

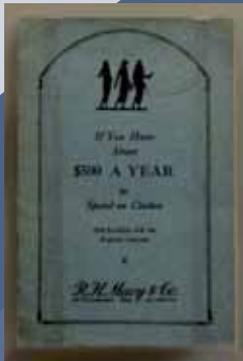
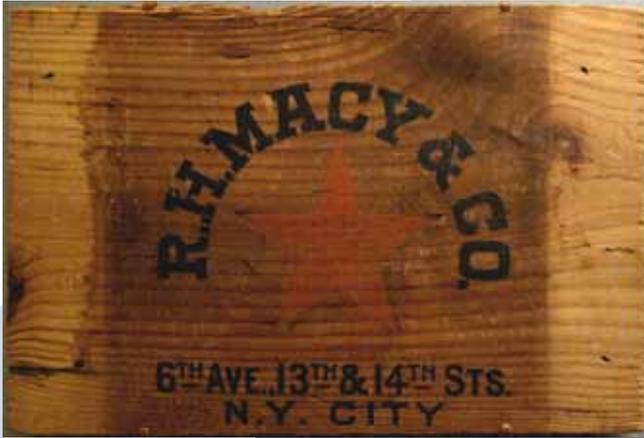
# Sacred Stories

*A Living Commentary on American Jewish History and the Hebrew Bible*

**THANKSGIVING** NOVEMBER 28, 2013

## *Celebrate Abundance and Possibility*

By Rabbi Brad Hirschfield



Artifacts from the archives of Macy's Inc, early twentieth century

# *Celebrate Abundance and Possibility*

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## Sacred Stories **THANKSGIVING**

Call it a simple coincidence, call it Thanksgiving, call it a once in a lifetime opportunity to integrate the quintessentially American and the quintessentially Jewish, but whatever you call it, celebrate the abundance and possibility in your life this year, as Thanksgiving and Hanukkah overlap.

From recalling a group of brave, hopeful, religious outsiders, the Pilgrims, who boarded leaky ships bound for a place they did not know, to a group of equally brave and hopeful religious outsiders, the Maccabees, who took on a fight they had little chance of winning, to immigrant Jews who celebrated holidays from Purim to Thanksgiving, by sharing with others, these are stories of recognizing possibility and celebrating abundance.

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In all of these cases, as in all of our lives, the story could have gone in a different direction. The pilgrims could have stayed home, or could have resisted celebrating when so much around them was still so rough and so terribly uncertain. The Maccabees could have also stayed home, or could have decided that there wasn't enough oil to keep the Temple Menorah burning, so why bother lighting it at all. And immigrants, who were still hard at work scratching out a living, could have resisted the response to share, especially with those who were not members of their particular community. But they didn't.

They did make the journey, they did fight and light, and they did give. In all three cases, they trusted in the possibility of the moment, and in the abundance they possessed. We can do the same in our own lives.

Whether at the table around a turkey, around a menorah set with candles, or wherever else you find yourself this Thanksgiving or Hanukkah, trust and celebrate that there is more in your life than you may know, and more possibility for you in the future than you may imagine. Do that and you join the ranks of some of the greatest heroes of both American and Jewish history. And if not this year, when?

*Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, President of CLAL, has been ranked several years in a row in Newsweek as one of America's "50 Most Influential Rabbis," and recognized as one of our nation's top "Preachers & Teachers," by Beliefnet.com.*

Artifacts from the archives of Macy's Inc, early twentieth century  
National Museum of American Jewish History

**Did You Know? – The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade started in 1924 under the leadership of the Straus family. The many immigrant employees marched in the parade as a way to give back and say thanks to their community.**



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### **About this partnership:**

Both the Jewish People and the United States of America are rooted in a quest for greater freedom and human dignity. Inspired by this parallelism, the National Museum of American Jewish History is collaborating with Clal—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership and its Rabbis Without Borders program to launch a new initiative, **Sacred Stories: A Living Commentary on the Hebrew Bible and American Jewish History**.

**Sacred Stories** weaves together Judaism's foundational sacred text, the Torah, with one of the most successful expressions of freedom in human history, the story of Jewish life in America. **Sacred Stories** explores our shared values by linking these two vital and compelling stories through contemporary commentary and 21st century media.

The **Torah** is a central feature of Jewish tradition. Used to refer generally to Jewish wisdom, it also refers specifically to the 5 Books of Moses which makes up the Hebrew Bible. A portion of the Torah text, a **Parsha**, is read on **Shabbat** (Sabbath). The whole Torah is read sequentially over the course of the year. Shabbat is the Jewish day of rest and begins on Friday evenings and ends Saturday night. Many Jews observe Shabbat to emulate God's resting on the seventh day of Creation. The fourth commandment is to keep Shabbat holy which Jews do with festive meals, resting, and learning.



The National Museum of American Jewish History, on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, presents educational programs and experiences that preserve, explore and celebrate the history of Jews in America. Its purpose is to connect Jews more closely to their heritage and to inspire in people of all backgrounds a greater appreciation for the diversity of the American Jewish experience and the freedoms to which Americans aspire.



Clal—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership is a think tank, leadership training institute, and resource center. Bringing Jewish insights to a wide American audience, Clal makes Jewish wisdom an accessible public resource. A leader in religious pluralism, Clal builds bridges across communities to encourage diversity and openness. Linking Jewish texts and tradition with innovative scholarship, Clal promotes Jewish participation in American civic and spiritual life, reinvigorating communities and enhancing leadership development.