

Religious School...education and enrichment

Make Kiddush and HaMotzi on Thanksgiving

It's November and Thanksgiving is on the mind. So, I thought it was appropriate to bring you one of my favorite ideas from a book I treasure: "40 Things You Can Do to Save the Jewish People" by Joel Lurie Grishaver.

Thanksgiving is filled with family traditions that are unique and comfortable. We all decorate our thanksgiving tables in different ways. Some use a traditional cornucopia filled with gourds of all sizes, some have handmade decorated turkeys made by little hands, some even buy a small flower and balloon arrangement at Tom Thumb the night before because they forgot to make an art project (not me though).

I think there is always at least one speech during thanksgiving about how thankful we are for everything. Sometimes it's the Patriarch of the family, sometimes the Matriarch. There are even families that invite everyone to share ways they are thankful.

Do you and your family do special things during the day on Thanksgiving? Watching football, eating all day long, constantly checking "the bird", playing board games are just a few examples of ways to spend this glorious feast together.

What is more Jewish than these ideas? Don't we celebrate Shabbat by using our nicest tablecloth and finest china? We enhance the mitzvah by creating a beautiful space (this is called Hiddur Mitzvah). Aren't there speeches made around the Seder table at Pesach? It's a chance to remember all the reasons it is wonderful to be free from slavery. What about spending time together. How many of you spend time with family and friends around a lunch table on Rosh Hashanah? It's a great way for us to begin a new year.

So why can't we take all of these ideas and combine them together? Wouldn't it be an amazing new tradition to take all of the wonderful experiences of Thanksgiving and put a Jewish twist in them? Here is an easy way to start: Make Kiddush and say HaMotzi.

When we say Kiddush we create a holy moment. The root of Kiddush is (קדשKadesh); this translates to sanctify. Let us bless this meal and create a sacred space around our experiences. The motzi gives us a chance to thank God for the food that is provided to us. Translated it says: Blessed are you God, Ruler of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth. What a magnificent way to thank God for all that we have at our table.

After the turkey is finished and the football game is over, I hope you will let me know how you made Thanksgiving a blend of Jewish and American rituals.

Jason