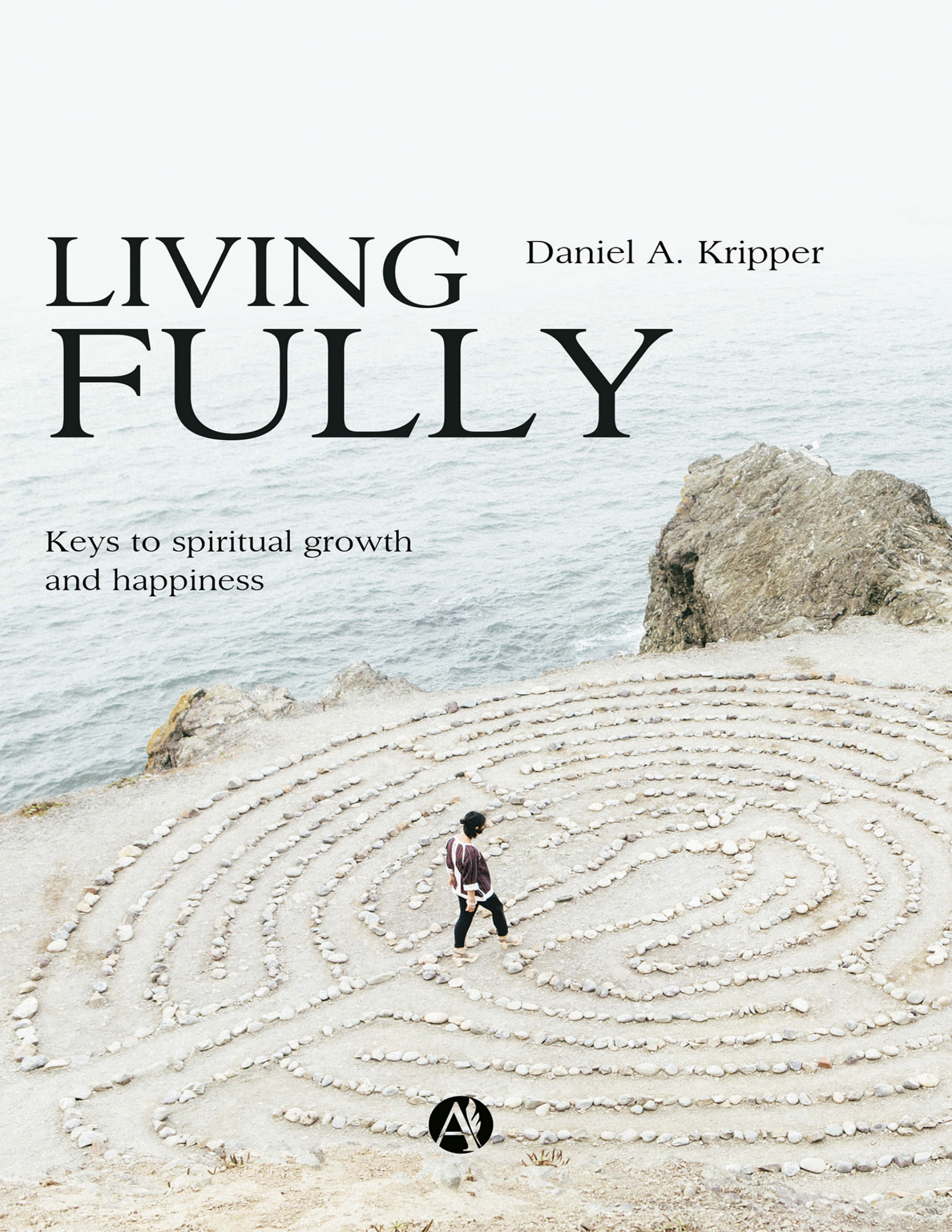


# LIVING FULLY

Daniel A. Kripper

Keys to spiritual growth  
and happiness



DANIEL A. KRIPPER

# Living Fully

*Keys to spiritual growth and happiness*



EDITORIAL AUTORES DE ARGENTINA

Kripper, Daniel A.

Living Fully : keys to spiritual growth and happiness / Daniel A. Kripper. - 1a ed. - Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires : Autores de Argentina, 2020.

Libro digital, EPUB

Archivo Digital: online

ISBN 978-987-87-0729-7

I. Ensayo Sociológico. I. Título.

CDD 301.01

EDITORIAL AUTORES DE ARGENTINA

[www.autoresdeargentina.com](http://www.autoresdeargentina.com)

Mail: [info@autoresdeargentina.com](mailto:info@autoresdeargentina.com)

Translation: Nadia Hlebowitsh

Edits: Edith Scott Saavedra

The translation of this book has been possible with the generous contribution of Haime Hochman.

Queda hecho el depósito que establece la LEY 11.723

Impreso en Argentina – *Printed in Argentina*

*In memory of Emilio, my brother, advisor and dear friend.*

# Index

[Introduction](#)

**[Chapter I](#)**

[The Kabbalah of Gratitude](#)

**[Chapter II](#)**

[Overcoming Fear](#)

**[Chapter III](#)**

[The Power of Habit](#)

**[Chapter IV](#)**

[Who Fears Change and New Paths?](#)

**[Chapter V](#)**

[The Science of Anger](#)

**[Chapter VI](#)**

[The Tao of Compassion](#)

**[Chapter VII](#)**

[Kindness in an unjust world](#)

**[Chapter VIII](#)**

[The Power of Forgiveness](#)

**Chapter IX**  
**The Habit of Happiness**

**Selected Biography**  
**About the Autor**

# Introduction

This is not a self-help book any more than it is so-called “fast-track spirituality,” nor does it aim to offer simple recipes for finding happiness in X number of steps.

Instead it is a reflection on the matters that make a better, more intense life, which is ultimately the essence of what we call spirituality.

I have embarked on this task largely based on years of experience as a rabbi and spiritual advisor, assisting individuals and families, and providing them with support and guidance.

I have always considered that my primary role is, above all, as a facilitator, especially in the wide-ranging moments of life, whether happy occasions or situations of crisis or regret.

One of my Bible teachers in Jerusalem used to tell us that the difference between an educator and an arrow on a street sign is that the latter simply indicates the direction, but does not accompany us along the way. The spiritual advisor, on the other hand, is somebody who walks with you, motivates you and encourages your path towards achieving your projects. In doing so, he becomes accustomed to these matters and learns the most important lessons. It is undoubtedly here where the great learning of the spirit is developed, and the capacity for understanding and empathy is cultivated.

The universities or theological seminaries provide us with the basic training, fundamentals and discipline of studying and research. But it is understood that the secrets of the “profession” and its most relevant key points are not learned in higher education centers, however prestigious they may be.

The well-known popular saying is often cited: “What nature does not give, Salamanca does not lend,” which undoubtedly represents a great truth; but the second part of the saying is no less true or important: “but what nature gives, Salamanca perfects.” Salamanca does its part, and it is far from my intention to minimize the influence of the academic world, to which I

personally owe so much; but the most effective mastery is achieved through practical exercise of the challenges that life presents us on a daily basis.

I try to develop my knowledge, day after day, along with those who are my best teachers in the exploration of the enigmas of existence and the search for wisdom. As a wise man once said: “I have learned a lot from my teachers, but even more from my students.”

Neither is this book focused on therapy or the resolution of psychological problems. Although in the old days, the use of the concept of therapy also included the spiritual component of the human being – referred to as the care of the soul – over time it was universally reduced to the domain of the mind, aimed at treating the so-called “patient.”

I remember my time as a student in the Department of Philosophy and Literature at the University of Buenos Aires, when Freudian psychoanalysis reigned in the field of psychotherapy, perhaps a reflection of trends and preferences of an increasingly complex and conflicted society. Thanks to this cultural “trend,” which cast the spotlight on Argentina as a worldwide mecca for psychoanalysis, I had the benefit of starting this specific training of the mind and inner exploration. I have continued this process in the company of great experts, belonging to the most diverse schools of thought, specialists of the genuine and fundamental meaning implicit in the idea of “therapy.”

To all of them, I dedicate this orientation guide, with my infinite gratitude for their influence and inspiration.

To prepare it, I have drawn from the most diverse sources, both secular and religious, classical texts, as well as insights from contemporary science and psychology, which open up illuminating perspectives on personal growth.

A spiritual guide was once asked how his task differed from that of a psychotherapist. And he responded with the following metaphor: there are two people digging a field. One is trying to remove debris and waste under the surface, while the other is after precious minerals. The primary goal of the latter is to extract hidden gold, so that the potential and talents lying waiting underneath come to light.

On the other hand, this guide in no way substitutes as psychotherapy when this is the given prescription.



It is my sincere intention that the following pages will help those who seek “clues” to find themselves again and see some light during this eclipse of values of our times.

# CHAPTER I

## The Kabbalah of Gratitude

It is said that Mathew Henry, the famous 18th century minister and biblical commentator, was once robbed, after which some friends asked him how he felt. Naturally they expected to hear him utter a complaint against God. They were greatly surprised when Henry replied:

“I feel very grateful to God... In fact, I have four things to be grateful for regarding what has happened to me. First, I am grateful to Him because it is the first time that I have been robbed. Second, I am grateful that they stole my bag and did not take my life. Third, I am grateful because, although they took everything on me, it was not much. And fourth, I am grateful because they robbed me and it was not me who robbed.”

This is certainly an impressive model of gratitude!

An ancient Hebrew liturgical poem states: “Why does man complain about his life? Shouldn’t it be enough to be alive?”

I have always been struck by this poetic sentiment. It is true that being alive is indeed something wonderful. But it rarely occurs to us, for example, that we might not have been born, and the fact that we wake up alive every morning is something we take for granted.

The most common attitude, even without realizing it, is complaining, regretting, protesting.

There is a funny American story about a congressman who was canvassing the vote of one of his supporters, when he suddenly finds out that he is planning to vote for the opposition candidate.

“But how could you do this to me? Don’t you remember when your business caught fire 10 years ago and I helped you get a cheap loan? And that other incident involving your daughter and the police of another country that I helped resolve? And when your wife got sick and I got her the finest medical attention she needed?”

To which the man replied: “All that is true, but what have you done for me lately?”

This example reveals, through humor, the typical attitude of the ingrate. “What have you done for me lately?” is his motto.

Without a doubt, this person has serious memory issues. Where memory fails, ingratitude grows.

This is the opposite attitude to recognition and gratitude. But not just as mere formality or a gesture of courtesy, because we know that it is the right thing to do – but rather, the gratitude that comes from the heart, as an attitude of life.

We complain for an infinite number of reasons, sometimes even rightly so; sometimes we do it to get approval or compassion from others.

There are the occasional complainers and then the chronic ones, those who take pleasure in sharing their complaints to let off steam, or to play the victim, or simply to get attention.

*“Wear gratitude like a cloak and it will feed every corner of your life.”*

*Rumi*

Let us remember how the Hebrew Bible dramatically describes the endless dissatisfaction and demands of the children of Israel upon leaving Egypt during the crossing through the desert, on the way to the Land of Israel.

They complained left and right and rebelled against God and Moses, their leader. It is understandable that despite the wonders surrounding them, under such harsh conditions their sight was blinded and they could not see the light at the desert’s end: the promised land.

Many centuries of slavery had taken away their ability to make decisions and seek a noble and independent existence.

When I re-read these stories, I think how we tend to resemble those wary pilgrims who thousands of years ago were condemned to wander through the desert of life, trapped in a vicious circle that led only to misery and despair.

“Accusing fate, complaining about God and men, griping over ‘the miserable luck’ that we have is absolutely useless. Often, we believe that in this way we will relieve our heart of a weight that oppresses us, when in fact this increasingly weighs on us – not to mention that it irritates all those around us – since he who complains always sinks deeper in the ocean of life, instead of rising to new heights,” writes Karl Otto Schmidt in *Un nouvel art de vivre*.

*“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”*

*Albert Schweitzer*

This is exactly the issue that concerns us in this chapter: how to rise above the dreariness and uselessness of meaningless complaints, and seek an illuminating and liberating way out. Stuck in our bubble, we get carried away by routine and run on autopilot.

Even when blessings appear on our doorstep, we are not open to receiving them, as we are often imprisoned by fear, anxiety and expectations.

Gratitude connects us to our best feelings and thoughts, and helps us look beyond ourselves.

We know from experience that gratitude nurtures more gratitude for what we have.

According to the wisdom of the Kabbalah, the most powerful antidote to complaint is gratitude as a spiritual attitude. Hasidic masters suggest that gratitude is a way of life, an outlook that can relieve individuals of their suffering. This gives direction and meaning to human existence. That is why gratitude should be practiced in all circumstances, and obsession with regret, envy, etc. should be set aside. In this way, a conscience is cultivated that allows us to face the tests of fate without bitterness.

The eminent Catholic theologian Henry Nouwen says:

“All that is has been freely given by the God of love. Everything is grace. Light and water, roof and food, work and leisure, children, parents, grandparents, life and death; everything has been given to us. Why? So that

we can thank: thank God, thank each other, thank each and every one of us.”

In the same vein, David Steindl–Rast, a Benedictine monk and prominent thinker, who has made gratitude a cornerstone of his spiritual conception, says that becoming a grateful person requires habitual practice: “From experience we know that whenever we are really awake and alive, we are also truly grateful.”

A great source of inspiration for all religions is, without a doubt, the Book of Psalms, whose classic verses are filled with the highest spirit of gratitude. This is summarized in the verse: “Hallelujah! Give thanks to the Eternal, because it is good; because His mercy is forever.” Psalm 106: 1.

Who hasn’t felt deeply moved when listening to Mercedes Sosa sing this song by Violeta Parra, who has had such an impact on popular South American folklore? Here we read some lines of the famous song “Thank you, life”:

“Thank you, life, which has given me so much.  
It gave me two beams of light, that when opened,  
Can perfectly distinguish black from white  
And in the sky above, her starry backdrop,  
And from within the multitude  
The one that I love.

Thank you to life, which has given me so much.  
It gave me sounds and the alphabet.  
With them the words that I think and declare:  
“Mother,” “Friend,” “Brother” and the light shining.  
The route of the soul from which comes love...”

While the option to feel grateful is always within our reach, we often forget it and ignore it. There are also those who believe they owe nothing to anybody.

Removing our ego and false pride, and recognizing that our well-being depends on other people, is the only way to put our capacity for appreciation into practice.

The Kabbalah teaches us that gratitude as a feeling can be very ephemeral if it is not exercised and internalized.

Thus, the teachers often said:

“Whoever learns from his fellow man, be it a chapter or a rule, a verse, an expression, or even a single letter, must show him respect.”

A great mystic, the 18th century rabbi Nachman of Breslov, taught that gratitude is incompatible with arrogance, resentment and selfishness. He said that “gratitude joins its sister joy, and is always ready to light a candle and celebrate a party. Gratitude disdains the old vices of boredom and despair, and does not take for granted gifts of life, great or small. Conscious gratitude is the attitude that ensures we can confront life’s trials without bitterness.”

Other Hasidic teachers also emphasize that unless we train ourselves to be grateful, even during the difficulties and setbacks that we face, we are destined for a life of misery.

It is true that there are times and situations when life does not smile at us, and gratitude does not come naturally. Nevertheless, even in such times, it is always possible to find something positive and illuminating.

A well-known parable tells of a farmer who had a son. They had a horse, which they used to help them with hard work in the fields. One day, the fence was left open, and the horse escaped to the nearby mountains. The elders approached this good man to sympathize with him.

“Such bad luck! What will you do now without a horse?”

“Good luck or bad luck, who knows?” answered the farmer.

A few days later, the horse returned, followed by some wild mares. The father and son were able to enclose them within the fence. The jealous villagers came to congratulate the man.

“Lucky you! Now you have several horses to help you. What a gift!”

“Good luck or bad luck, who knows?” the farmer replied simply.

This parable conveys a lesson that everyone could live firsthand. How often do situations, even unpleasant ones, eventually reveal themselves as hidden blessings? How can we know in advance?

*“Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns. I am thankful that thorns have roses.”*

*Alphonse Karr*

Let us look, for example, at the case of Leopoldo Pfefferberg, whom was saved from certain death by the famous Oskar Schindler, whom we will discuss later. Pfefferberg convinced the Australian writer Thomas Keneally to write a book that would become known as *Schindler's List*. His motive: to fulfill a promise made to Schindler – a savior of Jews during World War II – that immediately after the war, his name would be known to the world. Indeed, both the book and the subsequent film, directed by Steven Spielberg, helped this story of such noble actions reach the entire world.

Every time I visit the State of Israel, I am always moved to visit the Yad Vashem, which is the main Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. But there is one particular area that has special value to me, and it is the space dedicated to the “Righteous Among the Nations.” This section of the museum inspires within me, in the words of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, a sense of “fear and trembling.” It is dedicated to honoring hundreds of people from other religions who saved the lives of Jews in danger due to Nazi persecution, even at the risk of their personal safety. Many names are known, people of all nationalities, but I always wonder how many more, true anonymous heroes, exposed their lives in the midst of the catastrophe and collective blindness.

*Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.”*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

A contemporary author, John Demartini, has pondered the virtues of gratitude in his book *Gratitude Effect*, and how it powerfully moves the emotional and spiritual realms. He says that not feeling grateful for what one does and receives is like moving with the handbrake on. Quoting one of his teachers, he concludes that “if there is a day when you cannot be grateful