



Gratitude in the Time of Corona

This week we celebrate Thanksgiving. And why is this Thanksgiving different from, let's say, last year? Because this year we have the possibility of being together as families and friends. Yes, I know COVID isn't over. But for many of us, we are becoming more comfortable being with family and close friends who have been vaccinated and are ready to live our lives as prudently and safely as we can.

Each holiday or joyous event with friends and family-Thanksgiving, Chanukkah, Shabbat, birthdays, weddings and b'nai mitzvah have become touch stones for the sense of family celebration that we missed so dearly last year as we were sequestered in our homes.

All of this reminds me just how much we are inherently social creatures. It has been for many a time of loneliness and despite interactions via zoom, we have missed being together. I can remember being at a gathering a few weeks ago. Someone came up to me and gave me a big hug. "Rabbi, it's been so long!" At first I thought to myself, "So long? Really it hasn't been that long?" But then I realize the last time I saw the person was before COVID started, and so it had been about 20 months!

Counting time before COVID and after COVID, with a blur in the middle, seems to be par for the course. Part of me is ok with that. Who wants to remember this "Time of Corona" even if some positive things came out of it. This time has not approximated normalcy nor has it been normal.

As impatient as we are to get going again, however, we still know that we are not quite ready to push the "go!" button with our lives. But we shouldn't keep our finger on the "stop" button either.

That's where gratitude comes in. We have spent a bit of time these past months complaining and being unhappy about any number of things; the price of goods, mask mandates, schooling for our kids, and just the disruption to our lives. We are in need of a break from all this kvetching. And in need of a reminder of just how fortunate we really are. If it's easy to complain, I would hope it would be even easier to express our good fortune.

Here is a short list: Health, family, living in the United States, having food on our tables, being able to travel again and go to sporting events. Eating in restaurants and gathering with friends. Now, not all of us feel comfortable doing everything on this list. And that's ok. But, well, you get the idea. Our lives may be inconvenienced, but we are able to move forward. This is not to deny the hardships that exist for so many still in our country. Nor those who died from COVID. It is to say, that part of being resilient and grateful is not to forget the good.

In the words of Rabbi David Wolpe, "I am grateful that You help us to see; so we can heal, sooth sorrows, ease pain, raise those who are bowed down. We are thankful for blessings, O Lord, but also for the gift of giving blessing." [From Jewish Men Pray p. 273]

Let us give thanks for the good in our lives, and pray that the year ahead provides each of us an increasing sense of safety and security.