

Dearest Friends,

In advance of Thanksgiving Day tomorrow, I wanted to share a brief reflection with you regarding our collective observance of this legal holiday at this juncture in our national life. I look forward to having the opportunity to expand on some of these motifs in Shabbat.

As many of you are aware, Thanksgiving, though observed in various iterations for generations prior to the Civil War, was only made a federal holiday in October of 1863 by President Lincoln. Indubitably, this nation was divided at that time in a manner more fundamental and with consequences far graver than any which have been even remotely implicated by our disconcerting state of present discord.

Nevertheless, in light of the perils of fraternal strife which currently afflict our country, and the vitriolic state of our civic discourse, I do not think it inappropriate to refer you to the inimitable words of our sixteenth President, in establishing this day of national gratitude, as he “fervently implore[d] the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.”

Indeed, it is altogether fitting that we should be prayerful on this Thanksgiving Day on behalf of both our country and our fellow citizens. We would be deeply remiss if we were to imagine that our cherished ability to express our faith so freely and expansively in this country was somehow independent of the overall health of this republic.

And, even as we do beseech ‘He who brings salvation to kings and dominion to princes’ on behalf of this nation, let us equally commit ourselves to doing all that is in our mortal power to heal the wounds of excessive partisanship which so afflict our nation, as both’ lovers of peace, and those who pursue it.’

Let us take far greater care to understand the legitimate concerns of those with whom we disagree, and in selecting the words with which we may choose to express that disagreement. As the wisest amongst men taught, “the words of the Sages are heard in pleasantness”, and in this respect, we would do well do emulate those luminaries, and not the pundits whose voices are so often divisive and rancorous, in substance and in form.

May He whose very essence is Peace both answer our prayers, as well as reward our sincere efforts to contribute towards the full restoration of comity, civility, decency, and integrity to the national life of this country, which has been an unparalleled source of blessing for our people, and the flourishing of Torah.

Sincerely Yours,

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