

INHERENT INTERCONNECTEDNESS

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In some sense, this time of forced separation and seclusion is also a time of forced reflection for all of us. In a way, it has a taste of Yom Kippur. We are required to refrain from all sorts of things, which naturally brings us to reflect about the way we've been living and the way we want to be living.

The Torah gives us a list of mitzvot, which are the highest call to an ethical life. Leviticus 19:9-10 tell us, "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and the stranger. I, Adonai, I am your God."

"When there are those in our midst who do not have what they need, it actually puts us all at risk."

This mitzvah reminds us that we are profoundly interconnected. **We are in a web of mutuality and this is something that I think, ironically, we are being reminded of in this time of separation.** When we cannot touch each other, when we cannot gather with each other, we are more aware than ever of how much we need each other. We're more aware that we are one: that actually our health is

dependent on one another's health and our well-being is dependent on one another's well-being. **We are only as safe as the most endangered among us, and we are only as well as the sickest among us, and when there are those in our midst who do not have what they need — food, shelter, healthcare, or health insurance — it actually puts us *all* at risk.**

I'm reminded of a piece of commentary by Rabbi Moshe Alshich, who notes that in the aforementioned verse, pronouns go from plural to singular. He suggests the plural at the beginning, "When you (pl) reap the harvest of your (pl) land," teaches us that the land being reaped doesn't truly belong to the landowner. None of us actually own what we think we own; what's mine is really not mine — it's ours. We shouldn't think that we're giving to the poor person from our own property — we're giving from our collective property. But in the second section when the pronouns change to singular, we understand the act of giving is personal, from one to another.

We might think that behind the fences of our field or behind the closed doors that now separate our spaces more severely than ever, we are not actually connected. But what we are finding in this time when we are forced to be separate is how much we yearn for that connection, how much we need each other. How much **what's mine must be shared as much as I am able, because my well-being depends on your well-being, and your well-being depends on my well-being. We need each other and we are profoundly one.**

