

jewbelong

THANKSGIVING!



extremely fabulous.
MILDLY JEWISH.

THANKSGIVING COLLECTION



Welcome to what might be your most meaningful Thanksgiving ever. An overpromise? Nope! Because when you combine the beauty and meaning of Thanksgiving with the family/community focus on gratitude that is a foundational in Judaism, you get a helluva holiday! We hope you enjoy this collection of readings, blessings, songs and activities. Some of the content is Jewish-themed, and all of it is human-themed.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Love, **team jewbelong**

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SHEHECHEYANU

Generic Prayer of Thanks

At JewBelong we think of the *Shehecheyanu* as a catch-all/generic prayer for gratitude which makes it perfect for Thanksgiving. The translation is that we thank God (or spirit or whatever you believe) for giving us life, sustaining us, and allowing us to arrive at this moment. After you recite the Shehecheyanu, it is a nice time to go around the table (or Zoom screen) and ask people to share what they are grateful for.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, shehecheyanu v'key'manu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh. Amen.

Praised are You, Spirit of the Universe, who keeps us alive, sustains us, and brings us to this moment. Amen.



WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

Robert Thiele, George David Weiss

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom, for me and you
And I think to myself what a wonderful world
I see skies of blue, and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, dark sacred night
And I think to myself what a wonderful world

The colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces, of people going by
I see friends shaking hands, sayin', "How do you do?"
They're really sayin', "I love you."
I hear babies cryin', I watch them grow
They'll learn much more, than I'll ever know
And I think to myself what a wonderful world
Yes, I think to myself
What a wonderful world

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

Rabbi Naomi Levy

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.

PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY

Robert F. Kennedy

Let no one be discouraged by the belief that there is nothing one person can do against the enormous array of the world's ills, misery, ignorance and violence.

Few will have the greatness to bend history, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. And in the total of all those acts will be written the history of a generation. It is from numberless, diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped.

Each time a person stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot of others or strikes out against injustice, he or she sends a tiny ripple of hope. Crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples can build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

ANOTHER PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY

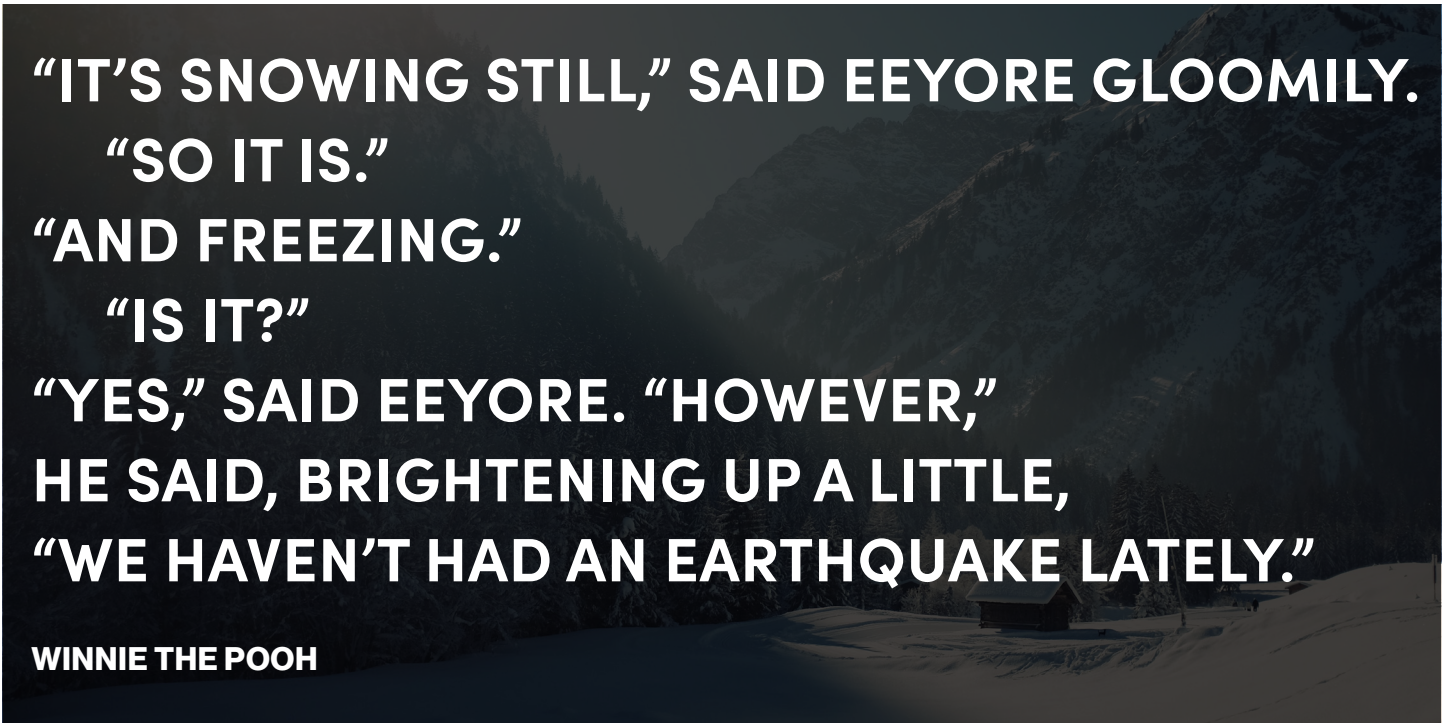
(Because we need it)

Rabbi Ayelet Cohen

Our God and God of our ancestors, bless this country and all who dwell within it. Help us to experience the blessings of our lives and circumstances, to be vigilant, compassionate, and brave. Strengthen us when we are afraid, help us to channel our anger, so that it motivates us to action. Help us to feel our fear, so that we do not become numb. Help us to be generous with others, so that we raise each other up. Help us to be humble in our fear, knowing that as vulnerable as we feel, there are those at greater risk, and that it is our holy work to stand with them.

Help us to taste the sweetness of liberty, to not take for granted the freedoms won in generations past or in recent days, to heal and nourish our democracy, that it may be like a tree planted by the water whose roots reach down to the stream; it need not fear drought when it comes. Source of all life, guide our leaders with righteousness, strengthen their hearts, but keep them from hardening. That they may use their influence and authority to speak truth and act for justice. May all who dwell in this country share in its bounty, enjoy its freedoms, and be protected by its laws. May this nation use its power and wealth to be a voice for justice, peace, and equality for all who dwell on earth.

May we be strong and have courage to be bold in our action and deep in our compassion, to discern when we must listen and when we must act, to uproot bigotry, intolerance, and violence in all its forms, to celebrate the many faces of God reflected in the wondrous diversity of humanity, to welcome the stranger and the immigrant and to honor the gift of those who seek refuge and possibility here, as they have since before this nation was born. Let justice well up like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.



**“IT’S SNOWING STILL,” SAID EYORE GLOOMILY.
“SO IT IS.”
“AND FREEZING.”
“IS IT?”
“YES,” SAID EYORE. “HOWEVER,”
HE SAID, BRIGHTENING UP A LITTLE,
“WE HAVEN’T HAD AN EARTHQUAKE LATELY.”**

WINNIE THE POOH

BLESSING FOR ANYONE WHO ISN'T JEWISH

(Cause we know this is a lot)

Inspired by Rabbi Janet Marder

May everyone who shares in a Jewish life feel welcome and integrated. We lovingly acknowledge the diversity of our community and are deeply grateful for the love and support you provide by opening your heart to Judaism, no matter how big or small a part it is in your day. Your presence at this Jewish experience is valued. It is not taken for granted because not everyone in this broken world will sit at a Shabbat dinner or attend a Passover Seder. We are a very small people, and history has made us smaller. As we once again see a rise in hatred and hear fear in the voices of our community, we are grateful for your presence. We pray with all our hearts that all you give to the Jewish people will come back to you and fill your life with joy. Amen.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

Meredith Grey (Grey's Anatomy)

Maybe gratitude has nothing to do with joy. Maybe being grateful means recognizing what you have for what it is. Appreciating small victories. Admiring the struggle it takes simply to be human. Maybe we're thankful for the familiar things we know. And maybe we're thankful for the things we'll never know. At the end of the day, the fact that we have the courage to still be standing is reason enough to celebrate.

ACTIVITY: MOST LIKELY TO!

Can also be played as a drinking game!

Most Likely To! is a lighthearted group game that, when played properly, will promote discussion and laughter. By that, we mean to emphasize the lighthearted nature of the game. It's not the time to berate your sister for always forgetting your birthday.

The steps are:

- The leader shares the list of 23 Most Likely To!
- For the first question, everyone in the group chooses who would be most likely to forget a loved one's birthday. Everyone writes their answer down and keeps their answer to themselves.
- Then the leader says, "time!" and everyone shows their answer on the screen at the same time. Remember The Newlywed game? It's like that!
- Don't forget, you are supposed to choose someone from the assembled group when answering each question. But, if your group wants to add people to the mix, go right ahead.
- The scoring for this game has to do with the matches. If your answer matches with one other person, you get one point, if it matches with two other people, you get two points, and so on.
- Of course, if you want to make your own Most Likely To's, go ahead!

MOST LIKELY TO...

1. Most likely to forget a loved one's birthday?
2. Most likely to forget their wallet?
3. Most likely to get stranded on vacation?
4. Most likely to stay up late arguing with internet trolls?
5. Most likely to stay up late playing video games?
6. Most likely to have a million followers on social media?
7. Most likely to have the most embarrassing tattoo?
8. Most likely to have the most hair colors in their lifetime?
9. Most likely to go bungee jumping?
10. Most likely to go on a hunger strike?
11. Most likely to go on a space mission?
12. Most likely to go to jail for doing something stupid?
13. Most likely to move to Israel?
14. Most likely to become Kosher?
15. Most likely to start wearing a Yarmulke?
16. Most likely to learn how to speak Hebrew?
17. Most likely to make gefilte fish?
18. Most likely to spend a day at a Jewish Museum?
19. Most likely to watch a Holocaust movie?
20. Most likely to hold back from sharing their opinions in a conversation?
21. Most likely to eat something off the ground?
22. Most likely to become addicted to coffee?
23. Most likely to give up their seat on the train for an elderly citizen?
24. Most likely to find a silver lining in every situation?

THE FINAL ANALYSIS

Kent M. Keith,

Adapted by Mother Theresa

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered.

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you.

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight.

Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.

Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God.

It was never between you and them anyway.

**NEVER LET A DAY PASS WITHOUT
LOOKING FOR THE GOOD,
FEELING THE GOOD WITHIN YOU,
PRAISING, APPRECIATING, BLESSING,
AND BEING GRATEFUL.
MAKE IT YOUR LIFE COMMITMENT,
AND YOU WILL STAND IN
UTTER AWE OF WHAT HAPPENS
IN YOUR LIFE.**

RHONDA BYRNE

SMALL KINDNESSES

Danusha Laméris

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs to let you by. Or how strangers still say "bless you" when someone sneezes, a leftover from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.

And sometimes, when you spill lemons from your grocery bag, someone else will help you pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other. We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot, and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder, and for the driver in the red pickup truck to let us pass.

We have so little of each other, now. So far from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange. What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here, have my seat," "Go ahead—you first," "I like your hat."

WHEN IT CAME TO LISTENING

Rupi Kaur

When it came to listening
My mother taught me silence
If you are drowning their voice with yours
How will you hear them she asked

When it came to speaking
She said do it with commitment
Every word you say
Is your own responsibility

When it came to being
She said be tender and tough at once
You need to be vulnerable to live fully
But rough enough to survive it all

When it came to choosing
She asked me to be thankful
For the choices I had that
She never had the privilege of making

BOUNTY

Susan Whelehan

The tossed salad
at our Soup Kitchen starts
with lettuce from the Community
Garden, planted by a Roma family waiting
to hear their refugee status, tended by 70 year old
David, who grew up on a kibbutz, harvested by the Sixth
Grade class from down the street, washed by Mrs. Singh,
recovering from a brain injury, dressed by Kaliyah,
a Med student who comes when she's got a free
hour, shared by a family of the working poor
who swallowed their pride to come here
for the first time. They offer thanks
and ask about the garden.

And so it grows.

WHAT WE HAVE TO BE GRATEFUL FOR

Rick Moranis

I have two kids. Both are away at college.
I have five television sets (I like to think of them as a set of five televisions).
I have two DVR boxes, three DVD players, two VHS machines and four stereos.
I have nineteen remote controls, mostly in one drawer.
I have three computers, four printers and two non-working faxes.
I have three phone lines, three cell phones and two answering machines.
I have no messages.

I have forty-six cookbooks.
I have sixty-eight takeout menus from four restaurants.
I have one hundred and sixteen soy sauce packets.
I have three hundred and eighty-two dishes, bowls, cups, saucers, mugs and glasses.
I eat over the sink.
I try to keep a positive view.

I have two refrigerators.
It's very hard to count ice cubes.
I have forty-one 37-cent stamps.
I have no 2-cent stamps.
I read three dailies, four weeklies, five monthlies and no annual reports.
I have five hundred and six CD, cassette, vinyl and eight-track recordings.
I listen to the same radio station all day.

I have one hundred and eighty-four thousand frequent flier miles on six airlines, three of which no longer exist.
I have "101 Dalmatians" on tape.
I have fourteen digital clocks flashing relatively similar times.
I have nine armchairs from which I can be critical.
I have a laundry list of things that need cleaning.
I have lost more than one thousand golf balls.
I am missing thirty-seven umbrellas.
I have over four hundred yards of dental floss.
I have two kids coming home for Thanksgiving.



PLANTING THE SEEDS OF ETERNITY

A Talmud Story

One day a sage was walking along a road, and he saw a man planting a carob tree. The sage asked the man, "How long does it take for this tree to bear fruit?"

The man replied, "Seventy years." The sage responded, "Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?" The man replied: "I found grown carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted those for me, I too plant these for my children."

A HOUSE CALLED TOMORROW

Alberto Rios

You are not fifteen, or twelve, or seventeen—
You are a hundred wild centuries

And fifteen, bringing with you
In every breath and in every step

Everyone who has come before you,
All the yous that you have been,

The mothers of your mother,
The fathers of your father.

If someone in your family tree was trouble,
A hundred were not:

The bad do not win—not finally,
No matter how loud they are.

We simply would not be here
If that were so.

You are made, fundamentally, from the good.
With this knowledge, you never march alone.

You are the breaking news of the century.
You are the good who has come forward

Through it all, even if so many days
Feel otherwise. But think:

When you as a child learned to speak,
It's not that you didn't know words—

It's that, from the centuries, you knew so many,
And it's hard to choose the words that will be your own.

From those centuries we human beings bring with us
The simple solutions and songs,

The river bridges and star charts and song harmonies
All in service to a simple idea:

That we can make a house called tomorrow.
What we bring, finally, into the new day, every day,

Is ourselves. And that's all we need
To start. That's everything we require to keep going.

Look back only for as long as you must,
Then go forward into the history you will make.

Be good, then better. Write books. Cure disease.
Make us proud. Make yourself proud.

And those who came before you? When you hear thunder,
Hear it as their applause.



THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

Woody Guthrie

This land is your land,
This land is my land
From California
to the New York island;
From the Redwood forest
to the Gulf Stream waters
This land was made for you and me.

As I was walking
that ribbon of highway,
I saw above me
that endless skyway:
I saw below me
that golden valley:
This land was made for you and me.

I've roamed and rambled
and I followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of
her diamond deserts;
And all around me
a voice was sounding:
This land was made for you and me.

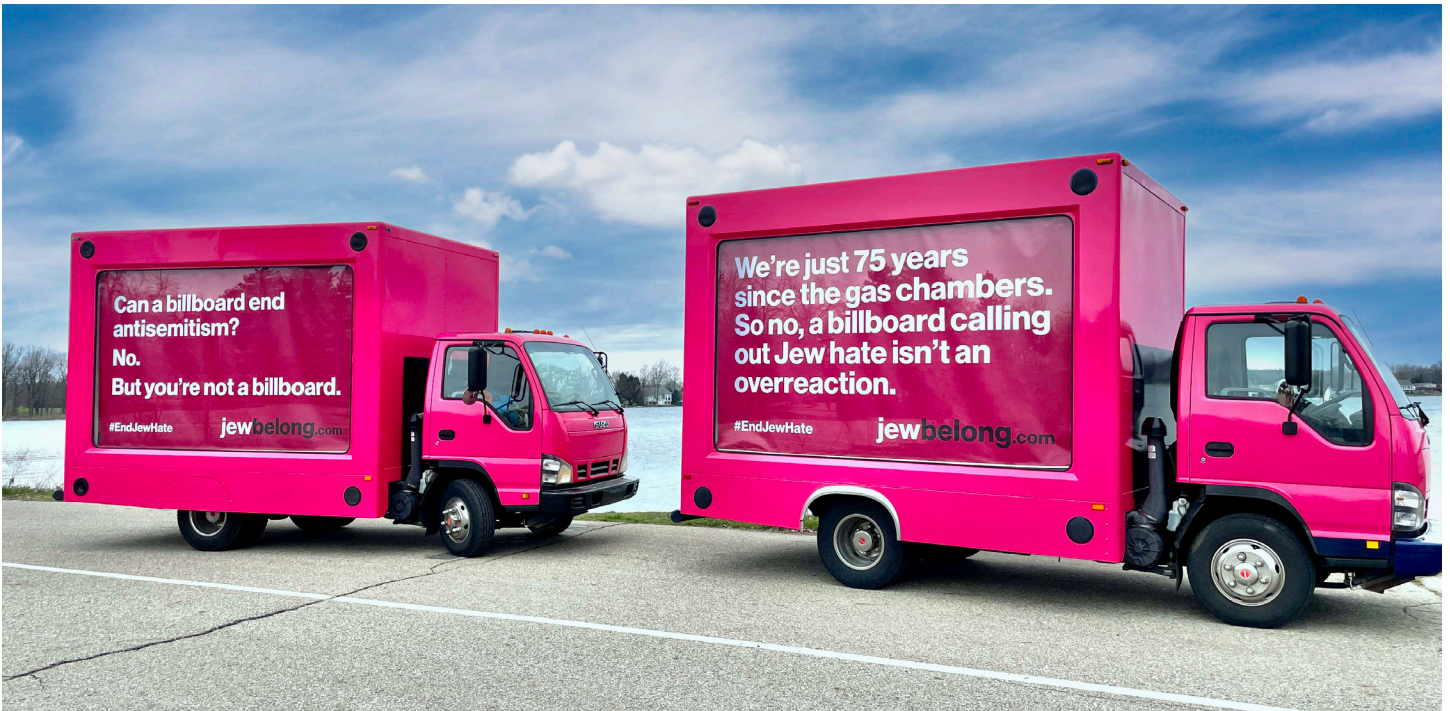
When the sun came shining,
and I was strolling,
And the wheat fields waving
and the dust clouds rolling,
As the fog was lifting
a voice was chanting:
This land was made for you and me.

As I went walking
I saw a sign there
And on the sign it
said "No Trespassing."
But on the other
side it didn't say nothing,
That side was made for you and me.

In the shadow of the steeple
I saw my people,
By the relief once
I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry,
I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?

Nobody living
can ever stop me,
As I go walking
that freedom highway;
Nobody living
can ever make me turn back
This land was made for you and me.

This land is your land,
This land is my land
From California
to the New York island;
From the Redwood forest
to the Gulf Stream waters
This land was made for you and me.



A JEWBELONG PROMISE TO **WORK TOGETHER TO END ANTISEMITISM**

Antisemitism is on the rise and we must all do our parts to stop it. Jews and allies need to be courageous, to call it out and to never make excuses for it. Antisemitism isn't new, but there are new and insidious strains of it. There's the familiar white supremacy movement that pretty much hates everyone who doesn't look like them, the run-of-the-mill antisemites, the subtle I-don't-really-mean-it-when-I-talk-crap-about Jews kind, and a relatively new form of hate directed at Israel which crosses the line to antisemitism far too often.

Antisemitism is hate. Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, atheists... literally everyone is worse off for it. Are we going to end it completely? Probably not. But that doesn't give us permission to throw our hands up and accept it, make excuses, or discount it. It's exactly the opposite. We must talk about it, write about it, learn about it, and call it out. No matter how difficult or uncomfortable, we can't ignore, chuckle along, or accept it. We've already learned the bitter lesson that true hate is never little, it is never unimportant, and it should never, ever be ignored.

jewbelong.org

For when you feel you don't

JewBelong.org does more than Thanksgiving! (Well, we better, with a name like JewBelong.) Our free booklets add sweetness and meaning to the big four Jewish holidays and lifecycle events, plus some things you might not even think of as Jewish, like pets, work and heartbreak.