



Congregation Ner Tamid

on the Greenspun Campus for Jewish Life, Learning, and Spiritual Renewal

Presents in the Time of Corona

Whether one is celebrating Hanukkah or Christmas during the month of December, gift giving is central to the joy of the holiday. While admittedly gift giving historically was never a part of Hanukkah, over the last generation or so that “battle” has been lost. And for the record, while gift giving has always been a part of Christmas, historically, gifts were home made and much more modest than they are today.

So, let’s face it, gift giving is here to stay. And not just because Madison Avenue has convinced us that it is a good thing. Gift giving stays around because, well, it is a good thing. Even someone who has “everything” enjoys a good present. One that reflects that the person giving the gift has thought about them in a loving way.

Some folks are nonetheless difficult to buy for. One might feel that those who are aging in life have done it all or bought whatever it is they wanted. One might get frustrated by the dad who says, “*just buy me another tie or some new pajamas*” (guilty!). Or by the person who no matter what you buy, always seems to be disappointed. (Remember, that is on them!) Don’t let those challenges stand in your way. Rise to the occasion. It might take a bit more effort, but making that effort is precisely the point.

There is however, the present that never goes out of style. One that doesn’t need to wait for a holiday or birthday to be given. It is the present of kindness, thoughtfulness, and selflessness. Today, and every day, there are opportunities to make a difference in the lives of people who surround us. Some we know intimately, and others are faces that blur together. We are surrounded by people who help shape our lives, and how we do our part helps shape theirs.

Too often we fail to say “thank you” or “please”. Too often we forget the niceties of holding open the door for another. Too often we don’t let someone in front of us while we are driving. Too often we undervalue simple gestures such as a phone call or an actual letter to a loved one or friend who is feeling isolated and alone. Too often we fail to see the opportunity that involvement in a charity might give to making our world better. The gift of time is precious; yet we have no problem using it to watch endless Netflix and Amazon shows. Relaxation is important, but sometimes it is simply filling our day with mindless care. So, take a moment, to think how your time could be a meaningful gift; to someone you know or someone you don’t know. A small act of kindness could mean the world to someone.

Hanukkah may be over, but its message burns bright: *a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.*

Rabbi Sanford Akselrad