

AN AMERICAN SEDER



Beth El
SYNAGOGUE

Thanksgiving History

Looking for a model on which to base their Thanksgiving festival, Pilgrims may have turned to Sukkot, the Bible's harvest festival.

President Washington designated the first national "Thanksgiving Day" on November 26, 1789 to give thanks for the Constitution.

President Lincoln made it a permanent holiday on October 3, 1863 to be a time for Americans to renew our pledge to the Constitution.

Beginning in 1837, Sarah Josepha Hale waged a relentless 38-year campaign to make Thanksgiving a National Holiday. That finally happened in 1941.

Keep Singing!

America the Beautiful

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with
brotherhood,
From sea to shining sea!

Story Telling

Share your own family's coming-to-America stories or discuss experiences you've had as Americans this past year.

My Country Tis of Thee

My country tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty
Of thee I sing:
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside
Let freedom ring!

Host: Welcome! We are grateful for this opportunity to gather as family and friends, to share a meal and to celebrate this American feast with stories, songs and readings. And so we thank God for giving us life, for sustaining us and allowing us to reach this day

All:
ברוך אתה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהָיִינוּ וְקִיָּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה
barukh ata adonai eloheinu melekh haolam
shehechyanu v'kiamanu, v'higiyanu lazman hazeh

Reader: Some are here because our forefathers fled oppression. Others came with dreams of a better life. Some came against their will as slaves. Others were here for thousands of years and helped or fought the newcomers to their native land. But no matter how we got here, we all benefit from our founders' belief in our right to be free.

Reader: Thus, on July 4, 1776, at the Continental Congress, we declared our independence saying, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Reader: With a Liberty Bell ringing out: "Proclaim Liberty thro' all the Land to all the Inhabitants thereof" and a Statue of Liberty welcoming "the tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to breathe free," they came.

Reader: People like Adams, Beck, Costa, Demetrios, Ellison, Finley, Gonzales, Hassan, Inna, Jackson, Kahn, Lind, McLaren, Nwaguru, Olaf, Pucinski, Quinn, Rosenbaum, Singh, Tanaka, Uilani, Verdeja, Williams, Xuan, Yoo, Zimmer.

Host: These are the names of the generations that came to America.

Reader: They reveal individual lives that represent the story of our nation.

Host: These are the names of the generations that built America.

Reader: They recall our parents and grandparents and mirror ourselves.

For Discussion

Asking questions is a sign of freedom:

- For what are you personally thankful?
- What are you thankful for as an American? A Jew?
- What do you wish to contribute to this country?
- What do you believe are the highest ideals and best values of the United States?
- Have we, as a nation, lived up to those ideals and values in the past year?

Did you know?

Irving Berlin wrote "God Bless America" in 1938 for Kate Smith to sing on her regular radio show. First broadcast November 11, 1938, "God Bless America" quickly became her signature song and one of America's most loved patriotic songs.

Blessings before the Meal

ברוך אתה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם...

Barukh ata adonai eloheinu
melekh haolam...

For the meal:

הַמּוֹצֵי לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

hamotzei lechem min haaretz.

For wine:

בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן

borei pri hagafen.

Blessing after the Meal

Birkat Hamazon

Host: These are the names of the generations that care for America.

Reader: They remind us why we gather at this Thanksgiving table.

Host: Our particular pasts and our shared present are wedded in hyphenated names:

Reader: African-American,
Irish-American,
Italian-American,
Jewish-American,
Korean-American,
Polish-American.

Host: In some parts of the world, these differences would be threatening. But in America, we feel enriched. In America, our differences resonate in our names, language, food, and music. They inspire art and produce champions and leaders.

All: For, above and beyond our differences, we are Americans, "one nation under God," committed to creating an ever more just land that is secure and free, abundant and caring for all her inhabitants.

Host: We are the stewards of America, her ideals and institutions, her cities and natural beauty. We are entrusted to understand America's past and guide her future.

Reader: And so while much work remains to be done to do to realize our dreams for this Nation, while there is still much work to do to repair our world, today we pause to give thanks.

All: We are thankful for the blessings in our lives and for the privilege, the responsibility and the honor of being Americans.

God Bless America

God bless America,
land that I love
Stand beside her
and guide her
Through the night
with the light
from above.
From the mountains
to the prairies,
To the ocean white
with foam
God bless America,
My home sweet home.
God bless America,
My home sweet home.

A Prayer for the Thanksgiving Feast

By Rabbi Naomi Levy
For the laughter of the children,
For my own life breath,
For the abundance of food on this table,
For the ones who prepared this sumptuous feast,
For the roof over our heads,
The clothes on our backs,
For our health,
And our wealth of blessings,
For this opportunity to celebrate with family and friends,
For the freedom to pray these words
Without fear,
In any language,
In any faith,
In this great country,
Whose landscape is as vast and beautiful as her inhabitants.

Thank You, God, for giving us all these. Amen.

Enjoy your meal with blessings and stories!