



Torah for Turbulent Times **"Flexibility & Resilience"**

It was great to see so many of you at our annual meeting on Sunday! Just in case you missed it and even if you were there, I've adapted my words of intention from the beginning of our meeting to share with you.

There's an ancient saying by the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, "The only constant in life is change." I would add to it, "The only constant in life is change, AND COMMUNITY." So much has happened in our world and we've been nimble as a community in adapting to change. As a colleague of mine recently put it in my recent rabbinical association newsletter, like a Jewish koan calling us to this very moment, "If not when, then now!"

We learn a great teaching in the Talmud to strengthen us, especially in times of change. "*A person should always be as flexible as the reed and never rigid as the cedar. This is why the reed merited to be used to write the words of the Torah.*" (Ta'anit 20b) Perhaps you've heard the old story about the cedar tree and the reeds. Alongside a river, a cedar tree and a patch of reeds grew side by side. The cedar tree was strong and proud; its enormous trunk and branches were tall and splendid, reaching far above the tops of the slender reeds below. Its majestic height and powerful appearance made the flimsy reeds nearby appear completely inferior. One day, a great storm came from across the river, and the strong winds blew with all their might. The cedar tree, as strong as it was, was toppled over by the winds; yet the reeds were still standing after the storm. "How did you manage to survive the storm?" the cedar tree wondered. The reeds replied calmly, "We were not blown over because we were flexible, moving and swaying with the wind. This allowed us to remain standing."

As the reed, we've been flexible, pivoting during these troubling times to support each other, to continue Jewish life, to pray, to learn, to celebrate - in short, to be a standing and thriving community. I'm grateful to be part of such a thoughtful leadership team, board and community. Continuing to be flexible, while maximizing relevancy and meaning, seem like good goals. How do we accomplish them? A good start is to ensure that we are able to meet your needs. I invite you to reach out to share your ideas, thoughts and feelings (including your *kvels* and *kvetches*, your joys and

complaints). Whether by Zoom, phone or email, I welcome them. Recently, I've begun to take a few socially distanced, one-to-one walks with some of you. It's been wonderful to take these much needed "screen breaks" to connect. What better way to embody flexibility than to take a walk together. The more flexible we are, the more resilient we will be.

-Rabbi Mark