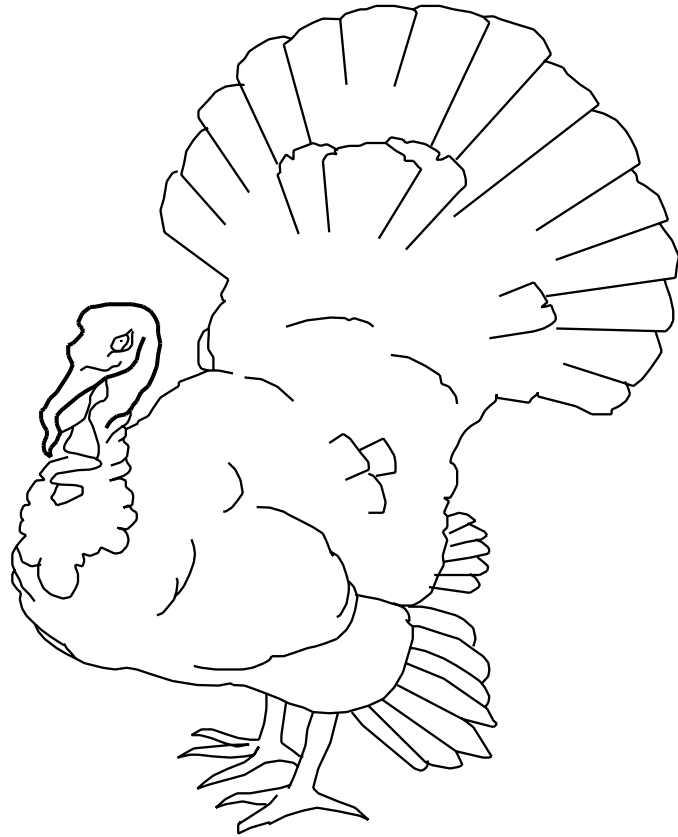


Why We Eat Turkey on Thanksgiving

Daniel M. Berry



Holidays and Food

On a holiday, it is quite traditional to eat foods that remind us of the purpose of the holiday

For example, on Passover, Jews eat matza to remind them that the Hebrews left Egypt so hurriedly that they did not have time to let the dough rise to make bread

The question naturally arises:

Why do we eat turkey on the U.S. and Canadian Thanksgivings?

Clearly, the Canadian Thanksgiving is derived from the U.S. Thanksgiving.

So question reduces to why U.S. Thanksgiving is celebrated by eating turkey.

International Bird

First, let's observe something about the bird itself

The name of the bird is very international, despite the fact that the bird is truly native to North America; its name seems to be the name of another country in a lot of languages

English: *Turkey*

Portuguese: *Peru*

French: *Dinde (D'Inde)*

Hebrew: *Tarngol Hodu (Indian Fowl)*

תרנגול הודו

Arabic: *Deek Rumi (Roman/Romanian Fowl)*

ديك رومي

(Rum=Rom was the Arabic name for what is now Turkey!)

Russian: *Indyushka* (from India)

Индюшка

Turkish: *Hindi* (the language spoken in India)

Hindi: *Peru Pakshi* (Peru Bird)

Greek: *Galapoula* (French Bird)

Γαλοπούλα

Austrian German: *Indian* (from India)

Polish: *Indyk* (from Polish word for India)

The name of the U.S. Ambassador to Israel in 1996 was Martin Indyk!

Klingon: *Khardassia* (Cardassia)

Welsh: *Twrci* (pronounced “toorki”)

Ojibwa (Algonquin): *Misese* ≈ Mississippi

Micmac (Algonquin): *Apatapegi jit* ≈ Apache

Japanese: *Karakuncho* (Chinese Bird)

カラクン鳥 or 唐國鳥

Scientific / Greek: *Meleagris* (guinea fowl)

Μελεαγρις

Scientific / Latin: *Meleagris Gallopavo* (guinea fowl French fowl)

Dutch: *Kalkoen* (*Calicut hoen* = Calicut hen)

Low German: *Kalkuun*

Danish: *Kalkun*

Norwegian: *Kalkun*

Swedish: *Kalkon*

Indonesian: *Ayam Belanda* (Netherlands bird)

Are there others that I do not know about?

Archeological Excavations

In excavations near Salem, Massachusetts, an old Hebrew manuscript was found that sheds some light on why we eat turkey on Thanksgiving.

It is clearly not surprising that we find a manuscript dealing with the origins of Thanksgiving near Salem, Massachusetts

However, it may be surprising to you that we found a *Hebrew* manuscript near Salem, Massachusetts!

It should not be; the influence of the old testament, written in Hebrew, on the pilgrims and their descendants in Massachusetts is well known.

Just look at the maps of Israel and the Palestinian Authority combined and of Massachusetts!

ISRAEL and PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY



Rehobot
רחובות

Jerusalem
ירושלים

Hebron
חברון

MASSACHUSETTS



Salem

Boston

Hebronville

Plymouth

Rehoboth

Hebrew in America

Ben Franklin once proposed that Hebrew be the national language of the nascent U.S.A.

After all, why keep English if we are breaking away from England?

Also *every* educated person should be able to read the Old Testament of the Bible in the original language.

Hebrew in America, cont'd

Hebrew was a required course at Harvard and Yale.

Hebrew is in the seal of Yale: ארײם ותמיס!

Hebrew in America, cont'd

Can you imagine what would be today and the future if Ben Franklin had his way?

- **Everyone would be speaking Hebrew in the U.S.A. and Canada.**
- **Hebrew would be the international language of diplomacy, science, technology, commerce, etc.**

Hebrew in America, cont'd

- **Everyone in the world would call a computer “מחשב”.**
- **This talk would be in Hebrew.**
- **In the 23rd and 24th centuries, the standard language of the United Federation of Planets would be Hebrew; Humans, Vulcans, Klingons, Romulans, and Cardassians would all be speaking Hebrew!**

National Bird of the U.S.A.

By the way, Ben Franklin proposed that the national bird of the U.S.A. be the turkey instead of the bald eagle!

Franklin argued that the turkey was more honest, more honorable, more diligent, and smarter than the bald eagle.

National Bird, cont'd

It's a good thing he did not prevail on this issue.

Who would want to *eat* the national bird on a national holiday?

Hmm... Today, we consider the turkey to be the epitomy of dumbness!

Key Discovery

The pilgrims evidently knew that the Hebrew word הודו (pronunciation: Hodu) means both:

Thank (plural imperative, i.e., Give Thanks)

India

The other name for turkey in those days was *Indian* chicken because Columbus thought he was in India when he saw turkeys for the first time! (Interestingly, the Canadian Thanksgiving is always around the U.S. Columbus Day!)

Thus, part of the Hebrew name of the bird, תרנגול הודו is the Hebrew command, הודו, to give thanks.

What better way to have our dinner remind us to give thanks!

An Old Quotation

What was found in the manuscript?

A very curious wish for the holiday that alerted us to the above conclusion

And it clarified the origin of a Thanksgiving day greeting that is given to this very day

בחג ההודייה: הודו שאין
אתם תרנגול ההודו אשר לפניכם.

b'chag ha-hodaya:

On-holiday Thanksgiving:

HODU

she-ain

atem

Give-thanks

that-not

you-are

tarngol

ha-HODU

asher Ifaneikhem.

fowl

the-indian

that-is before-you.

the turkey

Haggada Shel Hodaya

The manuscript was called *Haggada Shel Hodaya*, and just as *Haggada Shel Pesach* instructs Jews in the diaspora celebrating Passover to say *L'shana habaa b'irushalayim* (לשנה הבאה בירושלים) = “Next year in Jerusalem”) at the end of the Passover meal, *Haggada Shel Hodaya* instructs the future U.S. diaspora to conclude the Thanksgiving day meal with *L'shana habaa b'shalem* (לשנה הבאה בשלם) = “Next year in Salem”).

**So now you know why we eat turkey on
thanksgiving!**

Enjoy!!

Bon Appétit, בתאבון

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How to get paper & these slides

See the turkey near bottom of my home WWW page:

<http://se.uwaterloo.ca/~dberry/>