



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
Congregation Beth Tikvah
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A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday November 28, 2025 ~ Parshat: Vayetze

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

Thanksgiving Begins with Awareness

As we celebrate this Thanksgiving weekend, I am reminded once again of how deeply this holiday resonates with our American story, and with our Jewish story as well. On October 3, 1789, President George Washington issued a special proclamation establishing the first national Thanksgiving Day. At a moment when our young nation was still finding its footing, Washington understood the importance of pausing to acknowledge our blessings, to reflect on our responsibilities, and to offer gratitude to the Source of all goodness. His proclamation set in motion a tradition that has endured for generations, inviting Americans of every background to take stock of the gifts that sustain us and the ideals that bind us together.

Thanksgiving has always been one of my favorite days of the year. At its heart is the spiritual discipline of gratitude, pausing long enough to notice what we have, the people we love, what truly matters, and remembering that none of it should be taken for granted.

It is no coincidence that Judaism places gratitude at the very center of religious life. The Hebrew word for Judaism, *Yahadut*, shares its root with the word *L'hodot*, meaning to give thanks. We begin each morning with the prayer [*Modeh Ani*](#), thanking God for the gift of a new day. So many of our blessings begin with the words *Baruch Atah Adonai*, a statement of appreciation for sight, food, freedom, holiness, and life itself. Gratitude is not simply an emotion; it is a way of living, and a paramount Jewish value. As you gather around your tables this year, I invite you to take a moment to acknowledge the blessings in your life.

I will close with a beautiful prayer for Thanksgiving, written by Rabbi Naomi Levy, which expresses so much of what we hold dear:

A Thanksgiving Prayer

By Rabbi Naomi Levy

*For the laughter of the children,
For my own life breath,
For the abundance of food on this table,
For the ones who prepared this sumptuous feast,
For the roof over our heads,
The clothes on our backs,
For our health,
And our wealth of blessings,
For this opportunity to celebrate with family and friends,
For the freedom to pray these words
Without fear,
In any language,
In any faith,
In this great country,
Whose landscape is as vast and beautiful as her inhabitants.
Thank You, God, for giving us all these. Amen.*

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner