

### Grateful Thanksgiving

There is no way around it: We are living in historic times. From the financial to the political to the cultural to the scientific and so on, our world is going through dramatic shifts. Our anxieties, most of them, at least, have to do with the unknowns of the future in such times rather than the knowns of some sort of a coming debacle. No one knows the future in any age, but when the rules of the game seem to be shifting, that's when even old hands on the tiller get a little nervous.

To help calm these concerns, here are some pieces of good news: First, as a people – both as Jews and as Americans – we have gone through far more uncertain times and not only survived but thrived. Second, we have a lot of experience in our community that we can call on to help guide us through these choppy waters. And finally, we are smart enough – all of us – to know an opportunity when we see one. And this is, indeed, an opportunity (perhaps not a chosen one or one without some level of pain, but an opportunity nonetheless).

As the elections come to a head and a new President is chosen by our nation, there will be great opportunities for us to participate in our own lives and in the life of our community that have the potential to change positively and permanently how we live our lives. There is no greater joy than helping others – I know . . . I have made a career of it – and as our nation's future unfolds, I am certain that whoever is elected President will call upon us to offer our talents in service to our neighbor, to our community, and to our nation.

As we shift from campaign and election mode in the early part of the month to Thanksgiving at the end of the month (don't forget to come to the Brigantine Interfaith Thanksgiving Service to be held at our synagogue this year), we will most certainly begin to wonder about what we should be thankful. I do not downplay the potential challenges ahead. I know that in tough times such as these, it is hard to feel grateful for very much that we once assumed as a bare minimum in our lives. It is just at these moments, however, that we need to cultivate a keen sense of appreciation of and amazement at the wonders of Life.

Perhaps we can look honestly at our lives, remember that challenges are made to be met, and that a more positive future is simply awaiting our efforts to make come true. As my childhood Rabbi, Stanley Rabinowitz, once wrote: "Thanksgiving in thankless times provides a real test of faith." Now that we have the prescription, what shall we do?

Our response should be clear: We can have faith, act for the good, and keep cultivating an appreciation of our lives, our relationships, and the simple pleasures we enjoy each day. To do anything less would be to cheat us of the wondrous world and lives that we have been granted so graciously. If every moment is precious, and indeed it is, then let's not waste a single one wallowing in what could have been, but rather let's, each of us, concentrate on making them even more blessed.

I wish you the blessings of courage, calm thoughts, and good judgment, and I offer you the caring support of your Rabbi to help you stay steady on the path ahead.

*B'Shalom v'Hoda'ot* (In Peace and Thanksgiving),  
Rabbi Gerald R. Fox