

A Time for Gratitude
Beresihit 5780

Rabbi Daniel Fridman

As we begin the Torah anew, and bid the holidays farewell, it is striking to consider the first sin in which humans engaged. As Chava, and then Adam, eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, one may argue that the sin was a manifestation of a deeper, inner flaw: lack of gratitude.

Instead of being satisfied and grateful with the remarkable environment into which they had been placed, with its flowing rivers, orchards, and luscious fruits, all of which was theirs for the taking, Chava, and then Adam, become enticed by that one element which was forbidden to them.

It is not mere greed, nor is it simply the natural enticement one feels for that which is off limits, but, it seems to me, a deep sense of entitlement and lack of proper gratitude for all that was available to them which is at the inner core of the first sin in the Torah. Chava and Adam never stopped to consider that they had more than they could ever possibly enjoy, and became obsessed with the one element of the Garden that was not for their enjoyment. Calamity ensues, and the destiny of humanity is forever changed.

The message for us is self-evident. At the core of a healthy spiritual personality is a deep sense of gratitude for one's blessings, and this is certainly at the core of a healthy spiritual community as well.

As such, I want to personally express a profound sense of gratitude for all those who made our holidays so enriching and so meaningful. Of course, we express our gratitude to Reb Yitz and Rav Josh, who led our Tefillot so beautifully, but, equally, to our exemplary youth committee, security and medical committees, ritual committee, kiddush committee, and to all who volunteered to build our Sukkah, to decorate it, and of course, to Michael Laves, for photographing all of it.

Thank you to Sigi Laster, for once again running our Arba Minim campaign, and to our exceptionally deserving Chattanim, Dr. Ben Cooper, Daniel Wetrin, and Jeffrey Kantowitz, who we will celebrate on Shabbat. Thank you to Dr. Steve Myers, for all of the behind the scenes work in the shul and outside.

I equally would like to encourage each of you to reach out to the wonderful people who enriched your holidays and to thank them for all of their hard work. Never underestimate the significance of a sincere and kind word.

In closing, I want to thank our President, and a dear friend, Uri Horowitz, for his ongoing service to the shul, into the wee hours of the night. It has been a deep source of meaning and satisfaction to observe Uri work seamlessly with two of our illustrious past presidents, Bob Rabkin and Eva Gans, in taking the reins of the lay leadership of the congregation. Witnessing the profound mutual respect and affection between the generations has been a singularly rewarding and meaningful experience.

While almost all of this takes place out of the communal eye, it is only fitting that we should express our gratitude. May Hashem recompense Uri and Emma many times over for this exceptional service to our kehillah.

In the year ahead, may we always remember to be grateful for our many blessings, amongst which, unequivally, is our beloved shul.