

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Sukkot 5780 – First Two Days
October 14 &15, 2019 *** 15 & 16 Tishrei, 5780

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Torah Readings in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/742773/jewish/First-Days-of-Sukkot-Torah-Readings-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The reading begins with an injunction that a newborn calf, lamb, or kid must be left with its mother for seven days; one may not slaughter an animal and its offspring on the same day.

The reading then lists the annual Callings of Holiness — the festivals of the Jewish calendar: the weekly Shabbat; the bringing of the Passover offering on 14 Nissan; the seven-day Passover festival beginning on 15 Nissan; the bringing of the Omer offering from the first barley harvest on the 2nd day of Passover, and the commencement, on that day, of the 49-day Counting of the Omer, culminating in the festival of Shavuot on the 50th day; a "remembrance of shofar blowing" on 1 Tishrei; a solemn fast day on 10 Tishrei; the Sukkot festival — during which we are to dwell in huts for seven days and take the "Four Kinds" — beginning on 15 Tishrei; and the immediately following holiday of the "8th day" of Sukkot (Shemini Atzeret).

G-d declares the fifteenth day (and the subsequent 6 days) of the seventh month to be a holy convocation, no work shall be done during that time. The reading then describes the Sukkot offerings which were brought in the Holy Temple.

Sukkot Haftarahs in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/742779/jewish/First-Days-of-Sukkot-Haftorahs-in-a-Nutshell.htm

Day One:

Zachariah 14:1-21.

The prophet Zachariah prophesies about the world transformation that will occur in the end of days, when “the L-rd shall become King over all the earth; on that day shall the L-rd be one, and His name one.”

But first he describes a great war that will center around Jerusalem immediately before the ultimate Redemption. G-d will gather the nations for war, and He will do battle with them, by visiting various diseases and ailments upon them. Zachariah then notes that

those of the nations who will survive this cataclysmic war will be required to go to Jerusalem every year on the holiday of Sukkot to pay homage to G-d.

Day Two: I Kings 8:2-21.

Today's haftorah describes the dedication of Solomon's Temple, which occurred during the holiday of Sukkot. (The celebration of the completion of the Holy Temple began a few days earlier, on the 8th of Tishrei.)

The construction of the Holy Temple was completed. King Solomon assembled the leaders and elders of the tribes to Jerusalem, and amidst great fanfare the Levites transported the Ark from its temporary location in the City of David and installed it in the Holy of Holies chamber in the Holy Temple. Immediately, G-d's presence appeared in the Temple, in the form of a smoky cloud.

King Solomon then blessed G-d. He recalled the history of the sanctuary, how his father, King David, had wanted to build it—but was told by G-d that it would be his son who would accomplish this feat. "And the L-rd has established His word that He spoke, and I have risen up in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the L-rd spoke, and have built a house for the name of the L-rd, the G-d of Israel. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein (is) the covenant of the Lord, which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT Sukkot

[The Festival of Insecurity \(Sukkot 5780\) by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks](http://rabbisacks.org/)

<http://rabbisacks.org/>

What exactly is a sukkah? What is it supposed to represent?

The question is essential to the mitzvah itself. The Torah says: "Live in sukkot for seven days... so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in sukkot when I brought them out of Egypt" (Lev. 23: 42-43). In other words, knowing – reflecting, understanding, being aware – is an integral part of the mitzvah. For that reason, says Rabbah in the Talmud (Sukkah 2a), a sukkah that is taller than twenty cubits (about 30 feet) is invalid because when the sechach, the "roof," is that far above your head, you are unaware of it. So what is a sukkah?

On this, two Mishnaic sages disagreed. Rabbi Eliezer held that the sukkah represents the clouds of glory that surrounded the Israelites during the wilderness years, protecting them from heat during the day, cold during the night, and bathing them with the radiance of the Divine presence. Rashi in his commentary takes it as the literal sense of the verse. On the other hand, Rabbi Akiva says sukkot mammash, meaning a sukkah is a sukkah, no more and no less: a hut, a booth, a temporary dwelling. It has no symbolism. It is what it is (Sukkah 11b).

If we follow Rabbi Eliezer then it is obvious why we celebrate by making a sukkah. It is there to remind us of a miracle. All three pilgrimage festivals are about miracles. Pesach is about the miracle of the Exodus when God brought us out of Egypt with signs and wonders. Shavuot is, according to the oral Torah, about the miracle of the revelation at Mount Sinai when, for the only time in history, God appeared to an entire nation. Sukkot is about God's tender care of his people, mitigating the hardships of the journey across the desert by surrounding them with His protective cloud as a parent wraps a young child in a blanket. Long afterward, the sight of the blanket evokes memories of the warmth of parental love.

Rabbi Akiva's view, though, is deeply problematic. If a sukkah is merely a hut, what was the miracle? There is nothing unusual about living in a hut if you are living a nomadic existence in the desert. It's what the Bedouin did until recently. Some still do. Why should

there be a festival dedicated to something ordinary, commonplace and non-miraculous? Rashbam says the sukkah was there to remind the Israelites of their past so that, at the very moment they were feeling the greatest satisfaction at living in Israel – at the time of the ingathering of the produce of the Land – they should remember their lowly origins. They were once a group of refugees without a home, never knowing when they would have to move on.

Sukkot, according to Rashbam, exists to remind us of our humble origins so that we never fall into the complacency of taking freedom, the Land of Israel and the blessings it yields, for granted, thinking that it happened in the normal course of history.

However, there is another way of understanding Rabbi Akiva, and it lies in one of the most important lines in the prophetic literature. Jeremiah says, in words we recited on Rosh Hashanah, “I remember the loving-kindness of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown” (Jeremiah. 2:2). This is one of the very rare lines in Tanach that speaks in praise not of God but of the people Israel.

“How odd of God / to choose the Jews,” goes the famous rhyme, to which the answer is: “Not quite so odd: the Jews chose God.” They may have been, at times, fractious, rebellious, ungrateful and wayward. But they had the courage to travel, to move, to leave security behind, and follow God’s call, as did Abraham and Sarah at the dawn of our history.

If the sukkah represents God’s clouds of glory, where was “the loving-kindness of your youth”? There is no sacrifice involved if God is visibly protecting you in every way and at all times. But if we follow Rabbi Akiva and see the sukkah as what it is, the temporary home of a temporarily homeless people, then it makes sense to say that Israel showed the courage of a bride willing to follow her husband on a risk-laden journey to a place she has never seen before – a love that shows itself in the fact that she is willing to live in a hut trusting her husband’s promise that one day they will have a permanent home.

If so, then a wonderful symmetry discloses itself in the three pilgrimage festivals. Pesach represents the love of God for His people. Sukkot represents the love of the people for God. Shavuot represents the mutuality of love expressed in the covenant at Sinai in which God pledged Himself to the people, and the people to God.*

Sukkot, on this reading, becomes a metaphor for the Jewish condition not only during the forty years in the desert but also the almost 2,000 years spent in exile and dispersion. For centuries Jews lived, not knowing whether the place in which they lived would prove to be a mere temporary dwelling. Sukkot is the festival of insecurity.

What is truly remarkable is that it is called, by tradition, zeman simchatenu, “our time of joy.” That to me is the wonder at the heart of the Jewish experience: that Jews throughout the ages were able to experience risk and uncertainty at every level of their existence and yet – while they sat betzila de-mehemnuta, “under the shadow of faith” (Zohar, Emor, 103a) – they were able to rejoice. That is spiritual courage of a high order. I have often argued that faith is not certainty: faith is the courage to live with uncertainty. That is what Sukkot represents if what we celebrate is sukkot mammash, not the clouds of glory but the vulnerability of actual huts, open to the wind, the rain and the cold.

I find that faith today in the people and the State of Israel. It is astonishing to me how Israelis have been able to live with an almost constant threat of war and terror since the State was born, and not give way to fear. I sense even in the most secular Israelis a profound faith, not perhaps “religious” in the conventional sense, but faith nonetheless: in life, and the future, and hope. Israelis seem to me perfectly to exemplify what tradition says was God’s reply to Moses when he doubted the people’s capacity to believe: “They are believers, the children of believers” (Shabbat 97a). Today’s Israel is a living embodiment of what it is to exist in a state of insecurity and still rejoice.

And that is Sukkot’s message to the world. Sukkot is the only festival about which Tanach says that it will one day be celebrated by the whole world (Zechariah 14: 16-19). The

twenty-first century is teaching us what this might mean. For most of history, most people have experienced a universe that did not change fundamentally in their lifetimes. But there have been rare great ages of transition: the birth of agriculture, the first cities, the dawn of civilisation, the invention of printing, and the industrial revolution. These were destabilising times, and they brought disruption in their wake. The age of transition we have experienced in our lifetime, born primarily out of the invention of the computer and instantaneous global communication, will one day be seen as the greatest and most rapid era of change since Homo sapiens first set foot on earth.

Since September 11, 2001, we have experienced the convulsions. As I write these words, some nations continue to tear themselves apart, and no nation is free of the threat of terror. Antisemitism has returned, not just to Europe, but around the world. There are parts of the Middle East and beyond that recall Hobbes' famous description of the "state of nature," a "war of every man against every man" in which there is "continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, chapter XIII). Insecurity begets fear, fear begets hate, hate begets violence, and violence eventually turns against its perpetrators.

The twenty-first century will one day be seen by historians as the Age of Insecurity. We, as Jews, are the world's experts in insecurity, having lived with it for millennia. And the supreme response to insecurity is Sukkot, when we leave behind the safety of our houses and sit in sukkot mammash, in huts exposed to the elements. To be able to do so and still say, this is zeman simchatenu, our festival of joy, is the supreme achievement of faith, the ultimate antidote to fear.

Faith is the ability to rejoice in the midst of instability and change, travelling through the wilderness of time toward an unknown destination. Faith is not fear. Faith is not hate. Faith is not violence. These are vital truths, never more needed than now. ** For a similar conclusion, reached by a slightly different route, see R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, Meshekh Chokhmah to Deut. 5: 15. I am grateful to David Frei of the London Beth Din for this reference.*

Human Lives and the Natural World – Sukkot by Shuly Rubin Schwartz

<http://www.jtsa.edu/human-lives-and-the-natural-world>

For many of us who live in dense metropolitan areas, spending time in national parks gives us a unique opportunity to experience in more immediate fashion the majesty of our world. Vacationing in the Canadian Rockies this past summer—hiking in the mountains, walking on glaciers, boating in deep blue lakes, cooling off in the spray of gorgeous waterfalls, identifying rare birds and seeing moose, elk, deer, and the occasional bear (thankfully from a distance)—I felt awed and fortunate to behold this.

But it was the odd-looking overpasses on the highway that proved to be the most powerful sight of all. These were not ordinary overpasses, intended for cars or pedestrians. Brimming flowers, grass, and trees bounded by tall wire fences on each side, these were wildlife overpasses developed to address the unanticipated problems that surfaced after the Trans-Canada Highway was completed. Developed to provide people more convenient access to the natural wonders of the Canadian Rockies, the highway inadvertently wreaked havoc on the natural habitat. Numerous animals were killed trying to cross the road, and over time, scientists realized that the animal population was diminishing because various species had been artificially separated by the highway. By constructing numerous overpasses and underpasses, the Canadian national park system eventually succeeded in both dramatically reducing animal deaths and ensuring the flourishing of various wildlife species.

I was moved by the human ingenuity represented by these overpasses and by the humbling recognition that motivated it, for these overpasses signify the human imperative to constantly attune ourselves to the natural world that we inhabit.

And it is just this awareness that is heightened for us when we build and use a sukkah, a

structure that in its temporariness and its openness to the elements symbolizes our interconnectedness to the natural world. Its covering, called sekhakh, must be made of material that grows from the soil but that has been detached from the ground, usually tree branches or bamboo mats. Second, the covering must be layered in such a way that the daytime sky and nighttime stars are visible through it. This ensures that when we sit in the sukkah, we are attuned to the natural world: we encounter natural vegetation as well as the celestial world and we almost certainly encounter rain, wind, and variances in temperature.

Even after the structure has been completed, myriad decisions are dependent upon the weather and the animals around us. And the answers have changed over time—even in the course of one's own lifetime—as the world around us evolves. As a child, I prepared for the holiday by stringing cranberries and popcorn; then on the eve of the holiday we hung up the strands along with fresh lemons, oranges, apples, grapes, and other fruit as well as colorful dried corn stalks. I painstakingly colored decorations for the sukkah walls but they were inevitably ruined by a downpour, dampening my spirits.

A generation later when my own children were decorating the sukkah, we had reluctantly given up the cranberries and popcorn and most of the fresh fruit because they attracted bees and were eaten by squirrels. We still hung lemons and dried corn but substituted water-resistant imitation fruits and vegetables that we reused year after year. We also laminated favorite decorations to protect them from the rain. My now-adult children hang nothing fresh in their sukkot; the squirrels and bees have prevailed. Only weatherproof decorations are hung. All of this helps ensure a joyous Sukkot—but nothing guarantees it. In recent years, stronger hurricanes, winds, and storms have necessitated concrete blocks to anchor the poles against toppling, and some years, even they proved ineffective against the elements.

Many of these Sukkot challenges and adaptations are minor in the moment, but their symbolic message has only become larger and weightier over time. Despite the massive technological advances that humans have achieved, controlling the natural world will always elude us. To survive on this earth, humans must figure out how to adapt to forces beyond our control, to make certain that we don't harm the fragile equilibrium of our ecosystem, and to do all that we can to redress any problems we've inadvertently caused. The Ten Days of Repentance that recently ended gave us a chance to confess our shortcomings before God and make amends with the people in our lives. Sukkot provides us with the opportunity to restore our relationship with the natural world.

The 19th-century American naturalist John Muir aptly described the human interconnectedness with nature that we experience on Sukkot: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find that it is bound fast by a thousand invisible cords that cannot be broken, to everything in the universe." Just as we continue to adapt our decorations and reinforce the poles, so too must we recognize how intertwined human lives are with nature and use that knowledge to protect, preserve, and restore it. National parks are responsible for guarding and preserving the natural treasures within them and to do that, they must correct the damage that humans inflict. On Sukkot, as we exit our climate-controlled homes and immerse ourselves in the awesome volatility of nature, we too are encouraged to appreciate the joy of the holiday—the joy of the natural world—while also embracing the responsibility. *(Shuly Rubin Schwartz is provost; Irving Lehrman Research Professor; Sala and Walter Schlesinger Dean, Kekst School)*

[Sukkot: On the Heart for all Time by Rabbi Cheryl Peretz](https://t.e2ma.net/message/w66y0b/gu2i2kb)
<https://t.e2ma.net/message/w66y0b/gu2i2kb>

The joy and celebration of Sukkot is not limited to time or space of this world. In fact, according to the prophet Zechariah, whose words are read as the Haftarah on the first day of the holiday, Sukkot is the holiday that all will celebrate together in the World to

Come. Zechariah was of the last biblical prophets, who taught as the Jews were building the Second Temple and reorganizing Jewish presence in the land of Israel. Much of Zechariah's prophecy speaks of the distant messianic future. As such, Zechariah's words speak of great redemption when all will know and testify to the existence and oneness of God. Zechariah predicts: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord with one name."

These are the words that end the Aleinu liturgy said in every prayer service on the Jewish calendar. In an easy to miss phrase, the same prayer says V'hashevota el levaveicha – translated by many as 'take God to heart' but really is a demand to actively put God on your heart. It is the knowing and feeling that we truly come to know God.

In Jewish thought, the heart has many functions. Kohelet Rabbah (the rabbinical commentary on Ecclesiastes) records that the heart sees and hears, stands and falls, feels and knows, breaks and heals. Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz (1873-1936) says the heart is like a seismograph, recording every tiny tremor even if our conscious minds remain unaware of the impact.

Today, we know that the heart is not actually the source of love – the ancients were mistaken. But, doctors and scientists also tell us that the relationship between heart and emotions is extraordinarily intimate. Our emotions can actually change the shape and affect the operation of the heart.

In life, we all live great joys and sorrows. It is in loosening the membranes surrounding the heart that we truly experience emotions leading to introspection, meaning, and growth. This is the sacred invitation to place God on your heart and feel it in every moment – as a companion to the celebration, a comfort to the affliction, a renewal from the mundane. This is the fulfillment of the universal promise of redemption associated with Sukkot. (*Rabbi Cheryl Peretz, is the Associate Dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies*)

חג שמח