested in using this material, the ACTT organization would appreciate your contacting us. Thank you.

Version 2007-04-12

ACTT Hakaras HaTov Module – Packet 1

Goal of Hakaras HaTov 1 Module

To develop an awareness and a mindset that recognizes all the good that one receives and appropriately thanks the Giver/giver.

Module Duration

This *Hakaras HaTov* module will be covered in one part and will last for 10 weeks.

To Do List

- If you are not yet a member of the ACTT Organization, fill out a membership application and submit it – see Membership page of www.actt613.org or ACTT Welcome Kit
- Fill out the “ACTT *Hakaras HaTov 1* Commitment Form”, keep a copy for yourself and submit a copy to the organization – see Module page of www.actt613.org or this Module Packet’s Appendix
- On a daily basis:
 - Follow the Learning Schedule and record your *Hakaras HaTov* activity/action in your “ACTT *Hakaras HaTov 1* Activity Log” in this Module Packet’s Appendix – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions
 - Record your maintenance activity/action (from the *Ahavas Chesed*, *Judging Favorably*, *Kavanah During Davening*, *Anger Management* and *Shmiras HaLashon* modules) in your “ACTT *Hakaras HaTov 1* Activity Log” in this Module Packet’s Appendix – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions
- Participate in the chizuk activities, as desired:
 - ACTT *Hakaras HaTov 1* kickoff event and face-to-face discussion group meetings
 - ACTT online discussion group and e-mail list
 - Read inspirational material from sources recommended by the ACTT organization and also distributed by the ACTT organization
 - Recommend inspirational material to the ACTT membership and submit inspirational material to be distributed to all the ACTT members

***Hakaras HaTov* Resources**

The following are some resources for learning about *Hakaras HaTov*:

- Thank You - Gratitude: Formulas, stories and insights by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin; Artscroll/Mesorah; ISBN: 1-57819-065-7
- Duties of the Heart (Chovos HaLevavos) by R. Bachya ben Joseph Ibn Paquda; Translated from Arabic into Hebrew by R. Yehuda Ibn Tibbon; English translation by Daniel Haberman; Feldheim Publishers; ISBN: 0-87306-765-7 - Introduction to Section Three: The Gate of Serving G-d (Shaar Shlishi: Shaar Avodas HaElokim)

- Audio shiurim on the Internet:
 - Gratitude by Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb at www.torahmedia.com
 - HaKaras HaTov: Recognizing the Good by Rabbi BenTzion Shafier at www.TheShmuz.com
 - Hakoros Hatov: Thanks and No Thanks by Rabbi Paysach Krohn at www.torahmedia.com
 - Koheles: Hakaras Hatov by Rabbi Moshe Eisemann at www.torahmedia.com
 - The Challenge of Appreciation by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig at www.torahmedia.com

Leah and the Lesson of Gratitude

by Lori Palatnik

Reproduced with Aish HaTorah's permission from:

www.aish.com/literacy/exploring/Leah_and_the_Lesson_of_Gratitude.asp

Being a Jew is synonymous with expressing gratitude. Our matriarch Leah taught us to see everything in life as a gift.

"From the day that G-d created the world, there was no one who thanked G-d until Leah came and thanked Him." (The Talmud)

Leah, married to Jacob, was one of the mothers of the Jewish people. In the passage above the Talmud is referring to the birth of Leah's fourth son, Judah. The name Judah shares the same root in Hebrew as the word *today*, meaning "thank you." But what does the Talmud mean when it says that Leah was the first person to ever really thank G-d?

Abraham never thanked G-d? Noah never thanked G-d? Sarah never thanked G-d? Of course, they did. In fact, many people had thanked G-d in the Torah long before Leah. Therefore, the Talmud must be telling us that there was something special about Leah's thankfulness. Her gratitude must have been somehow truer and deeper than that of anyone who had come before her.

By understanding what made Leah's gratitude special, we will learn what true gratefulness is all about.

SEEING EVERYTHING AS A GIFT

Leah was a prophetess who knew that the Jewish nation was destined to descend from the 12 sons of Jacob, her husband. Each tribe would be a foundation stone that would shape our history. Jacob's sons would come from four women: Leah, Rachel, Bilha, and Zilpah. Leah expected that each woman would have 3 sons.

Judah was Leah's fourth son. She recognized that he was one more than her share. Her thankfulness for Judah was deeper and more heartfelt because he was unexpected. He was a gift.

This is how we are supposed to view *everything* in life. Every ray of sunshine, every child, every breath -- they are all gifts from G-d.

The mistake of thinking any thing is owed to us blocks us from gratitude.

People sometimes don't appreciate sight until they meet someone who is blind. We shouldn't wait until we are sick to appreciate our health. We should count our blessings every day and take pleasure in the miraculous gifts bestowed upon us.

BEGINNING THE DAY WITH GRATITUDE

Jewish consciousness says that every morning we should rise with the prayer, *Modeh Ani*: "I am grateful to G-d for bringing life to me each and every day."

At our time of sorrow, when we have lost a loved one, we are forced to stand and face our own mortality. We do not live forever, and we do not know from one day to the next when our time will come. All we can do is say, *Modeh Ani*: "I am grateful to G-d, for giving me another day, and another opportunity to use it wisely."

Our religion is called "Judaism" from Judah. The essence of being a Jew is to be thankful. Realize, as Leah did, that every moment of life is a gift. Open the gift and take pleasure in its Source.

Mastering The Gratitude Attitude

by Rabbi Dov Heller, M.A.

Reproduced with Aish HaTorah's permission from:

http://www.aish.com/spirituality/growth/Mastering_The_Gratitude_Attitude.asp

It starts with getting rid of the entitlement attitude, which puts one's "rights" ahead of everything else.

What in life do you feel is coming to you? Health? A good job? Children? A peaceful retirement? Check yourself out.

If you're like me, you probably have a whole list of things you feel entitled to, and if you don't get them, you feel cheated. If you are unable to take a vacation or buy the home you've dreamed of, then life has robbed you of something you are entitled to!

We live in a society that feeds an entitlement attitude. Compare the Bill of Rights, which focuses on our entitlements, to the Torah, which focuses on our responsibilities and obligations.

LIFE OWES US NOTHING

The entitlement attitude says, "life owes me something," or "people owe me something," or "G-d owes me something."

You know if you're into entitlement because the result leaves you constantly feeling angry, resentful, or frustrated. If you believe that someone owes you something and that person doesn't come through, you feel angry. You feel you've been ripped-off and cheated out of what I rightly deserve.

But entitlement is a lie. It's a perversion of reality.

There is nothing in the universe that states, "Dov Heller deserves to live a long, happy, and successful life!" My feelings of entitlement are born from within my own mind. Objectively speaking, there is no basis for such claims.

Even though Judaism maintains that G-d created us for pleasure and wants us to have pleasure, we still should not feel entitled to getting what we desire. This is because everything good we do get must be looked at as a gift. Understanding this creates an awareness that the source of all our good is G-d.

This understanding that everything is a gift forms the basis of our relationship with G-d. Judaism also looks at the bad as coming from G-d and it should ultimately be viewed as a gift. However a discussion of this complex issue is beyond the limits of this article.

Neither G-d, nor anyone else for that matter, owes us anything. Do you believe this is true? Most people do not.

THE ENTITLEMENT ATTITUDE

There are many things we feel entitled to. For example, aren't we entitled to have people treat us fairly, with sensitivity, with respect? Where is that written? The truth is that any kindness we receive from others is always a gift.

What about marriage? This is an area of life which is full of expectation. What do you think your spouse owes you? Financial support? Emotional support? Is he or she the one who is supposed to make you happy for the rest of your life?

Your spouse owes you nothing! Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler emphasized this point in his Strive for Truth when he said, "When demands begin, love departs." If we would focus on our responsibilities to our spouses and what we can do to make them happy, our marriages would be much more fulfilling. Focus on what you are not getting that you feel entitled to and your marriage will be painful.

A distinction must be made between the illegitimacy of "entitlement" in an absolute sense and our legitimate claim to seek "justice" and the fulfillment of one's rights under society's laws or under a body of religious laws. For example, when a person isn't paid for his work, he is "entitled" by society's laws to sue for his wages. A wife who is being treated disrespectfully by her husband is "entitled" by Torah law to be given respect.

But in an absolute sense, a person is not entitled to be paid or to be given respect because there is nothing in the universe that guarantees any kind of individual rights.

THE GRATITUDE ATTITUDE

Eliminating entitlement from your life and embracing gratitude is spiritually and psychologically liberating.

Gratitude is the recognition that life owes me nothing and all the good I have is a gift. My eyes are a gift. So is my wife, my clothes, my job and my every breath. This is a major shift from the entitlement mode. Recognizing that everything good in life is ultimately a gift is a fundamental truth of reality.

To speak of seeing everything good we have as a gift leads us to confront the reality of a giver and the source of all this good: G-d.

Gratitude is where we begin to experience G-d in a powerfully personal way. "Thank you" is the simplest and one of the most powerful prayers a person can say. If you can say, "Thank you," you can connect with G-d and begin to develop a personal relationship with Him.

A powerful, although tragic, example of someone who mastered the gratitude attitude was a great Jewish woman named Bruria. The story of Bruria is told in the Talmud. Bruria and her husband, Rabbi Meir, had two sons who both died one Friday afternoon before Shabbat. Bruria decided not to tell her husband of the tragedy until after Shabbat since, according to Jewish law, one is not permitted to have a funeral on Shabbat or to openly mourn. There was nothing they could do until after Shabbat so she kept the information to herself and allowed her husband to enjoy the day (imagine being able to do that!). Explaining where the boys were was the least of her challenges.

When Shabbat was over this is how Bruria broke the horrible news to her husband. She asked him a legal question: What is the proper course of action if one person borrows two jewels from another and then the original owner requests that the return of the jewels. He replied with the obvious answer that one is obligated to return the loan upon demand. She then took her husband to where their two dead sons lay and said, "G-d has requested that we return the loan of our two jewels."

Bruriah teaches us a potentially life transforming lesson here: Everything we have is on loan!

ON LOAN

My ears are on loan, my health is on loan, my children are on loan. Everything is a loan that is given as a gift.

What have we done that we could claim we earned life, health, financial success, or children? We have done nothing. As I mentioned earlier, when we internalize this truth, we become spiritually and psychologically liberated.

How freeing to live with a sense that everything good is on loan.

This is the key to internalizing the gratitude attitude. Once we understand that everything is a gift, we can begin to feel gratitude towards G-d, the source of all good, and grow closer to Him in an authentic and joyful way.

ACTT Module Packet Appendix



ACTT Commitment Form – Hakaras HaTov 1 Module

Remember, it is better to commit to less – you can always do more!

Please PRINT all information

This commitment does not constitute a vow; I am doing the following, bli neder

From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___

In memory of _____

As a zechus for:

a refuah shelaimah for _____

a shidduch for _____

parnassa for _____

other _____

- ___ *Hakaras HaTov act(s) daily in a ☺ mood*
(ACTT recommends 1-2 acts daily – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions)
- *Performing one or more of the following maintenance activities in a ☺ mood*
(ACTT recommends a total of 1-2 acts daily – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions)
 - ___ *Ahavas Chesed act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
 - ___ *Judging Favorably act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
 - ___ *Kavanah During Davening act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
 - ___ *Anger Management act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
 - ___ *Shmiras HaLashon act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
- *Learning ___ minutes daily from* (ACTT recommends 5 minutes daily):
 - The ACTT *Hakaras HaTov 1* Learning Schedule Book (see *ACTT Daily Activity Log*)
 - Other _____

Please PRINT all information

Name: _____ Date _____

Email address: _____ Tel. number _____

Address: _____

☺ *Be happy with your ability to Improve Yourself and Grow!* ☺

Please email form: commitment@actt613.org or mail: ACTT, 48 Edgemount Road, Edison, NJ 08817



ACTT Activity/Action Ideas

Acknowledgements:

- 1) Some Ideas for Acts of Chesed adapted from Areyvut's 2005 "A Kindness a Day Calendar: 365 Ways to Make a Difference", see website: www.areyvut.org
- 2) Some of the ideas for Judging Favorably were adapted from "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet
- 3) Some of the ideas for Kavanah During Davening were adapted from Praying with Fire by Rabbi Heshy Kleinman
- 4) Ideas for Improving Anger Management were adapted from Anger The Inner Teacher @ www.aish.com/spirituality/growth/Anger_The_Inner_Teacher.asp

IDEAS FOR HAKARAS HATOV

<p>Recognize the good that you possess Appreciate what you do have rather than what you do not have Acknowledge that what you possess is a gift, not something you deserve Develop the habit of saying thank you for everything you receive, both big and small Realize that everything comes from Hashem and is for your good, then thank Him Always see the glass as being half full and be thankful Focus on developing an attitude of gratitude Appreciate the good that a family member does for you and say thank you Appreciate the good that a friend does for you and say thank you Appreciate the good that a colleague does for you and say thank you Appreciate the good that strangers do for you and say thank you</p>	<p>Write a thank you note to express your appreciation Make a telephone call to express your appreciation Give a gift to express your appreciation Express appreciation for routine actions such as taking out the garbage, preparing supper, doing the laundry, cleaning the house, bringing in the newspaper Thank the school bus driver Thank your teacher, thank your child's teacher Thank the mail carrier for delivering the mail Say <i>Modeh Ani</i> each morning with great feeling Reflect on <i>Modim Anachnu Lach</i> in <i>Shmoneh Esrei</i> Thank Hashem for every breath that you take</p>
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IDEAS FOR ACTS OF CHESED

<p>Offer to run an errand for a friend Cheerfully greet someone Bake an unexpected treat for a friend Remember someone's birthday Call someone going thru a difficult time Leave a friendly note for a family member Listen patiently to others Clean up after dinner without being asked Call someone who lives alone Greet everyone you see with a smile Introduce yourself to someone Apologize for something you've done Take out the garbage without being asked</p>	<p>Give someone an unexpected compliment Spend time with a child with a disability Help strangers in shul feel welcome Take an elderly person shopping Pay attention to what people are saying Spend quality time with family & friends Call or visit someone who is sick Cook a meal for a person in need Visit someone who may be lonely Call someone you haven't spoken to in a while Say thanks - no matter how small the deed Help a child with his / her homework Compliment someone who helps you</p>	<p>Give someone an encouraging note When asked to do something, respond right away in a cheerful and willing manner Drive someone to the doctor Help out family members even if you're busy Help someone find a job Buy a gift for a loved one for no reason Greet everyone with a pleasant "good morning" Write a letter to an elderly person Take a neighbor's garbage cans in from the curb Call someone who recently lost a loved one Congratulate siblings on recent accomplishments</p>
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ACTT Activity/Action Ideas (continued)

IDEAS FOR JUDGING FAVORABLY

<p>Don't jump to conclusions Judge your neighbor's actions favorably "Judge your fellow man fairly" (Leviticus 19:15) Look for possible explanation in another's behavior Give your friend the benefit of the doubt Look for the good in others "Judge all people to the side of merit" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:6) Realize that your friend did not see you carrying packages when he/she passed by</p>	<p>Remember, it could be a miscommunication... Are we missing any facts? Look for people's strengths Remember, things are not always what they seem! Try to explain... not complain about other people's actions Focus on solutions - not recriminations Remember the excuses one makes for oneself - apply these excuses to the one who wronged you</p>
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IDEAS FOR IMPROVING KAVANAH DURING DAVENING

<p>Meditate for 5 minutes before davening Write translations to difficult words in your siddur Think about all Hashem has given you Say the words, "I am standing before Hashem" out loud Remember that Kavanah During Davening is a Halachik requirement of prayer Pronounce each word slowly and clearly Use a siddur, even for Tefillos I know by heart Establish a specific place for davening Concentrate for 3 seconds on each word of a specific tefillah</p>	<p>Learn the meanings of words you do not know Select one prayer a week to say with more kavanah Write down your favorite phrases from davening and focus on them when you daven Arrive before the minyan begins to daven and be ready when they start When davening at home, remove distractions from around you Select one word a day to say with more kavanah Select one phrase a day to say with more kavanah Before you start to daven, review what Hashem has given you in the last 24 hours</p>
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IDEAS FOR IMPROVING ANGER MANAGEMENT

<p>In the past, when you have been able to overcome anger quickly, how did you do it? Learn from people who are able to remain calm in situations that get you angry Learn from people who are able to let go of their anger easily Give anger a chance to subside before speaking by counting from 1 to 10, 1 to 20, etc. When you notice that you are feeling angry, breathe slowly and deeply, exhale slowly When you are about to get angry because of something that someone did to you, focus on some good quality of that person</p>	<p>Use physical exercise to release anger: take a brisk walk, run, dance, jump rope, etc. Meditate on: "Ein od milvado - There is nothing else besides G-d" When you get angry, look at yourself in a mirror to see and hear yourself as others see and hear you when you are angry Write down all your angry thoughts in a letter addressed to the person you are angry at, but do not send it When you are about to get angry, ask yourself, "How important is this in my life?"</p>
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ACTT Activity/Action Ideas (continued)

IDEAS FOR SHMIRAS HALASHON

Think before speaking
 Pause to think about what to say and how to say it before responding to someone
 Give each person the benefit of the doubt
 Train yourself to avoid judging others
 Think positive thoughts and avoid negative thoughts
 Stay calm and avoid getting angry
 Avoid joking around that could lead to making fun of others
 Develop a character of humility - avoid arrogance

Be extra careful with Shmiras HaLashon for 1-2 hour(s) each day
 Never give up hope of one's ability to guard one's tongue
 Accept the idea that it is possible to speak without gossiping
 Train yourself to avoid complaining about others
 Learn the laws of Shmiras HaLashon
 Walk away from a group that is speaking Lashon Hara
 If someone starts speaking Lashon Hara to you respectfully ask them to stop
 Realize and say to yourself: "It's Not That Important"



ACTT Daily Activity Log – *Hakaras HaTov 1* Module

Abbreviations: 1) TY = Thank You - Gratitude: Formulas, stories and insights by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin; 2) HT = *Hakaras HaTov*; 3) AC = *Ahavas Chesed*; 4) JF = *Judging Favorably*; 5) KDD = *Kavanah During Davening*; 6) AM = *Anger Management for Positive Results*; 7) SL = *Shmiras HaLashon*

		Learned (✓)		Activity/Action	
Date	✓	Book	Chapter	✓	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
EXAMPLE DAILY ENTRY – current module’s activity/action and up to 2 maintenance activities/actions					
Day	m/d/07	✓	TY	x	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HT: Appreciated a friend’s thoughtfulness and said thank you; and/or AC: Helped someone find a job; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> and/or JF: Did not jump to conclusions; and/or KDD: Meditated for 5 minutes before davening; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> and/or AM: Took a brisk walk to release anger; SL: Paused to think about what to say and how to say it before speaking
Mon	04/23/07		TY	1	
Tue	04/24/07		TY	2	
Wed	04/25/07		TY	3	
Thu	04/26/07		TY	4	
Fri	04/27/07		TY	5	
Sat	04/28/07		TY	6	
Sun	04/29/07		TY	7	
Mon	04/30/07		TY	8,9	



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Hakaras HaTov 1* Module

		Learned (✓)		Activity/Action	
Date	✓	Book	Chapter	✓	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Tue	05/01/07	TY	10		
Wed	05/02/07	TY	11		
Thu	05/03/07	TY	12		
Fri	05/04/07	TY	13		
Sat	05/05/07	TY	14		
Sun	05/06/07	TY	15		
Mon	05/07/07	TY	16,17		
Tue	05/08/07	TY	18		
Wed	05/09/07	TY	19		
Thu	05/10/07	TY	20		
Fri	05/11/07	TY	21		



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Hakaras HaTov 1* Module

		Learned (✓)		Activity/Action	
Date	✓	Book	Chapter	✓	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Sat	05/12/07	TY	22		
Sun	05/13/07	TY	23		
Mon	05/14/07	TY	24,25		
Tue	05/15/07	TY	26		
Wed	05/16/07	TY	27		
Thu	05/17/07	TY	28		
Fri	05/18/07	TY	29		
Sat	05/19/07	TY	30		
Sun	05/20/07	TY	31		
Mon	05/21/07	TY	32,33		
Tue	05/22/07	TY	34		



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Hakaras HaTov 1* Module

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Chapter	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Wed		TY	35		
Thu		TY	36		
Fri		TY	37		
Sat		TY	38		
Sun		TY	39		
Mon		TY	40,41		
Tue		TY	42		
Wed		TY	43		
Thu		TY	44		
Fri		TY	45		
Sat		TY	46		



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Hakaras HaTov 1* Module

		Learned (✓)		Activity/Action	
Date	✓	Book	Chapter	✓	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Sun	06/03/07	TY	47		
Mon	06/04/07	TY	48,49		
Tue	06/05/07	TY	50		
Wed	06/06/07	TY	51		
Thu	06/07/07	TY	52		
Fri	06/08/07	TY	53		
Sat	06/09/07	TY	54		
Sun	06/10/07	TY	55		
Mon	06/11/07	TY	56,57		
Tue	06/12/07	TY	58		
Wed	06/13/07	TY	59		



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Hakaras HaTov 1* Module

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Chapter	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Thu	06/14/07	TY	60		
Fri	06/15/07	TY	61		
Sat	06/16/07	TY	62		
Sun	06/17/07	TY	63		
Mon	06/18/07	TY	64		
Tue	06/19/07	TY	65		
Wed	06/20/07	TY	66		
Thu	06/21/07	TY	67		
Fri	06/22/07	TY	68		
Sat	06/23/07	TY	69		
Sun	06/24/07	TY	70		

Glossary

Ahavas Chesed	.....loving kindness
B'li Neder	.....without making a formal commitment
Bitachon	.....trust in Hashem
Chesed	.....kindness
Chizuk	.....moral support
Davening	.....praying
Hakaras HaTov	.....gratitude
Kavanah	.....concentration
Klal Yisrael	.....the Jewish people
Lashon Hara	.....evil tongue (speech) - any derogatory or damaging (physically, financially, socially, or stress-inducing) communication
Midah, Midos	.....character trait, character traits
Mitzvah	.....a commandment
Mussar	.....ethical teaching
Neshamah	.....soul
Nisayon	.....a test
Ona'as Devarim	.....causing hurt through the spoken word
Parnasa	.....livelihood
Rechilus	.....gossip-mongering - any communication that generates animosity between people
Refuah Shleimah	.....a complete recovery from an illness
Sefer	.....a book
Shidduch	.....a match of two eligible and marriageable Jewish singles
Shiurim	.....classes
Shmiras HaLashon	.....guarding one's tongue
Siddur	.....prayer book
Siyata D'Shmaya	.....Divine Assistance
Talmid, Talmidim	.....student, students
Tefillah, Tefillos	.....prayer, prayers
Teshuva	.....repentance
Zechus	.....merit