



Torah for Turbulent Times

"The Cornucopia of Life"

In 2020 life has dealt us a real “horn of plenty.” There have been so many hardships this year. In the backdrop of our Thanksgiving tables are hundreds of thousands of lives lost around the world and in our country, as well as continuous struggles for health, peace, justice and unity. Nevertheless, the symbol of the cornucopia is meant to focus us on the overflowing blessings and abundance of life. There is also so much to be grateful for and I pray that we are able to keep our focus on the “giving thanks” part too.

“Nothing this year has been normal. Weddings have been over Zoom. Home runs have soared through empty stadiums...For eight months, the world has felt unfamiliar. Thank goodness, then, for Thanksgiving! If there’s anything our collectively beleaguered psyche needs, it’s a holiday embracing gratitude and mashed potatoes - even if it’s at a much smaller table.” (NYT, 11/22/20) The pairing of “gratitude and mashed potatoes” sticks with me this week. We are a people who have lived and crossed into many lands over thousands of years. Throughout our journey we've managed to keep gratitude on our spiritual table. Some may say that it’s even our main ingredient. Perhaps this is a good question to add to the conversation at your table (or at your Zoom meet-up or phone calls) tomorrow - *“What do you think is the “main ingredient” that enables our people, and all people, to survive and thrive?*

In good conversation, questions, and mashed potatoes, may this holiday nourish us in body and soul. May gratitude satisfy, satiate and sustain our families, our community, and our country.

Rabbi Mark

Optional Table Blessings

A Thanksgiving Prayer (adapted from R. Naomi Levi by me for 2020)

For the laughter of the children, for my own life breath, for the abundance of food on this table, for the ones who prepared our sumptuous feast, for the roof over our heads,

the clothes on our backs, for our health, and our wealth of blessings, for the opportunity to pause and to celebrate, regardless of social distance, with family and friends, whether in person or not, on Zoom or FaceTime or over the phone, by myself or with a loved one. For the freedom to pray these words without fear, in any language, in any faith, in this great, complex and diverse country of promise and opportunity, whose landscape is as vast and beautiful as her inhabitants. Thank You, G-d, for giving us all of these.

May it be your will, G-d of our ancestors, that You grant our family, our community, our town, and all humankind a good and long life. Remember us with blessings and kindness, fill our home with Divine Presence. Give us the opportunity to be truly wise, lovers of the Universe, the Holy Essence, people of truth, who illuminate the world with Torah, learning, values, good deeds, and the work of the Creator. Please hear our prayer at this time of Thanksgiving. Let Your light shine upon us.

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shehecheyanu v'kiyimanu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, Eternal our G-d, the Universal One, who has sustained us and brought us to this season.

A Thanksgiving Prayer Honoring Our Ancestors and Native Peoples' Land

“This Land Belongs to No One” (By Hila Ratzabi)

“The earth is God’s, and all its fullness; The world and those who dwell upon it.” - Psalm 24

This land belongs to no one but G-d. The Earth was here before us and will endure after we are gone. Let us walk gently upon this precious earth, taking only what we need, leaving little waste, nurturing the soil, revitalizing the land to sustain future generations. This land we dwell upon today is the ancestral land of [insert name of local Native people]. We acknowledge their historical roots in this place, the many generations who were stewards of this land. We hear the echoes of their prayers to the Great Mother Earth and seek to learn from their wisdom.

We acknowledge the history of pain, disease, and bloodshed the Native peoples’ endured when they were colonized. Though we can’t reverse the course of history, let us not ignore it...

Ritual and full blessing here: <https://ritualwell.org/ritual/land-belongs-no-on>