

MM Thanksgiving Week Blue Sheet — November 23, 2013

DID WE MISS THANKSGIVING?

We were shopping at a local mega-type store looking for Thanksgiving decorations. We found four aisles of Christmas merchandise but nothing for Thanksgiving. We asked the lady in charge, "*Did we miss Thanksgiving?*" She answered, "*We never had it.*"

Really? They went straight from Halloween to Christmas. In fact Christmas goods were out before Halloween. However, they did have Thanksgiving turkeys on sale.

We're going to work Thanksgiving into our schedule. Twice, in fact. This Sunday we do our family gathering. I have the big table pulled out and seating for 14. They come from Medford, Eugene, Albany and Portland. Four of us are in Corvallis. They are all free to do Thanksgiving with other sides of the family or friends. Our second and maybe third Thanksgiving will be at the cabin. Jean and I have gone north for years. We enjoy doing a Dutch oven meal over our wood stove, or join friends.

This is a historic Thanksgiving. Hanukkah is on the same day and won't connect again for 77,798 years! That surprised me. We always noticed an overlap of Hanukkah and Christmas. We have usually sung a rousing version of "Light one candle for the Maccabee children" among our Christmas Eve at the Deli songs. We include a Menorah among our home Christmas decorations. But this year is different. Hanukkah will begin on Thanksgiving Day!

Actually, the Jewish festival that most fits Thanksgiving is *Sukkot*, usually associated with the fall harvest season. Rabbi Howard Berman writes:

"Attempting to reclaim a simple 'pure' form of Christianity as close as possible to the early church of Jesus' time, the Pilgrims sought a model in the traditions of Jewish observance and worship."

However it happened, here we are on a most rare occasion that has been "named" for this one day, **Thanksgivukkah**. No, it's not a blend of Christianity and Judaism. Thanksgiving has become a secular holiday. What both days share is a them of extreme thankfulness.

The theology of Thanksgiving is flawed in my view. I am uncomfortable with the idea that there is any possibility the Hebrew G_D especially chose the descendants of Abraham to receive a homeland by displacing the residents of that day. In the same way it is hard to imagine that the Christian GOD especially chose our European ancestors to receive the American continent by displacing hundreds of native tribes and nations that originally occupied the continent from sea to shining sea. I know that winners write the history and even their own scriptures. But selective favoritism seems incompatible with any variety of divine Spirit.

That we occupy a portion of the world as our own is no excuse to neglect stewardship of its beauty and bounty. Once again the UN conference on dealing with climate change appears ready to close without agreement. Just in time for Thanksgiving.

And Thanksgiving may be a hard sell in the Philippine Islands devastated by a typhoon or in Illinois and the parts of the mid-west trashed by tornados. The survivors express thanks for sure, but are left trying to believe they were somehow selectively spared while so many others died. There are others on this list that face equally unhappy circumstances. In the face of all of this, questions and doubts aside, Thanksgiving invites us to come to the table and say the Hanukkah blessing:

Blessed art thou, Lord our God, Master of the universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this special time.

Time to dry the eyes, and put hopes and fears aside. Time to live the moment. Time to break the bread and pour the wine. Time to taste the bounty of love. Time to say "**Hallelujah anyhow!**"

— Art Morgan, November 23, 2013

PS A bakery in New York is making Thanksgivukkah donuts, filled with cranberry sauce, Turkey gravy and toasted marshmallow. Go for it. You won't get another chance for 77 thousand years!

