

Sukkot Day 4

September 27, 2018

Sydney--*Shirah Chavah bat Shmu'el v'Tovah*

<https://miowitztorahreading.weebly.com/sukkot--day-4.html>

Summary

We celebrate סוכות for seven days--from the 15th through the 21st of the Jewish month of תשרי. It is the first of the three festivals during which Israelites would travel to Jerusalem at the times when the Temple stood. Each of these festivals--שבועות, פסח, and סוכות--connects in an important way with the farming cycle and marks a key event in the history of the Jewish people.

סוכות occurs at the end of the fall fruit harvest, when the fruit are gathered. In fact another name for Sukkot is, חג האסיף, the Festival of the Gathering. When we perform the מצווה of holding the "Four Species" of plants : לולב <show it>, הדס <show it>, ערבה <show it> and the אתרוג <show it> together, it reflects our thanksgiving for the harvest. One explanation of this ritual is that the אתרוג represents the heart, the לולב represents the spine, the הדס suggests the eyes, and the ערבה symbolizes the lips and mouth. When we hold them all together, say the blessing, and then shake them in all directions we show our wish to serve God joyfully--with our whole bodies.

The holiday also reminds us of the Israelites' wanderings after being brought out from Egypt. During this time they lived in סוכות--temporary shelters-- in the wilderness. Our סוכות are designed both to offer some protection and to make us feel a little more unprotected than our regular houses. The roof of a סוכה must give us more shade than sun and the walls should be able to stand up against some wind. We must also be able to see the stars through the roof. We are taught to make it our main home for the week, but it is meant to feel temporary and maybe even a little shaky to us.

Questions

1) In the *Mishnah*, the early rabbis of our tradition taught that the temporary *sukkah* we live in during the holiday of *sukkot* should be less than 20 *amot* in height--shorter than about 30 feet. Why do you think that the rabbis might limit the height of a *sukkah* to 20 *amot*? <<pick 3>>

Maybe the rabbis might want us to think about the Tower of Babel when we build the *sukkah*. They want us to focus more on having the experience of living in the *sukkah* for the week than on building it and making it impressive-looking.

2) In the same *Mishnah* the rabbis also teach that a *sukkah* has to be at least ten *tefahim* high--about 4-5 feet tall--a little taller than the height of the table that the Torah is resting. Why do the rabbis say we need to have a *sukkah* a least ten *tefahim* tall? <<pick 3>>

I think that our rabbis want to make sure that a person can fit inside the *sukkah* comfortably both sitting up and lying down--so a person can eat, sleep, read, and more in the *sukkah*.

3) Another name for *Sukkot* is *zman simhateinu*--“Time Of Our Joy” How might living in a *sukkah* and trying to do many things in the *sukkah* during the week of the holiday make us happy?

Maybe just living in a *sukkah* doesn't make us happy, unless we make a special effort to do things in there that make us happy. Maybe the whole point is to give us a place that we can make a special effort to eat dinner together, sleep, read, play with friends, and do other things that make us happy.