



# CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space... Grow at your pace.

November 20-21, 2015 ■ 9 Kislev, 5776 ■ Shabbos Vayeitzei  
Candlelighting: 5:05P ■ Shabbos Ends 6:13P

Kiddush this Shabbos is sponsored by the members of the Guarantee Kiddush Club: Wes & Tricia Sutkin, Yaakov & Susan Rich, Ben & Lauren Nise, Chana Esther Day, David Fisher, Ari & Naomi Goldberg & Eli Goldberg. Shalosh Seudos this Shabbos is sponsored by the shul. Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016 if you are interested in sponsoring kiddush or shalosh seudos in the future.

## ■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

### Friday Night, November 20<sup>th</sup>

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-5:05P
- » Candlelighting-5:05P

### Shabbos Day, November 21<sup>st</sup>

- » Shacharis-8:30A
- » Junior Congregation for boys in shul-9:30A
- » Mommy & Me Young Children's Minyan-10:00A
- » Chumash Class for men & women -3:55P
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men in shul-4:55P
- » Shalosh Seudos for women at the Rich home-4:55P
- » Maariv/Shabbos Ends-6:13P
- » Avos U'Banim-7:30P

## ■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40A
- » Mincha-6:00P / Maariv-9:00P (Sunday-Thursday)

## ■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

### MEN

- » Dovid Aharon ben Devorah (David Wills)
- » Yisroel Michoel ben Shulamis (Father of Chani Tkatch)
- » Yechiel Mordechai ben Devorah (Brother of Ken Jarmel)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)
- » Yoseif Yitzchok ben Yehudis Chaya (Brother in Law of Yoseif Meir Rich)
- » Mattisyahu Chaim ben Ettel (HaRav Mattisyahu Solomon)

### WOMEN

- » Brocha bas Sora (Mother of Hadassah Klug)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

## ■ WHAT'S NU AT CTC

- » **NEW this Shabbos in our Freshly Renovated NE Wing: Mommy & Me Young Children's Minyan** at 10 AM. Iced coffee & creamer (Via with coffee rich and vanilla sugar) for moms, with davening & d'var torah for kids.
- » **4 Amazing Events Celebrating Chanukah: 1) Cookie Baking for Bnos Yisroel:** Girls from Pre-K - 3rd Grade will bake Chanukah cookies for the Shabbos Chanukah kiddush. Sunday Nov. 22 from 10AM -11:30AM at the Rich home. RSVP to srich@toraschaimdallas.org or 972-835-0386. **2) Chanukah Arts & Crafts for Kids:** Sunday, Nov 29, 10 AM at CTC. Four stations for four children's age groups. Pictures, Banners, Menorah Paper Links, and Letter on Foam Board Surprise Project. \$5/Child. Adult art leaders at each station. **3) Adult Only Melava Malka Social:** Motzei Shabbos, Dec 5, 8:30 PM. Indoors & Outdoors at shul. Tiki lights, cocktail tables, soup bar, dips and drinks. Piano & Guitar players. \$10/ Person, \$18/Couple. Please get a baby sitter so we can all enjoy. **4) Boy Scout Chanukah Party for Entire Family:** Sunday, Dec 6, 2-4 PM, \$18/ Family Max, \$5/Person.
- » **Hilchos Shabbos In-Depth for Women:** Wednesday, November 4, 2015, 11:30 AM -12:15 PM, Congregation Toras Chaim began a weekly, in-depth Hilchos Shabbos shiur for women, open to the community, no charge. Class will end, each week, in time for 12:30 PM TDSO carpool. The shiur will be given by Rabbi Yaakov Rich, at Congregation Toras Chaim, 7103 Mumford Ct., Dallas, TX 75252.

## ■ TIME FLIES: RABBI LABEL LAM

We find a curious statement with regard to Yaakov. He himself set the price of seven years to work for the hand of Rachel in marriage. When the time arrived, he approached his future father-in-law Lavan and demanded his daughter, and then the Torah records oddly, "It was like a few days in his eyes due to his great love for her." (Breishis 29:20)

This is no Hallmark Card aphorism. The Torah itself testifies with utter objectivity how he experienced the passage of those seven years. It was like a few days, and why? Because he loved her so much! Do you hear the problem? If he loved her so much, a week would seem like a year and a year should be like a century and seven years a millennium. How could he have felt like it flew so fast?

Here are two approaches that may help make some good sense

from this difficult statement!

1-Many people, in search of a medical degree, go to school for more than 7 years, sacrificing sleep and investing large amounts of borrowed money just for the opportunity to serve and save lives and maybe make a nice living at a career that has loads of prestige too. I saw a line recently that the definition of a cynic is someone who sees the cost of everything and the value of nothing. What term do we have for someone who sees the value of something truly valuable and therefore is not troubled by the cost?! Yaakov knew that with just seven years of work he would merit to marry Rochel! If you know that the Mona Lisa, a priceless, painting would be yours only after seven years of work, would you not think that it would be worth the effort!? Of course! Therefore, "It was like a few days in his eyes due to his great love for her", his profound appreciation for her.

2-The way we experience time, fast or slow is a function of whether we are passive or active. If one is waiting for the proverbial pot of water to boil then it may seem to take forever. If one is waiting for the toast to pop, the train to arrive, Mr. or Mrs. Right to enter one's life, or even for Moshiach to come, then the passage of time, no matter how long or short may feel like a death sentence.

However, if one is readying himself to take law boards to capitalize on three years invested in intensive study, then six months of review can go awfully fast. If in one month a small percentage of the material is covered, then one might wish there would be a way to slow the pace of the clock.

Similarly, it is so with an athlete who is preparing for the Olympics and needs to be the fastest human on earth in four short years. Time would be chasing him more than anything or anyone else. Four years can go quickly when there is a real and urgent goal. About this idea, some have explained the Mishne in Pirke Avos, "The Day is short, the work is much..." When is the day short? When the work is much!

Now, maybe we can understand that Yaakov had such admiration for his bride to be Rachel that she deserved no less than the best. Those seven years were a critical period to iron out wrinkles in his character that might yet need smoothing, so as a Sofer he would etch with perfection HASHEM's name on the Holiest parchment.

Therefore, we too are well advised to prepare for the great dates of life. To be "doers" rather than "waiters", to prepare for marriage, and Moshiach and every day or year to be readier rather than just older, to be active rather than passive, and then we see how time flies!

## ■ THANKSGIVING: HARMLESS HOLIDAY OR CHUKOS HAGOYIM: RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

One of the interesting aspects of being American and living in the 'Medinashel Chessed' is dealing with secular holidays. A day off from work, more time to learn, and suspended Alternate Side parking rules are always appreciated. Of these holidays, Thanksgiving is by far the most popular among Yidden, with many keeping some semblance of observance, generally as a way of saying 'Thank You' and showing a form of Hakaras HaTov to our host country. Although all agree that showing Hakaras HaTov is prudent, on the other hand, it is well-known that many contemporary poskim were very wary of any form of actual Thanksgiving observance. This article sets out to explore the history and halachic issues of this very American holiday.

**Why Thanksgiving?** Americans commonly trace the holiday of Thanksgiving to the 1621 Pilgrim celebration at Plymouth Plantation, Massachusetts. The Pilgrims were expressing gratitude to G-d for a successful harvest after surviving a particularly harsh winter; mainly due to the aid of Squanto, the English-speaking Native American, and the Wampanoag tribe, who taught them how to hunt (turkey) and plant (maize) in the New World, and shared food supplies with them. A second Thanksgiving was observed on July 30th, 1623 in appreciation of an abundant harvest after a refreshing 14-day rain following a nearly catastrophic drought. Similar sporadic celebrations occurred locally throughout the New England area for the next century or so, but never on a national level until 1777, during the Revolutionary War, when 'The First National Proclamation of Thanksgiving' was given by the Continental Congress.

In 1782, John Hanson, the first United States president under the Articles of Confederation (and mysteriously somehow forgotten from the history books), declared the fourth Thursday of every November was

to be observed as Thanksgiving. Several years later, President George Washington issued 'The First National Thanksgiving Proclamation' (under the Constitution), designating November 26th 1789, as a day of Thanksgiving. He did so again in 1795. Yet, it was not until 1863, in the midst of the Civil War [a.k.a. The War Between the States or The War of Northern Aggression (for the Southerners out there)], when the holiday as we know it was formally established by President Abraham Lincoln, at the urging and behest of Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of Godey's Lady Book, who was lobbying for a national day off from work. Thanksgiving has since been observed annually as a national holiday across the United States. But our subject is defining how Thanksgiving observance is viewed by Halacha.

**Chukos HaGoyim?** In Parshas Acharei Mos, we are exhorted not to follow in the ways of the Goyim, "U'Vichukoseihem Lo Seleichu". According to the Rambam and later codified by the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, this prohibition includes manners of dress, haircuts, and even building styles. Tosafos mentions that this prohibition includes two distinct types of customs: idolatrous ones, and those that are nonsensical; implying even if they are not done l'sheim Avodah Zara, they would still be assur to practice.

However, the Ran and Maharik define the prohibition differently. They maintain that a nonsensical custom of the Goyim is only prohibited when it is entirely irrational, with no comprehensible reason for it, or when it has connotations of idolatrous intent. Likewise, following a custom that would lead to a gross breach of modesty (pritzus) would fit the category. However, observing a simple custom of the Goyim that has no reference to Avodah Zara would be permitted.

Although the Vilna Gaon rejects their understanding of the prohibition, and the Gilyon Maharsha seems to follow Tosafos, nevertheless the Rema explicitly rules like the Maharik and Ran, as does the Beis Yosef. Accordingly, they hold that as long as a custom is secular, with no connection to Avodah Zara, such a custom may be observed.

**Thanksgiving: Religious or Secular?** But to understand how this affects us and possible Thanksgiving observance, we must first ascertain whether Thanksgiving is truly a religious holiday or a secular one. Of the aforementioned Thanksgiving observances, all were declared as a unique day expressly designated to thank G-d for all of his 'gracious gifts'. This implies that it is meant to be a religious holiday. Yet, only the Continental Congress's proclamation made reference to the Christian deity. Additionally, there is no actual religious service connected with the day at all. Furthermore, nowadays, the vast majority of Americans simply associate Thanksgiving with food (mainly turkey), football, and family, and take the day off. This implies that its observance is strictly secular. Which is the real Thanksgiving?

**Contemporary Rulings** As with many issues in halacha there are different approaches to Thanksgiving observance. In fact, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l alone has written four different responsa on topic. Although in the earlier teshuvos he seems to be against the idea of a Thanksgiving celebration (possibly there were more religious connotations involved in the early 1960s celebrations than in the 1980s), nevertheless, in his later teshuvos he does allow a Thanksgiving observance (he notes that it is not a religious celebration) with turkey being served, as long as it is not seen as an obligatory annual celebration, but rather as a periodical 'simchas reshuv'. All the same, Rav Moshe concludes that it is still preferable not to have a celebration b'davka for Thanksgiving.

Other contemporary poskim who allowed eating turkey on Thanksgiving include Rav Eliezer Silver, Rav Yosef Dov (J.B.) Soloveitchik (the Boston Gaon), the Rivevos Efraim, and Rabbi Yehuda Hertzl Henkin. They explain that Thanksgiving is "only a day of thanks and not, Heaven forbid, for idol celebration"; therefore, they maintain that merely eating turkey on Thanksgiving cannot be considered Chukos HaGoyim.

Yet, other contemporary authorities disagree. Rav Yitzchok Hutner is quoted as maintaining that the establishment of Thanksgiving as

an annual holiday that is based on the Christian calendar is, at the very least, closely associated with Avodah Zara and therefore prohibited. He explains that its annual observance classifies it as a 'holiday' and celebrating Gentile holidays is obviously not permitted. It is well-known that Rav Avigdor Miller was a strong proponent of this view as well, as Thanksgiving's origins reveal that it was actually established as a religious holiday.

Similarly, Rav Menashe Klein ruled that it is a prohibited to celebrate Thanksgiving. Aside for citing the Gr"as opinion, which would prohibit any such celebration, he mentions that although the Thanksgiving holiday was originally established by (Pilgrims) rejoicing over their own survival, that they didn't starve due to their finding the turkey, and might not be considered Chukos HaGoyim, nevertheless there is another prohibition involved. In Yoreh De'ah (148, 7), the Shulchan Aruch, based on a Mishna in Maseches Avodah Zara (8a), rules that if an idolater makes a personal holiday for various reasons (birthday, was let out of jail, etc.) and at that party he thanks his gods, it is prohibited to join in that celebration. Rav Klein posits that the same would apply to Thanksgiving, as it commemorates the original Pilgrim Thanksgiving, thanking G-d for the turkey and their survival, and would be certainly prohibited, and possibly even biblically.

An analogous ruling was given by Rav Dovid Cohen (of Gevul Ya'avetz), and Rav Feivel Cohen (author of the Badei HaShulchan), albeit for different reasons. Rav Feivel Cohen takes a seemingly extreme position, maintaining that not only is it forbidden for a Jew to celebrate Thanksgiving, it is even prohibited for a Gentile to do so as well! Rav Dovid Cohen, on the other hand, writes that for a Jew to eat turkey on Thanksgiving expressly for the sake of the holiday should be prohibited by the rule of Tosafos, as it would be deemed following an irrational rule of theirs that is improper to follow. Yet, he concedes that it is not prohibited for a family to get together on a day off from work and eat turkey together, as long as they do so not to celebrate Thanksgiving, but rather because they like turkey. Even so, he concludes that it is still preferable not to do so.

**Trotting Out the Turkey?** With several differing major approaches to Thanksgiving advanced by contemporary authorities, which is the prevailing custom? Should turkey be on our plates this Thursday? The answer is that it depends. As shown, there are many authorities who maintain that Thanksgiving dinner should be avoided at all costs. However, many people do eat turkey on Thanksgiving, albeit many with non-Thanksgiving-related intent. (Remember, even kosher turkey prices drop for the holiday!) Yet, it certainly seems preferable not to make an 'exclusively for Thanksgiving' party. Everyone should follow his community practice and the lead of their knowledgeable halachic authority.

Anecdotaly, my own grandmother, Mrs. Ruth Spitz (May she have a Refuah Sheleimah), would buy a turkey, but instead of serving it for Thanksgiving dinner, would rather save it and serve it l'kavod Shabbos on the Shabbos immediately following Thanksgiving. This way one is not compromising on tradition nor halacha, and additionally receives the benefits of kavod and oneg Shabbos.

Although nowadays for many in Yeshivish and Chassidic circles the idea of observing even some semblance of Thanksgiving may seem an anathema, it is interesting to note that many authorities of the previous generation did not seem overly concerned. In fact, as is widely known, the annual Agudas Yisrael Convention, attended by many Gedolim, was traditionally held over Thanksgiving weekend for many decades, with turkey on the menu! Additionally, Rav Yosef Elyahu Henkin's authoritative Ezras Torah calendar (with halachos for the whole year) noted Thanksgiving along with other secular holidays.

Come what may, with Chanuka on the way, we can concentrate on the upcoming eight days of true thanks giving, lehodos u'lehallel. In fact, although there will be no need to be talking turkey while giving thanks, on Chanuka we still all proclaim "Hodu Lashem Ki Tov!"

# Good Shabbos

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## ■ CLASSES

» Before Shacharis Gemara Taanis for men (M-Fr, 6-6:35A)

» NQ Daf HaYomi Moed Kattan for men (Sunday-Thursday 8-9P)

» Chumash for men & women (Shabbos one hr before mincha)

» Hilchos Taaruvos for men (Sunday 7:00-8:00A)

» Supercharge Your Sundays for men (Sunday after Shacharis for 45 mins. with R' Noach Klug)

» Marriage Chaburah for women (Tuesday 7:15-8:00P)

» In-Depth Hilchos Shabbos for women (Wed, 11:30-12:15P)