



CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

November 25-26, 2016 ■ 25 Cheshvan, 5777 ■ Shabbos Chayei Soroh
Candlelighting: 5:03P ■ Shabbos Ends 6:11P

KIDDUSH this Shabbos is sponsored by BJ & Bracha Adrezin in honor of Yaakov Zevi Krycer's birthday. We wish Yaakov Zevi and the entire Krycer family continued growth in ruchnius & gashmius. **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 25th

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv – 5:05P
- » Candlelighting – 5:03P
- » Oneg Shabbos at Rich home (7119 Bremerton Ct., Dallas, Texas 75252). Men, women & children encouraged to attend. – 8:30P

Shabbos Day, November 26th

- » Shacharis followed by Kiddush–8:30A
- » **NEW:** Mommy & Me with Tricia Sutkin–10:15A-End of Service
- » Chumash/Pirkei Avos Shiur (M&W)–3:50P
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men in shul – 4:50P
- » Shalosh Seudos for women & young children at the Rich home – 4:50P
- » Maariv/Shabbos Ends–6:11P
- » Avos U'Banim–7:15P

■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Weekday Shacharis–6:40A
- » Mincha–5:05P
- » Gemara Shiur (Kesuvos)–8P
- » Maariv followed by 5-min halacha shiur–9P

■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

MEN

- » Aryeh Laibel ben Leah (Friend of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Yisroel Michoel ben Shulamis (Father of Chani Tkatch)
- » Zoosav ben Lipke (Father of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Yechiel Mordechai ben Devorah (Brother of Ken Jarmel)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)

WOMEN

- » Chaya Gittel bas Shandel (Friend of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Leah Esther bas Yenta Leah (Lori Jarmel)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

■ WHAT'S NU AT CTC

- » **Oneg Shabbos Tonight:** Rabbi Shmuli and Nechama Wolf, and Mr. Dovid Rosenfield, will be spending Shabbos with us. Good excuse for an Oneg -- not that we need one! Tonight 8:30 PM at the Rich home. Please come with a zemer, story or D'var Torah to share with the group. Men, women and children encouraged to attend.
- » **Avos U'Banim Overnight:** Thank you to Ari Goldberg and all the fathers and sons who went on the overnight last Motzei Shabbos. We had a fabulous time, and was the perfect kickoff to Avos U'Banim learning every Motzei Shabbos.
- » **Avos U'Banim 5777**

Avos U'Banim, or Father/Son Learning takes place on on Motzei Shabbos 60 minutes after Shabbos ends. The children are rewarded with Pizza, Cocoa and Prizes for their efforts. All boys are invited to attend with their father or another adult. We are asking for a contribution of \$5 per attending family per session, to help allay the costs to the shul. A small cost for infinite rewards!

Those who would like to dedicate a learning session for just \$54, for any special purpose (in memory of a loved one, a refuah shleima, or in honor of a simcha) can do so as well. For details contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016.

■ ELEVATE EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM: RABBI LABEL LAM

And it will be, [that] the maiden to whom I will say, 'Lower your pitcher and I will drink,' and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels,' her have You designated for Your servant, for Yitzchok, and through her may I know that You have performed loving kindness with my master." (Breishis 24:14)

We have already been treated to an awe inspiring portrait

of Avraham reaching out to heat stricken idolaters, showering them with honor, and pleading with them to allow him to provide a token measure of food. All this was followed by a grand festive meal because Avraham is idealized as someone who, "Says little and does much!"

This all begs a question about Eliezer's test at the well. Why would the maiden he is seeking be required to declare in advance that she is going to feed his animals? Let her agree to give him water and then see if she over delivers on her offer. Then she would be a more perfect fit for Avraham's family. Why must she say a lot and then do a lot?

A seemingly extra detail in the actual narrative may pry open the door to offer a peak at an answer. Remarkably so, Rivka makes that declaration just as Eliezer had hoped. Then after he actually drinks from the pitcher the first thing she does is pour the water into the water trough and then it's off to the races to feed the ten camels. Why do we need to know that she first poured the remaining water into the drinking pool for the animals? Maybe we detect that she is concerned not to be wasteful, which is also a supreme Torah-value. That's nice too but maybe there is much more.

What exactly was Eliezer testing for? He was actually boxing her into a corner. If he would ask her for water from her jug, how could she refuse? After she would give him to drink, what should she do with the rest of the water? It's effectively PAGAM-tainted! She can't bring it home. The sun is setting. She has to get back home with fresh water. If she spills it into the watering trough in front of him there is a good chance he will be offended by her action. That's not an option either.

In a split second after his offer she must come up with a solution that was preserve his dignity. In that moment she must make the only real choice but it requires an enormous investment of effort. She must declare in advance that she is going to feed all of his camels and then when she spills the pitcher into the watering trough, it is just a part of her promise.

Watering the ten camels was all part of a cover up to protect his honor. In order to come up with that scheme on the spot she would have to have in place a unique combination of important qualities. Sure she would have to possess a heart filled with Chessed, and she would also have to be very smart. She needs to be dutiful as well, in order to follow through on her original promise, doing as she said.

Most necessary, perhaps, she would have to have an instinctive sense of the inherent dignity of every human being, just as Avraham who had lavished his guests with honor. If Rivka was to help build a family whose mission is to lift up and enlighten all humanity, this value is critically important.

This past Friday an old friend called and asked me if I had time for a two minute story. I just listened and when he was done he wished me a good Shabbos and hung up. A week later, I remain in awe! While exiting a Shul in Brooklyn on Thursday eve he espied a non-Jewish fellow with his sweatshirt hood pulled over his baseball cap and preoccupied with his phone. He also noticed that the fellow was wearing extra-large baggy pants and they parked way below his waistline. My friend felt an urgent need to gently point out to him that his pants were hanging very low. He did. The fellow grunted in vague acknowledgment.

After going a block he said that he felt compelled to turn back and approach the fellow once again. He told him emphatically, "You are a prince! I want to let you know that you are a very important person. You are a prince!" A block away again, curiosity

overcame him and turned to look back. Incredibly so, the fellow had pulled up his pants! By appealing to the inherent dignity of a man one is able to elevate everything about him.

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

One of the interesting aspects of being American and living in the 'Medina shel 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 thanks 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 that 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)], that 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 local non-Jewish populace, "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 Zarah, with specific idolatrous intent, they would still be prohibited to practice.

However, other Rishonim, primarily the Ran, Mahar"i Kolon / Cologne (known as the Maharik), and Rivash, 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. On the other hand, they maintain, observing a simple custom of the Goyim that has no reference to Avodah Zarah, especially if there is a valid reason for its performance, such as kavod, giving proper honor or respect, would indeed 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 Zarah, such a custom may still be observed.

Most later authorities, including the Mahari Kastro, the Imrei Aish, the Shoel U'Meishiv (Rav Yosef Shaul Nathanson), the Ksav Sofer, the Maharam Schick, the Maharsham (Rav Shalom Mordechai Schwadron), the Mahara"tz Chiyus, and more contemporarily, the Seridei Aish (Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg), and Rav Ovadiah Yosef, zichronam levrachah, all rule in accordance with the Rema's ruling that as long as one has valid reasons for performing a specific custom, it does not necessarily get classified as the problematic Chukos HaGoyim, unless its origins are rooted in idolatrous practice.

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 reshus'. 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.

On the other hand, 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 Zarah 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 belie that it was actually established as a religious holiday.

Similarly, Rav Menashe Klein ruled that it is prohibited to celebrate Thanksgiving. Aside from 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 make an 'exclusively for Thanksgiving' party. Everyone should follow his community practice and the lead of their knowledgeable halachic authority.

Anecdotally, 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 Eliyahu 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, lehodot 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

■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

Friday Night, November 25th

» Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv – 5:05P

» Candlelighting – 5:03P

» Oneg Shabbos at Rich home (7119 Bremerton Ct., Dallas, Texas 75252). Men, women & children encouraged to attend. – 8:30P

Shabbos Day, November 26th

» Shacharis followed by Kiddush – 8:30A

» **NEW:** Mommy & Me with Tricia Sutkin – 10:15A-End of Service

» Chumash/Pirkei Avos Shiur (M&W) – 3:50P

» Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men in shul – 4:50P

» Shalosh Seudos for women & young children at the Rich home – 4:50P

» Maariv/Shabbos Ends – 6:11P

» Avos U'Banim – 7:15P

■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

» Weekday Shacharis – 6:40A

» Mincha – 5:05P

» Gemara Shiur (Kesuvos) – 8P

» Maariv followed by 5-min halacha shiur – 9P

■ CLASSES

» Before Shacharis Gemara Yevamos for men (M-Fr, 6-6:40A)

» NQ Daf HaYomi Kesuvos for men (Sunday-Thursday following Maariv)

» Pirkei Avos/Chumash for men & women (Shabbos 60 mins before mincha)

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

» In-Depth Hilchos Shabbos for women (TBD)