

# Thanksgiving, a Puritan Pesach

By Ted Roberts, the Scribbler on the Roof

It's strange how the human mind, like the thermostat on my den wall, turns itself on and off.

Like the other day my mind transported me back fifty years; an afternoon in 1951 when my wide-ranging imagination contemplated supper. Hmm, probably those egg-battered veal chops my mother made so well.

It was a legitimate topic for contemplation since it was 5 o'clock in the afternoon - supper was near. But it was sort of inappropriate since I was in my American History classroom and the professor was lecturing about what we then called "Indians." These noble Native Americans hated breaded veal chops. And they could never have fried one up because they were totally free of matzoh meal, guns, rum, iron skillet, and the circular concept we call the wheel, until those pale-faced Europeans came along. So, I mentally dumped my platter of veal chops in the kitchen garbage as the professor's voice rang out

loud and clear: "Some historians believed that, after the Diaspora, the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel reappeared out of the mists of North America as the Algonquin, Narragansett, and Iroquois Native Americans."

Can you believe this? Though he had a PhD and I only had a Bar Mitzvah certificate on my bedroom wall, I knew he was wrong because I never heard of a Native American doing up a golden fried, matzoh meal-breaded veal chop like my mama and her sisters used to make.

But he was right in that some historians held to this belief. Doesn't Narragansett sound a little like Naftali.

\* But those friendly New England Aborigines brought corn and turkey to that first Thanksgiving feast - not Tzimmus or brisket in dark onion sauce.

So, as usual, I consulted my rabbi. I cornered him in his study and asked him straight out, "Since maybe, perhaps, it could be, that the Massapeka tribe of North America is the Manasseh tribe of



Squanto and friend.

Israel, why isn't Thanksgiving a Jewish holiday?"

His eyes appraised my sanity like Noah's anonymous wife looked at him when he announced his naval construction program in Dry Gulch Valley. "Have a chair, Ted. Here, have a nice chocolate chip cookie. Lean back and breathe deeply."

He was no stranger to my quest for Judaica. He began to sound like my history professor of long ago. And his eyes bored into mine like he thought I was asleep and dreaming of veal chops. The parallels, he claimed, were more apparent between those hungry Puritans - not the noble Native Americans -

and our ancestors.

That's what he tried to say, but I rushed on to elaborate. I told him that I had checked my biblical concordance and found the Hebrew word "Todah" twenty times from Leviticus to Jonah - and guess what it meant? Thanksgiving, that's what.

He nodded in agreement like wise King Solomon learned to do when each of his thousand wives complained about the excess jewelry, cosmetics, and gold spangled gowns of the other 999. Such a king. A thousand wives and he never paid a cent of alimony. And you can believe he sat down to a hot supper every night. No wonder he was smart enough to write Ecclesiastes.

Anyhow, my rabbi and I, after a few more chocolate chip cookies, decided that yes it was Halachically correct to celebrate Thanksgiving. So many Jewish parallels. And not coincidentally. Those dark-robed Puritans (don't they look like Chasids in the paintings?) worshipped, with minor exception, the Lord God of Hosts

who thunders in the Chumash more than the socially conscious Allfather of the prophets, or the mushy narrator of Song of Songs and Ruth, or the philosopher-king of Ecclesiastes.

Many of them were fluent in Hebrew, we are told by historians. And they certainly saw their flight from the English church as analogous to our Egyptian Exodus many millennia earlier; the waves of the Atlantic instead of the sand dunes of Sinai.

That first Massachusetts Bay Thanksgiving was all about gratitude for a bountiful, nourishing, harvest and a successful, watery exodus from England and its repressive church. To our Jewish ears, it sounds a lot like Passover and Shavuus; with maybe a touch of Chanukah's chauvinism. If it doesn't feel Jewish enough for you, stuff the turkey with matzoh-brei and sing Dayenu. Crown the evening with a prayer for America and Israel. ☆

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# Ideas for Enjoying a Jewish Thanksgiving

By Julie Hilton Danan

(JTA) — Thanksgiving. The holiday brings to mind pleasant images of families gatherings around roasted turkey, cranberries and pie.

Perfectly compatible with Jewish observance, the holiday is a traditional favorite of Jewish families. It always falls on a Thursday, never on the Sabbath. The classic main dish is a turkey, available in kosher form. And gratitude for one's blessings is something all Americans can share in feeling and expressing.

Here are a few ideas to make Thanksgiving a special family day:

\* **Do good deeds together.** The classic Jewish way of enjoying our blessings is to share them with others. You could donate money to organizations that fight hunger, or your time to serve meals at a com-

munity Thanksgiving dinner for the needy or to deliver meals to shut-ins.

\* **Say blessings.** I encourage families to say the Hebrew blessings for wine and bread before the festive Thanksgiving meal. Or you could go further and adapt a Hassidic Passover custom of asking everyone present to add a drop of his or her own wine to the goblet before saying the blessing. As you do so, tell one thing that you are thankful for this year.

\* **Say grace after meals.** Through this prayer we can thank God for our many blessings of food and nourishment. Both the traditional and shorter more contemporary versions of the "Birkat HaMazon" are found in many prayer books.

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has written a special Thanksgiving prayer which can

supplement the "Birkat HaMazon." The English version of Rabbi Schachter-Shalomi's prayer reads: "In the days of the pilgrims, the Puritans, when they arrived at these safe shores, suffered hunger and cold. They sang and prayed to the rock of their salvation. And you, standing by them, roused the caring of the natives for them, who fed them turkey and corn and other delights. Thus you saved them from starvation, and they learned the ways of peace with the inhabitants of the land. Therefore, feeling grateful, they dedicated a day of Thanksgiving each year as a remembrance for future generations. ... Thus do we thank you for all the good in our lives ..."

This prayer is available in Hebrew and English in a loose-leaf collection, "Hashir Vahahevach" ("The Song and The

Praise") through the ALEPH Alliance for Jewish Renewal, [alephjr@aol.com](mailto:alephjr@aol.com).

\* **Create a Thanksgiving seder.** In addition to the blessings and customs mentioned above, you could create a Thanksgiving seder plate and place objects on it which signify the blessings of our nation and/or things for which you are personally thankful. Besides displaying and explaining these objects at the meal, you could also read or tell stories of the first Thanksgiving, followed by a retelling of your family's own saga of finding freedom in America. This could be oral, or the more ambitious might choose to create a hand-crafted memory book that is brought out each year.

Round the meal out by singing Hebrew songs of thanks, as well as American folk songs. This type of seder is especially meaningful if shared among families of different religions and backgrounds.

\* **Invite someone far from home to Thanksgiving dinner.** Check with your synagogue for ideas. If possible, also invite the person to phone home at your expense. Invite people outside your usual social circle to the Thanksgiving feast. If they are new Americans, they may have much to share about the blessings of this country that we often take for granted. ☆

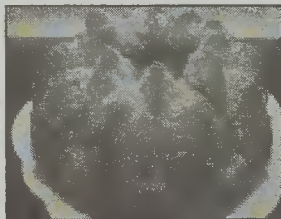
Julie Hilton Danan is the author of "The Jewish Parents' Almanac" (Jason Aronson). She is spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Am in San Antonio, and is studying for rabbinic ordination with ALEPH Alliance for Jewish Renewal. She wrote this column for the on-line magazine Jewish Family & Life! [www.jewishfamily.com](http://www.jewishfamily.com), which first published it. It was distributed by Jewish Telegraphic Agency. This version appeared on the website of the Phoenix Jewish News.

# Thanksgiving Recipes

(Continued from previous page)

## Preparation:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Fit a large roasting pan with a V-rack. Rinse the turkey in cold water and pat it dry. In a sm. food processor, make a rub by combining the sage, rosemary, garlic, and kosher salt. Chop till well-combined, but not pureed, or chop very fine by hand. (Use at once or herbs will turn black.) Massage the rub over the outside of the turkey and in the cavity as well, really rubbing it in. Dust the turkey all over with paprika. Lastly spread garlic oil over turkey, pressing it into skin. When stuffing is completely cool, pack the turkey cavity and neck cavity with stuffing, patting the openings until stuffing is firm. Put the turkey on rack in the roasting pan and tent it with aluminum foil. Roast at 450 degrees for 1 hr. Lower the temperature to 400 degrees and roast the turkey for



Apple Bundt Cake

1 hr. more. Remove the foil, baste the turkey with pan drippings, and carefully rotate the pan in the oven. Roast for 30 minutes more.

Test turkey for doneness by pricking thigh with a fork. If the juices run clear when the thigh is pierced, the turkey is done. (Another sign of doneness is the skin color; it should be a rich golden brown.) Remove the turkey from the oven and transfer it to a

serving platter. Yield: 6-8 generous servings.

## Cranberry-Fig Chutney

### Ingredients:

Grated zest of 2 med. oranges  
2 bags (12 oz. each) fresh cranberries, rinsed, drained, and picked over  
8 dried figs, chopped  
1/2 c. finely chopped onion (about 1 sm.)  
1/4 c. raisins  
3 c. sugar  
3 T. finely chopped, peeled fresh ginger  
1 t. coarse kosher salt  
1 t. ground cinnamon  
1 t. cayenne pepper  
1 t. dry mustard

### Preparation:

After removing zest from oranges, cut off the peels and discard. Cut oranges into sm. pieces. Combine the orange zest and segments and all the remaining ingredients in a large, heavy saucepan. Over med.-high heat, stir occasionally, until the sugar dissolves,

8-10 min. Increase the heat to high and boil rapidly, stirring more frequently, for 20-30 min., till the cranberries pop and the mixture cooks down to a jam-like consistency. Remove the pan from the heat and let cool. (The chutney will thicken as it cools.) Serve at room temp. The chutney will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for a week. Yield: 5-1/2 cups.

## Apple Bundt Cake (Pareve)

### Ingredients:

2-1/4 c. all-purpose flour  
2-1/4 t. baking powder  
1/4 c. orange juice  
2-1/2 t. pure vanilla extract  
1/2 lb. (2 sticks) unsalted margarine  
1-1/2 c. sugar, plus 2/3 c. sugar  
3 extra lg. eggs  
4 med. McIntosh apples, peeled, cored, and roughly chopped  
1 t. ground cinnamon  
1 t. grated orange zest

### Preparation:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Grease and flour a 10" Kugelhoppf (bundt) pan and set aside. In a bowl, mix together the flour and baking powder; reserve. In a cup, stir together the orange juice and vanilla; reserve.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the margarine and 1-1/2 cups sugar till light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. In 1/3s, add the flour mixture to the beaten egg mixture — alternating with the orange juice mixture. Combine the batter well. In a 3rd bowl, toss the chopped apples with 2/3 c. sugar, cinnamon, and orange zest. Pour 1/2 of the batter into the prepared pan. Top it with 1/2 of the apple mixture. Cover apples with remaining batter. Sprinkle remaining apple mixture on top. Bake cake for 1 hr., or till a cake tester inserted in the center comes out just clean. Transfer to a wire rack and cool completely. To serve, invert cake onto platter. Yield: 10-12 servings. ☆