

**“Gratitude – How do we develop it for ourselves and our children?”
by Rabbi Brian Strauss**

Recently, I was having dinner with some friends and the discussion turned to the question, "If you could come back as anyone in the world, who would it be?" A number of the women said, "Oprah Winfrey, Kate Middleton, or Beyonce." Most of the men said, "Peyton Manning, JJ Watt, Bill Gates or Brad Pitt."

Do you know who else we all decided we would want to come back as? Our children! I don't know about you, but my children, thank God, have it really good. They have a lot more than Lisa and I ever did. But with everything that our children have today, how do we get them to truly be grateful, to really appreciate everything we are giving them?

In our home, it doesn't always seem that our children are as grateful as they could be. We have computers, HD TV's, and a front yard with every type of game, bike, and ball they could ever want. But I still hear, "Dad - we don't have anything to do. I'm bored." Is there anything worse?

The challenge is trying to find a balance between providing a nice life for our children and making sure they really appreciate everything we are giving them.

Let us ask ourselves, as adults, what kind of example are we setting for our children?

Do our children often see us showing appreciation for our house and for our car, no matter how big or fancy it is? Or do they hear us often complain that so and so has a larger house and so and so has a fancier car than we do? Do our children know that we are truly thankful for our friends, for our loved ones and for anything they ever do for us? Or do they always hear us complain that no one ever helps us or gives us anything?

Have you ever wondered why we are called Jews? The name is derived from the name, Judah, which means "to be thankful." You can learn a lot from how a religion derives its name. We are a people whose ultimate goal is to be thankful for what we do have. Judaism is about finding the good in our lives – Every good breath we take, every healthy loved one in our life, even every nice possession we have worked hard for and own. Can we remember that these are really gifts from God to first be appreciated, then taken advantage of and enjoyed?

Later this month, we will celebrate the great holiday of gratitude - Thanksgiving.

You may not know, but the pilgrims got their idea for this brilliant holiday from their knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. It was their way to thank God for the fall harvest, based on the biblical holiday of Sukkot.

Today, despite the fact that very few of us actually grow our own food, Americans still enjoy celebrating Thanksgiving because it gives us a chance to gather with those we

love and offer thanks for what we do have.

Can we celebrate the idea of Thanksgiving, appreciating all of our blessings, not just on the last Thursday of this month but with our children every day of the year?

What a gift we would be giving ourselves. What an example we would be setting for our children.

Happy Early Thanksgiving and Shabbat Shalom