

### Torah Tidbits from Rabbi Larry Moldo

The concept behind Thanksgiving is easy. Life is sometimes unexpectedly not as difficult as it is most of the rest of the time, and usually this is due to help. Help from others, help from God, or help from the surrounding environment. When you are helped, you say Thank You. In expanded practice it is a trifle more difficult, depending upon your personal situation.

You find something, that isn't on the table in front of you, to which gratitude is owed. Then you express that gratitude. And you eat. It is a typical Jewish holiday format which wasn't begun, per se, by Jews. We find something in our own situation which reflects the holiday setting we might be in, and we express that. Then we eat. Usually.

This focus on gratitude is reflected in one of Uzi Hitman's songs we reviewed at the Adult Education session a week ago. "todah" - "thanks". We will be adding that song into our Friday night repertoire in a week or so on Rabbi-led Shabbatot, as a bit of gratitude and hope will go a long way in today's world.

Please read through this week's portion - it contains a lot of difficult material, and even contains a segment or two that are not traditionally suitable for public comments. Feel free to send questions you might have to me, and perhaps a private discussion might take the place of public pronouncements.

One of the things we actually pride ourselves on is that our ancestors are always depicted as human beings, complete with flaws. We can be proud of how our ancestors were depicted without being equally proud of the behaviors they are shown to have exhibited. Whitewashing history or personal mythology can lead to delayed acceptance of past behavior, and therefore even further delayed restitution or apologies. Situations and people are complicated enough without bringing incomplete historical resonances into the mix.

On another note: I am personally against punishing underage children for the obnoxiousness of their parents, or the society which has managed to kick them out. I am for making sure they can be healthfully integrated into the society around them, which includes a healthy dose of expressed gratitude. On all sides. I am also personally for being as upset when Israeli, Kenyan or Lebanese civilians are killed as when French civilians are killed. Or any other nationality, for that matter. Genocides are being perpetrated at this very moment, and where we cannot militarily prevent it, we should be striving mightily to protect those people, or at the very least supporting those organizations whose mission is to support those people and educate others about their plight. We are wealthy enough as a whole in this country to help those others and decrease the local numbers of poor and homeless simultaneously. As Mordechai said to Esther, "Who knows if it is for this reason that you are in this position to begin with?"