

REFUGEE THANKSGIVING 2015

Brought to you by Reconstructionist Judaism

This Thanksgiving there are refugees everywhere. Fleeing violence, fleeing despair. No one puts their children at risk unless there's no alternative.

All our families have arrival stories to tell. They landed at Plymouth Rock. They waited the lines at Ellis Island. They crossed searing deserts and stormy wide oceans, or deplaned in New York and Milwaukee, Miami and LA. They came because they wanted to, hoping the future would be brighter. They came because they were loaded on ships against their will, and knew the future would be worse.

We've been in the kitchen for hours, cutting, cooking, stirring; remembering who's bringing what, wondering whether we'll have enough.

Can a festive meal begin without a page to read and big thoughts to share?

We can fret about the kitchen and the universe all in one breath.

We pause before our set table. We are deeply grateful. Life holds no guarantees. And still: we are not huddled into a refugee camp in southeast Turkey nor jammed ten to a room in a crowded apartment in Berlin. We are not suffering the northern Mexico heat while waiting to cross, not sleeping in a field in Serbia, not waking up at a way station in Sweden. We are not on a boat, praying we'll reach a distant shore alive. In our many ways, we have made it to the other side. We pause and take a breath. Some face extraordinary violence, and we don't. Some go hungry, and the table before us holds an overflowing, to-some-eyes almost unimaginable bounty.

We could be holding on with a wing and a prayer, but tonight, instead, we have a poem and a prayer, to read aloud, to read line by line around the table, to do with what you wish.

May Thanksgiving 2015 be filled with deep gratitude and compassion, for everyone.

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THE NEW COLOSSUS

By Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

A THANKSGIVING PRAYER

From ritualwell.org

By Rabbi Naomi Levy, from *TALKING TO GOD: Personal Prayers for Times of Joy, Sadness, Struggle and Celebration*

For the laughter of the children,
For my own life breath,
For the abundance of food on this table,
For the ones who prepared this sumptuous feast,
For the roof over our heads,
The clothes on our backs,
For our health,
And our wealth of blessings,
For this opportunity to celebrate with family and friends,
For the freedom to pray these words
Without fear,
In any language,
In any faith,
In this great country,
Whose landscape is as vast and beautiful as her inhabitants.
Thank You, God, for giving us all these. Amen.



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