

Erev Rosh Hashanah 5781

# Gratitude

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Eilu Eilu hotzeianu, hotzeianu mimitzrayim hotzeianu mimitzrayim DAYENU!

I know, I know. Wrong holiday, right? Not so fast! Yes, Dayenu is a song we sing at the Passover Seder each year, and for me, every time I hear it I can see my maternal grandmother singing that song, feeling those words of gratitude even though her life was not always easy. Eilu Eilu Hotzeianu....

Dayenu reminds us of the good in life. Dayenu starts with Mitzrayim—yes, Egypt. Even more, Mitzrayim, in the literal sense, the narrow places, describes our world today. We are living in Mitzrayim, in the narrow places. Nearly six months into a world-wide pandemic, we arrive at this New Year having experienced lives none of us could have imagined just a year ago.

Our world, our nation, our community present us with challenges in every direction. Over the coming days of sacred reflection, we will wrestle with the challenges of fear, racism, unknowing, and more. But tonight, as we begin the year, let's turn to Dayenu, and begin with gratitude, even from this narrow place.

As we gather tonight, we will pause to consider all of the good we have, all that is missing, and at least some of what we can do to bring holiness and wholeness.

Here's what we have:

A. Technology

1. The ability to talk, see, share
2. Distance, driving, no longer a challenge

- B. Community
  - 1. Our gatherings—on screen, on the phone, in our cars, in-person spaced apart and wearing masks
  - 2. Learning
- C. Needs
  - 1. Food-shelter-clothing-medication
  - 2. Human contact, even in new forms
  - 3. Laughter and joy even in dark times

Here's some of what is Missing

- A. Connection—
  - 1. Seeing so many while distributing Seder plates, prayer books and challahs
  - 2. A sense of safety and identity
  - 3. peoplehood
- B. Hope
  - 1. So much despair
  - 2. So much lying
  - 3. So much destruction
- C. Concern
  - 1. Seeing ourselves in each other
  - 2. Dignity and respect for all of humanity
  - 3. Those being ignored—people of color, older people, people in institutions, immigrants

Some of what we can do

- A. Reach out
  - 1. share our blessings by phone, computer, written word
  - 2. Safely protest, make our voices heard
  - 3. VOTE VOTE VOTE
- B. Listen to science and history
  - 1. Masks save lives

2. Step in for those being targeted—cry out, reach out, speak out
3. Err on the side of humanity rather than economics

C. Care for self and other

1. Make time for self-care—walks, reading, talking
2. Offer gifts to others—food, time, assistance
3. Work to unite—LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN

Conclusion: HaYom Harat Olam. Today is the birthday of the world. In creating the world, God provides a blueprint for gratitude. After each day of creation, God utters simple words: Ki tov. Until the final day, the day of humanity's creation, the day leading into Shabbat. At that moment, God utters the words Hinei Tov Me'od—it was very good.

Each of us can do the same. As our heads hit the pillow, even in the midst of pandemic and crisis and racial strife, we can find something good of the day just ending. We can find a way to end our days with the words Ki Tov. And each week as we end the week by gathering for Shabbat, we can look around the zoom screen, or someday soon I pray, the sanctuary or chapel, and say, Hinei Tov Me'od. Behold how very good it is.

Follow God in creation—every day find the good.