

Women's League Shabbat Dvar 2021-2022

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On this Sisterhood (Women's League) Shabbat, as on every day, we give thanks for our blessings. As Jews, this begins when we wake up in the morning. We are commanded to recite prayers of gratitude even before we get out of bed. The first words that often roll off our tongues are "modeh ani lefanecha". I gratefully thank You for returning my soul". Our Siddur here is telling us something very interesting...to be a wakeful human being is to greet each day by appreciating our surroundings--- including the air we breathe and the people that are part of our lives. We give thanks for the morning that brings us life and health, and for Shabbat that teaches us to be grateful for all that life brings us on a daily basis. But what happens when we can't see the blessings? When all we see are the obstacles and the challenges.

For the past two years, the theme for Women's League for Conservative Judaism has been "*B'Yachad*". The word "*B'Yachad*" in Hebrew means "together". This year, we once again have endured the challenge of the Covid pandemic. We have endured sickness. We have been lonely. We have been cautious. So where are the blessings in this? How can we be "together" when we are told to stay far away from one another? How can we be "wakeful"? How can we be grateful?

As Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, of blessed memory, once said, "So often in life, things that you regard as an impediment turn out to be great, good fortune." In the face of the pandemic, our Sisterhoods pivoted..... *B'Yachad*, together, we made necessary changes.

Together our committees organized events and meetings on zoom. Together we studied Torah and held virtual services. We baked challot together virtually. We attended virtual Hebrew classes, distance learning events, training sessions and programming in our regions and across North America.

We are grateful for the creativity that emerged. Grateful for the camaraderie that continued to build. Grateful for planting the seeds for success instead of allowing the challenge to stop us. Grateful to be "together, *B'Yachad*, spiritually. By working together, we have had the strength to change the course of our thoughts and actions.

And in our personal lives, we can be grateful for things large and small. Grateful for the first responders, doctors and nurses who risked their lives day in and day out in the hospitals full of patients being treated for Covid. Grateful for the workers who kept the shelves stocked with essentials. Grateful for the phone calls from friends who checked to see if we were well. Grateful for the chicken soup that they brought if we were not. Grateful for the friends who appreciated our calls to them. Grateful for our health and the well-being of our closest friends and relatives. Grateful for the extra time spent with our children who were home for virtual learning. Grateful for our clergy who continued to inspire us in times of crisis. And, grateful for being “wakeful” and noticing what needed to be done and for having the ability to do it.

Together, B’yachad, we made a difference. Together, B’yachad, we will continue to do so.

And so, I offer you a prayer of gratitude. Birkat Hagomel, is a prayer that is often said after recovering from a serious illness or surviving a dangerous journey. We all have survived the journey through the pandemic and have emerged more “wakeful” and “grateful” on the other side.

Birkat Hagomel

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַגּוֹמֵל לְחַיִּיבִים טוֹבוֹת שְׂגֻמָּלָנִי כָּל טוֹב

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, ha-gomel l'chayavim tovot she-g'malani kol tov

מִי שְׂגֻמָּלָךְ כָּל טוֹב הוּא יְגַמְלֶךְ כָּל טוֹב סְלָה

Mi she-g'malcha kol tov, hu yi-g'malcha kol tov selah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, ruler of the world, who rewards the undeserving with goodness, and who has rewarded me with goodness.

May he who rewarded you with all goodness, reward you with all goodness for ever.

Shabbat Shalom