

Rabbi's Message
"Sucker Sermon"
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The Festival of Sukkoth is popularly regarded as the Festival of our Thanksgiving. Jews, however, have been wont to give thanks to G-d not only once a year, but almost every hour of every day. Indeed, as I indicated in one of my sermons during the summer, the religious personality is the grateful personality. He who does not have it in his heart to be appreciative of blessings that flow his way will ultimately deny G-d and the divine character of the human being.

No passage of Scripture gives clearer evidence of the Jewish point of view than that passage in Deuteronomy which prohibits Jews to intermarry with Moab and Ammon. This is a paradoxical commandment. Jews were ordered not to wage war against these two nations. Yet, we foreswore any traffic with them whatever. One has reason to ponder why it is that we bear this eternal grudge.

The answer is given by one of our great Sages. Moab and Ammon were hostile to our ancestors as they moved through the wilderness from Egypt to the Promised Land. They offered no hospitality and even sought means to destroy us. And they did this despite the fact that it was our father Abraham who saved their father Lot when Lot was in danger. Our father risked his life to save their father. Nonetheless, they did not recognize the debt they owed us for their very existence as a people. They would not even have come into being were it not for the fact that Abraham waged war to save their progenitor. For such an ungrateful people we have no respect and Jewish females were prohibited from ever marrying their males, even if they converted to Judaism.

If only all of us could cultivate the grateful heart! Last month we were frightened that the Arab world would wage a holy war against our people in Israel because of the alleged burning of one of their holy places. How could they so easily forget that were it not for our people they would have neither their prophet, nor their religion, nor any of their holy places. Their entire Moslem tradition they owe to us. Yet they think nothing of destroying the

very people from whom their faith stems!

The United Nations is hardly much better. The utter futility of any appeal to the United Nations for the benefit of Israel is evidence of ingratitude. The very vision of world peace the United Nations has is from Jewish prophets. Were it not for our prophets and their Messianic vision, there would have been no dreams of world government or world federalism. Yet the instrument for world peace has no respect for the very people that gave the world the hope that one day there would be universal peace!

How nice it would be if Blacks had it in their hearts to be grateful! So much of what they have achieved in modern times is due to Jews. Yet instead of being grateful, Jews are the special butt of Black hatred in so many quarters.

If only our children could also learn this lesson! True, we may have failed the younger generation in many ways. The world is not what they or we would like it to be. We have bequeathed to them many problems. By the same token, however, if only they could be grateful for so many things that were accomplished by their parents to make the world better for them than it was for the parents themselves! Do they give thought to the fact that except for a very small percentage of the population, poverty has been eliminated, civil rights have been extended, the threat of universal war is far less than it ever was, the hope and promise of Israel is theirs to enjoy, and even the freedom which they are converting into license is to be credited to the heroic sacrifice of an earlier generation!

Yes, it is important to be grateful. However, it is not only for the sake of others that we ought learn to be grateful to G-d and our fellow men. It is important for ourselves. A grateful person enjoys his life more. A grateful person is loved more and lives longer than the person who is always bitter, disgruntled, and incapable of appreciation.

On a holiday of Thanksgiving, let us cultivate the grateful heart. This would be a boon to us individually and to mankind collectively.