

**Positive Judaism Study Guide #6**  
**Open to Hope: The Spirituality of Gratitude**

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Psychologist and author Melody Beattie taught that “gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.” And Michelle Obama said, “we learned about gratitude and humility - that so many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to the janitors who kept our school clean... and we were taught to value everyone’s contribution and treat everyone with respect.” Gratitude is a key strength in one’s ability to thrive and flourish.

In addition to gratitude, humor, hope, optimism, and the appreciation of beauty are important strengths in Positive Judaism. Grenville Kleiser once said, “good humor is a tonic for mind and body. It is the best antidote for anxiety and depression. It is a business asset. It attracts and keeps friends. It lightens human burdens. It is the direct route to serenity and contentment.”

Finally, in the inspiring words of Helen Keller, “optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

<b>Transcendence</b>	<b>Expanding on the core characteristics of Transcendence</b>
Appreciation of Beauty/ Yirah	Able to recognize beauty in nature, art, science, humanity, and excellence, in the profound and the mundane.
Gratitude/ Hakarat Hatov	Having the ability to be thankful and to be aware of the good and taking time to express appreciation.
Hope/Tikvah	Believing that good will come for self and others. Having an optimistic mindset.
Humor/Simcha	Able to bring lightheartedness, laughter, and smiles to self and to others through jokes, teasing, and play.
Spirituality/Ruchniut	Having faith in a higher purpose and expressing connection and interest to the unknowable and unseen.

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**1. Appreciation of Beauty**

Rabbi Hanina said further: “Everything is in the hand of heaven except the awe of heaven, as it is written, ‘and now, O Israel, what does the Eternal your God demand of you? Only this: to be in awe . . . (Deuteronomy 10:12). - *Talmud Brachot 33b*

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**2. Gratitude**

Gratitude rejoices with her sister joy and is always ready to light a candle and have a party. Gratitude doesn't much like the old cronies of boredom, despair, and taking life for granted. -*Rabbi Nachman of Breslov*

Modeh ani l'fanecha. . . I offer thanks before you, living and Eternal One, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great. -*Modeh ani l'fanecha, first prayer recited each day*

Blessed are You, Eternal One of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season." --*Shehechyanu*, prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving

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### **3. Hope**

And I shall always hope, and I shall add to all of Your praises. -*Psalms 71:14*

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### **4. Humor**

A joyful heart makes for good health; despondency dries up the bones. -*Proverbs 17:22*

And Sarah laughed. . . -*Genesis 18:12*

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### **5. Spirituality**

Three gates the Creator has opened to mankind so that they may enter into the domain of spirituality, ethical conduct and the laws divine, that guide us in our works and daily life to health of body and mind and soul. The first is the lofty portal of pure Reason, with all obstructing errors cleared away; the second is the book of Torah, revealed to Moses, the prophet; the third is built up of traditions. -*Duties of the Heart, Gates of Knowledge, Bahya Ibn Pakuda*

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### **\* Optional Discussion Questions**

1. What is a gratitude practice? Describe a gratitude practice that leads to increased positivity?
2. What is the relationship between the appreciation of beauty and spirituality?
3. Does one need to be spiritual to be religious? Or, religious to be spiritual?
4. Is there a difference between hope and optimism? How can one build optimism?
5. How has humor served the Jewish people in history?