

November 29, 2019/1 Kislev 5780

Dear chevreh,

I want to wish everybody a happy Thanksgiving, and offer two sets of words and prayers from people associated with Reconstructionist Judaism, one hot-off-the-press, and one from 1951.

1) Writer Hila Ratzabi who is the Managing Editor at Ritualwell.org wrote the following introduction to a prayer she crafted about Thanksgiving:

“This prayer is intended to be said at the beginning of a Thanksgiving meal. For many of us, Thanksgiving can be a complicated holiday: on the one hand, we may feel drawn to the nostalgia of family meals and traditions we grew up with, but at the same time, we feel conflicted celebrating a day that for many Native peoples is a day of mourning. While some people may eschew the holiday altogether, for many Americans the holiday is a time to connect with family and express gratitude for the good things in our lives.

This prayer takes its inspiration from the verse in Psalm 24, “The earth is God’s.” We begin by acknowledging that this land belongs to no one. We then honor the ancestral Native peoples who cared for this land, followed by our own immigrant ancestors who endured hardship to come here. We then thank those who cooked our meal, and those who planted and harvested the food we eat. Finally, we state our commitment to sustaining the land for future generations.”

Here is the link to the prayer and questions to ask before reading it:

<https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/land-belongs-no-one>

2) Here is an introduction and a prayer from 1951 in a book co-edited by Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionism.

1951 The Faith of America: Readings, Songs and Prayers for the Celebration of American Holidays by Mordecai Kaplan; Williams, J. Paul; Kohn, Eugene Kaplan

THANKSGIVING DAY: a day devoted to a grateful awareness of the blessings of American life. A blessing not appreciated is easily lost. If we take for granted the blessings that we enjoy by virtue of our living in a land of almost boundless opportunities and take no thought to the moral foundation on which the welfare of our people rests, those blessings will sooner or later be lost. Thanksgiving should be used to make us aware of those moral foundations, of our dependence on divine justice and love for the continued enjoyment of the blessings of American life.

Prayer: The Significance of the Day

OUR GOD AND FATHER, it is good to give thanks to Thee and to acknowledge Thy blessings. Only thus can we savor them to the full. In the hurried pace of our lives and in our preoccupation with the petty and the trivial, we are prone to take Thy gifts for granted. Oblivious of thy bounties, we sinfully waste the opportunities they afford us for living the good life. Therefore, do we set aside this day for thanksgiving.

We thank Thee for the land and for its fruits by which we live. We thank thee for the vigor of body and mind that enables us to exploit the fertility of our country's fields and forests and the buried treasures of its mineral wealth. We thank Thee for the varied beauty of its landscape, for the grandeur of its mountains, the hospitality of its plains and prairies, and the gleaming vistas of ocean from its coasts.

We thank Thee for the inspiration of our country's history—for the courage and hardihood that sustained its explorers and pioneers, for the heroism that inspires its fighters for freedom and equality, for the enterprise that builds its teeming cities, for the arts that express the beauty and meaning of its way of life, for the just laws and free institutions that enable its people to work together in peace and harmony.

Grant, O God, in Thy grace, that we may perfect our national life to the measure of Thy bounty. Grateful for the gifts Thou hast bestowed upon us, may we use them to extend the area of freedom, justice, and good-will among men. May our use of Thy, gifts bear. Witness to mankind that life is good when lived according to Thy benign will, O gracious Giver of all good.

AMEN.

Happy Thanksgiving, and Chodesh Tov, as this evening marks the beginning of the Hebrew month of Kislev.

Rabbi Diana