The root of הכרת, נ.כ.ר, has two contrasting meanings.

**Klein Dictionary[[1]](#endnote-1) (Root)**

נכר ᴵᴵ to regard, recognize.

    — Niph. - נִכַּר was known, was recognized.

    — Pi. - נִכֵּר he recognized.

    — Pu. - נֻכַּר was recognized.

    — Hith. - הִתְנַכֵּר he made himself known.

    — Hiph. - הִכִּיר 1 he knew; 2 he understood, distinguished; 3 he recognized; NH 4 he acknowledged; NH 5 he approved.

    — Hoph. - הֻכַּר PBH 1 was recognized; NH 2 was ascertained; NH 3 was approved. [Several scholars identify this base with נכר ᴵ. According to them the orig. meaning of נכר ᴵᴵ would have been ‘to regard as something strange’, i.e. ‘to regard intently’.] Derivatives: נִכָּר, הֶכֵּר, הַכָּרָה, מַכִּיר, מַכָּר, מֻכָּר.

**Klein Dictionary (Root)**

נכר ᴵ to treat or regard as a stranger.

    — Niph. - נִכַּר he dissembled.

    — Pi. - נִכֵּר 1 he treated as a stranger; 2 he denied; 3 he delivered over.

    — Hith. - הִתְנַכֵּר he acted as a stranger. [Base of נָכְרִי. Related to Aram. נוּכְרַי, Syr. נוּכֽרָי, Ugar. nkr, Ethiop. nakīr (= stranger), Arab. nakir (= unknown, little known), Akka. nakru (= foreign, hostile), Syr. נַכַּר (= he detested, abhorred), נַכּֽרִי (= he alienated, estranged), Arab. nakira (= he did not know, was ignorant; he denied), nakir (= denial), Akka. nakāru (= to be a stranger, be hostile). nakiru and nakaru (= enemy), nukurtu (= enmity). cp. נכר ᴵᴵ. The following verbal forms are denominated from נֵכָר or נָכְרִי.] Derivatives: נֶכֶר, נֹכֶר, נֵכֶר, הַנְכָּרָה, הִתֽנַכְּרוּת, נִכּוּר.

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The root נ.כ.ר is used in twice in each of two consecutive lines of Torah.

**Genesis 42:7-8**

וַיַּ֥רְא יוֹסֵ֛ף אֶת־אֶחָ֖יו **וַיַּכִּרֵ֑ם וַיִּתְנַכֵּ֨ר** אֲלֵיהֶ֜ם וַיְדַבֵּ֧ר אִתָּ֣ם קָשׁ֗וֹת וַיֹּ֤אמֶר אֲלֵהֶם֙ מֵאַ֣יִן בָּאתֶ֔ם וַיֹּ֣אמְר֔וּ מֵאֶ֥רֶץ כְּנַ֖עַן לִשְׁבׇּר־אֹֽכֶל׃ **וַיַּכֵּ֥ר** יוֹסֵ֖ף אֶת־אֶחָ֑יו וְהֵ֖ם **לֹ֥א הִכִּרֻֽהוּ**׃

When Joseph saw his brothers, **he recognized them**; but he **acted like a stranger** toward them and spoke harshly to them. He asked them, “Where do you come from?” And they said, “From the land of Canaan, to procure food.” For though Joseph **recognized** his brothers, they **did not recognize him**.

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How do these contemporary definitions of gratitude compare to your understanding of הכרת הטוב?

**Definitions of Gratitude**

gratitude[[2]](#endnote-2) - n., the feeling of being grateful and wanting to express your thanks

gratitude[[3]](#endnote-3) - n., a strong feeling of appreciation to someone or something for what the person has done to help you

gratitude[[4]](#endnote-4) - n., the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness

gratitude[[5]](#endnote-5) - n., a sense of thankfulness and happiness in response to receiving a gift, either a tangible benefit (e.g., a present, favor) given by someone or a fortunate happenstance (e.g., a beautiful day)

Could it really be true that no one God before Leah? What is the innovation in gratitude that this represents to the rabbis?

**Genesis 29:35**

וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן, וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת-יְהוָה--עַל-כֵּן קָרְאָה שְׁמוֹ, יְהוּדָה; וַתַּעֲמֹד, מִלֶּדֶת.

And she conceived again, and bore a son; and she said: ‘This time will I praise Adonai.’ Therefore she called his name Judah; and she left off bearing.

**Masechet Berachot 7b**

וְאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוּם רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַי: מִיּוֹם שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת עוֹלָמוֹ לֹא הָיָה אָדָם שֶׁהוֹדָה לְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, עַד שֶׁבָּאתָה לֵאָה וְהוֹדַתּוּ.

And Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai: From the day the Holy One of Blessing, created the world, no one thanked the Holy One of Blessing, until Leah came and thanked God.

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The word gratitude in Hebrew, *hodah’ah*, comes from the root *yud-dalet-hey*, meaning to give thanks. The name Judah comes from the same root, the basis of the word Jew. What is the connection between gratitude and confession?

**Klein Dictionary[[6]](#endnote-6) (Root)**

ידה to confess, give thanks.

    — Hiph. - הוֹדָה 1 he gave thanks, praised, lauded; 2 he confessed.

    — Hith. - הִתֽוַדָּה he confessed, made confession.

    — Pi. (back formation from the Hith.) . - וִדָּה he confessed (tr. v.), he confessed (intr. v.).

    — Pu. - וֻרָּה was confessed. [Aram.-Syr. אוֹדִי (= he praised, confessed), Arab. istauda(y) (= he confessed).] Derivatives: הוֹד, **הוֹדָאָה**, הוֹדוֹת, הוֹדָיָה, הֻיְּדוֹת, הִתֽוַרּוּת, וִדּוּי, תּוֹדָה.

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What is Ben Zoma trying to communicate? What do wisdom, might, and honor teach us about gratitude?

**Pirke Avot 4:1**

בֶּן זוֹמָא אוֹמֵר, אֵיזֶהוּ חָכָם, הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תהלים קיט) מִכָּל מְלַמְּדַי הִשְׂכַּלְתִּי כִּי עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ שִׂיחָה לִּי. אֵיזֶהוּ גִבּוֹר, הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת יִצְרוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (משלי טז) טוֹב אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם מִגִּבּוֹר וּמשֵׁל בְּרוּחוֹ מִלֹּכֵד עִיר. אֵיזֶהוּ עָשִׁיר, הַשָּׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תהלים קכח) יְגִיעַ כַּפֶּיךָ כִּי תֹאכֵל אַשְׁרֶיךָ וְטוֹב לָךְ. אַשְׁרֶיךָ, בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה. וְטוֹב לָךְ, לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. אֵיזֶהוּ מְכֻבָּד, הַמְכַבֵּד אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שמואל א ב) כִּי מְכַבְּדַי אֲכַבֵּד וּבֹזַי יֵקָלּוּ.

Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? He who learns from everyone, as it is said: “From all who taught me have I gained understanding” (Ps 119:99). Who is mighty? He who subdues the [evil] inclination, as it is said: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city” (Prov 16:32). **Who is rich? He who rejoices in his lot**, as it is said: “You shall enjoy the fruit of your labors, you shall be happy and you shall prosper” (Ps 128:2).“You shall be happy” in this world, “and you shall prosper” in the world to come. Who is honored? He who honors his fellow human beings as it is said: “For I honor those that honor Me, but those who spurn Me will be dishonored” (I Sam 2:30).

Read Psalm 128, the source of Ben Zoma’s proof text for “Who is rich?” What picture is being painted about gratitude and prosperity?

**Psalm 128**

שִׁ֗יר הַֽמַּ֫עֲל֥וֹת אַ֭שְׁרֵי כׇּל־יְרֵ֣א יְהֹוָ֑ה הַ֝הֹלֵ֗ךְ בִּדְרָכָֽיו׃ יְגִ֣יעַ כַּ֭פֶּיךָ כִּ֣י תֹאכֵ֑ל אַ֝שְׁרֶ֗יךָ וְט֣וֹב לָֽךְ׃ אֶשְׁתְּךָ֤ ׀ כְּגֶ֥פֶן פֹּרִיָּה֮ בְּיַרְכְּתֵ֢י בֵ֫יתֶ֥ךָ בָּ֭נֶיךָ כִּשְׁתִלֵ֣י זֵיתִ֑ים סָ֝בִ֗יב לְשֻׁלְחָנֶֽךָ׃ הִנֵּ֣ה כִי־כֵ֭ן יְבֹ֥רַךְ גָּ֗בֶר יְרֵ֣א יהוה׃ יְבָרֶכְךָ֥ יהוה מִצִּ֫יּ֥וֹן וּ֭רְאֵה בְּט֣וּב יְרוּשָׁלָ֑͏ִם כֹּ֝֗ל יְמֵ֣י חַיֶּֽיךָ׃ וּרְאֵֽה־בָנִ֥ים לְבָנֶ֑יךָ שָׁ֝ל֗וֹם עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃

A song of ascents. Happy are all who fear Adonai, who follow G-d’s ways. You shall enjoy the fruit of your labors; you shall be happy and you shall prosper. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons, like olive saplings around your table. So shall the man who fears Adonai be blessed. May the Adonai bless you from Zion; may you share the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life, and live to see your children’s children. May all be well with Israel!

The Talmud (Menahot 43b) instructs us to say one hundred blessings, recognizing one hundred things to be thankful for, every day. Read the texts. Rabbi Meir interprets the verse from Deuteronomy that he uses as a proof text (Deut. 10:12) as though it said one hundred *me’a*, ‘100,’ rather than *ma*, ‘what.’

**Menachot 43b**

רבי מאיר אומר חייב אדם לברך מאה ברכות בכל יום שנאמר (דברים י, יב) ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלהיך שואל מעמך.

Rabbi Meir would say: A person is obligated to recite one hundred blessings every day, as it is stated: “And now, Israel, what [ma] does the Lord your God require of you” (Deut. 10:12).

**Deuteronomy 10:12**

וְעַתָּה֙ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל מָ֚ה יהוה אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ שֹׁאֵ֖ל מֵעִמָּ֑ךְ כִּ֣י אִם־לְ֠יִרְאָה אֶת־יהוה אֱלֹהֶ֜יךָ לָלֶ֤כֶת בְּכָל־דְּרָכָיו֙ וּלְאַהֲבָ֣ה אֹת֔וֹ וְלַֽעֲבֹד֙ אֶת־יהוה אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ בְּכָל־לְבָבְךָ֖ וּבְכָל־נַפְשֶֽׁךָ׃

And now, O Israel, what does the Adonai your God demand of you? Only this: to revere Adonai your God, to walk in God’s paths, to love God, and to serve the Adonai your God with all your heart and soul.

**Numbers Rabbah 18**

In the time of Kind David, 100 people died every day due to a terrible plague. Realizing that the plague had a spiritual cause, King David and the Sages instituted a “measure for measure” response: saying of 100 blessings each day. Once implemented, the plague stopped.

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The Sages debate the appropriate blessings for a variety of situations, concluding that one must say a blessing on both good news and bad news. What is the purpose of this practice? Is it possible to say a blessing over bad news with a full heart?

**Mishnah Berakhot 9:2**

עַל הַזִּיקִין, וְעַל הַזְּוָעוֹת, וְעַל הַבְּרָקִים, וְעַל הָרְעָמִים, וְעַל הָרוּחוֹת, אוֹמֵר בָּרוּךְ שֶׁכֹּחוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ מָלֵא עוֹלָם. עַל הֶהָרִים, וְעַל הַגְּבָעוֹת, וְעַל הַיַּמִּים, וְעַל הַנְּהָרוֹת, וְעַל הַמִּדְבָּרוֹת, אוֹמֵר בָּרוּךְ עוֹשֵׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, הָרוֹאֶה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל אוֹמֵר בָּרוּךְ שֶׁעָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל, בִּזְמַן שֶׁרוֹאֶה אוֹתוֹ לִפְרָקִים. עַל הַגְּשָׁמִים וְעַל הַבְּשׂוֹרוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת אוֹמֵר בָּרוּךְ הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּטִיב, וְעַל שְׁמוּעוֹת רָעוֹת אוֹמֵר בָּרוּךְ דַּיַּן הָאֱמֶת.

On comets, and on earthquakes, and on lightning and on thunder, and on storms say, “Blessed [be the One] whose strength and might fill the world.” On mountains, and on hills, and on seas, and on rivers, and on deserts say, “Blessed [is the One] who makes the works of the beginning.” R’ Yehuda says, “One who sees the great sea says, ‘Blessed [is the One] who made the great sea,’ but only if he sees it occasionally.” On rain and on good news say, “Blessed is the One who is good and does good.” And on bad news say, “Blessed [are You] the true judge.”

***HaTov V’ha’meitiv***

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה אֱלהֵינוּ מֶלֶך הָעולָם הַטּוב וְהַמֵּטִיב.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who is good and causes good.

***Baruch Dayan HaEmet***

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה אֱלהֵינוּ מֶלֶך הָעולָם דַיַּן הָאֱמֶת.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who is the true judge.

1. Klein’s *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Oxford Learner’s Dictionary [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cambridge Dictionary [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Lexico UK Dictionary [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. APA Dictionary of Psychology [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Klein’s *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* [↑](#endnote-ref-6)