

ONFAITH

ASKING THE CLERGY

What are you grateful for this year?



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In our time of multiple political, financial and ecological crises, it's easy to feel hopeless and anxious. Thankfully, an ancient daily Jewish tradition fights against these hope-killers — and it's even backed by science.

Each morning, Jews speak their first words of the day in gratitude, "I give thanks to you, Universal Sovereign, for returning my soul in your vast faithfulness."

I love this simple blessing. It speaks of so much in so few words. Each day, I am reminded that as a Jew, I am tasked by my creator with making the world a better place through Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), that Judaism requires Hakarat Ha'Tov (gratitude), and that even when my own belief in

myself flags, my creator has faith in me.

And science backs this ancient tradition with proof! There are six types of dopamine, the body's natural reward system. Interestingly, the dopamine we produce for anxiety is the same as that for gratitude. Research shows the fastest way to short circuit an anxiety attack is to ask what we are grateful for. Even just asking the question of ourselves switches the focus without losing the reward.

Judaism and science: I am grateful for both!