



Around the Shabbat Table

Sukkot 5763

October 2002

*This week's writer: Rabbi Arnold D. Samlan,
Director of Nassau / Queens Services, Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York*

Shalom!

Introduction

This week we celebrate the holiday of Sukkot, which commemorates both the harvest season as well as the exodus from Egypt. We do so by building booths (Sukkot) in which many people eat or even live during the holiday. The Sukkah is a temporary structure, whose covering is built out of natural materials and is somewhat open to the sky and to the elements.

One interesting point is that the rabbis developed the idea of "*sukkat shalom*," the "booth of peace." According to the rabbis, the booth in which we live was to represent peace.

Another interesting idea was that of Sukkot being a holiday that relates to *all* people. As a matter of fact, when the Bible speaks about a future time when war and bloodshed end, the prophet Zechariah predicts that all people will come to worship God together on this holiday of Sukkot.

Questions for Your Family's Discussion

As your family shares a meal over this holiday, you might want to discuss the following questions:

- I. The idea of Sukkat Shalom, a "booth of peace" is to remind us to pursue peace. During the past year, America has gone to battle, and we have seen very troubling events in Israel, reminding us of how difficult it is to achieve peace. What are your family's beliefs about war and peace? When is it permitted (or even required) to go to war?

2. What are your family's views on the situation in Israel? How can Israel achieve peace? Are there things that we can do to help?
3. Our community often focuses on how we are different than other people or other religions. Yet, it is the holiday of Sukkot that the Bible suggests will one day be celebrated by all people. Why is it that this holiday, more than any other, was thought to be relevant to all people?

Some Texts to Wrestle With

The word Sukkah (Plural: Sukkot) is found in a number of places in Jewish literature. For example:

- ☆ "You shall live in booths seven days...in order that future generations might know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Torah - Leviticus 23:42-43).
- ☆ "All who survive...will make a pilgrimage each year to bow low to the King, God...to observe the holiday of Sukkot" (Book of Zechariah 14:16).



Towards an Action Agenda

Over the holiday of Sukkot, your family might want to get involved in some actions that relate to the values of Sukkot:

The Sukkah is a temporary structure, reminding us that there are those people in our community who do not have a permanent roof over their heads. Families can get involved in helping people in need by volunteering or raising money for homeless shelters. You can learn about homeless shelters in Nassau County through the Interfaith Nutrition Network at <http://the-inn.org/emergency/emergency.htm>

You can learn more about the conflict in Israel, including the historical background through the Jewish Virtual Library at <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/myths/mftoc.html>

Shabbat Shalom!

Please join together in learning with other families by sharing your family's discussions and ideas by posting them on our web site. Simply respond with your thoughts and ideas to RavADS@bjeny.org

If there is any way we can be of service, please contact Rabbi Arnold D. Samlan at the BJE Nassau Queens Center, 516-876-6535, or see our web site: www.bjeny.org

Around the Shabbat Table is a project of the Nassau / Queens Center of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. This project has been funded through a generous grant by the Long Island Program Services Committee of UJA-Federation of New York.