

Weekly Teaching

November 17, 2017

[At Temple Sholom, on November 21 at 7:00 pm, we will be hosting the Annual Greenwich Fellowship of Clergy Thanksgiving Interfaith Service.](#)

It's important to come together as American brothers and sisters and give thanks for the many, many blessings God has bestowed upon us because we have the privilege of being American Citizens.

We live in a hectic world with so many demands on our most precious commodity: time.

But, as Jews we need to prioritize the opportunities by which we can gather and deepen our meaningful relationships with the community at-large.

I hope that the turn out from our Temple Sholom community for the Thanksgiving Interfaith Service within our own House of Worship will reflect well on our significant commitment to our Sholom Center for Interfaith Learning and Fellowship.

Please find below a suggested Thanksgiving Hagaddah which you can adapt so as to make your own private Thanksgiving gathering even more meaningful.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Thanksgiving!!

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Thanksgiving Hagaddah

Our American celebration of Thanksgiving is a wonderful opportunity to make a meaningful family religious experience.

Consider the Thanksgiving meal to be like your Passover Seder.

Pre-plan Thanksgiving activities and consider designing a family Thanksgiving Hagaddah.

Share your Family's American Jewish Story

- How did you come to be in this wonderful country?
- Where did your grandparents or great grandparents come from? What were their early immigrant experiences?

Formally Welcome and Engage your Guests

- At the beginning of your Thanksgiving meal, go and open your door and proclaim: "Whoever is in need, let that person come and eat."
- Have everyone at the table share something that they are grateful for.

Feed the Hungry

- Collect tzedakah for the hungry or each person place a can of non-perishable food in a box before you eat.
- Talk about hunger and what we can do to combat this problem within our world.

Ask Four Thanksgiving Questions

- Why is this holiday of Thanksgiving different from other holidays that we celebrate as American Jews?
- What are the things we are thankful for this year?
- How can we help others in need this year?
- Why do we eat certain foods for Thanksgiving?

Recite Blessings

- Offer personal prayers over the food before you eat and then say *hamotzi* over the bread.
- Express personal prayers after you have eaten and/or recite the *Birkat HaMazon* (Grace after the Meal).
- Bless the children with what you hope and dream for them in our country.

Share Thanksgiving with Others

- Make Thanksgiving baskets for other families in need or for the elderly.
- Broaden your guest list and perhaps reach out to singles.

Share Thanksgiving Readings

1. *"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"* (The words on the Statue of Liberty by Emma Lazarus)
2. *"Just as God is gracious and compassionate, you too must be gracious and compassionate...As the Holy One is faithful, you too must be faithful. As the Holy One is loving, you too must be loving."* (Midrash)
3. *"As God clothes the naked, you should clothe the naked. As the Holy One visited the sick, you should visit the sick. As the Holy One comforted those who mourned, you should comfort those who mourn. As the Holy One buried the dead, you should bury the dead."* (Talmud)
4. *For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food,
For love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends.*
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)
5. *Though our mouths were full of song as the sea, and our tongues of exultation as the multitude of its waves, and our lips of praise as the wide-extended firmament; though our eyes shone with light like the sun and the moon, and our hands were spread forth like the eagles of heaven, and our feet were swift as hinds, we should still be unable to thank thee and bless thy name, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, for one thousandth or one ten thousandth part of the bounties which thou has bestowed upon our fathers and upon us.* (Siddur)
6. *Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands!
Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into God's presence with singing!
Know that the Lord is God! It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him, bless his name!
For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.*
(Psalm 100)
7. *Praise the Lord.
I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.
Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who have pleasure in them.
Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.
He has caused his wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful.
He provides food for those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant.*

*He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.
The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy, they are established forever and ever, be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.
He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant for ever.
Holy and terrible is his name!
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who practice it.
His praise endures forever!*
(Psalm 111)

8. *"We will speed the day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing ...Free at last, Free at last, Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last."*
(Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)
9. *"Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving."*
(WT Purkiser)
10. *"Thank God every day when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and forced to do your best will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues which the idle will never know."* (Basil Carpenter)
11. *"The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union. It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations are blessed whose God is the Lord."*
(Abraham Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation October 3, 1863)