

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

September 27- October 3, 2020
9-15 Tishrei, 5781

First Day of Sukkot: First
Torah: Leviticus 22:26 - 23:44

Second Torah:
Numbers 29:12-16

Haftarah: Zachariah 14:1-21
Second Day of Sukkot:
Leviticus 22:26 - 23:44

SUKKOT

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

Hyman & Martha Rogal Center
5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
412-421-0111
Fax: 412-521-5948
www.alephne.org
info@alephne.org

What Happened on Sukkot?

More than anything else, we seek happiness in life. "Eternal youth" is nice, but what is it worth if it isn't accompanied by happiness...? Yet, no matter how much we accomplish in life – materially or spiritually – for many of us happiness seems to be an elusive quality. There always seems to be *one* more thing we need to accomplish before we can be truly happy. In truth, however, trying to achieve happiness via personal accomplishments or successes is akin to trying to gain wealth through frequenting casinos—you're always "oh so close" to winning the jackpot! Let us examine the nature of the holiday of Sukkot, and thus solve the mystery of happiness. On its surface, the holiday of Sukkot is quite bizarre. Every other holiday on the Jewish calendar commemorates an event which occurred on that particular date; but nothing happened on the 15th of Tishrei which would explain the establishment of a holiday on this date. Every other holiday celebrates a major event which saved the Jewish people from grave danger (such

as Passover, Chanukah, or Purim), or changed the course of Jewish history (such as the forgiveness G-d granted the Israelites on Yom Kippur or the giving of the Torah on Shavuot), but Sukkot celebrates a relatively "minor" miracle—the Clouds of Glory which miraculously surrounded the Jews for the forty years they spent in the desert. During this same period, the Jews were also the beneficiaries of another two miracles, the Manna and the waters which were produced by the rock—the "Well of Miriam." Yet these two

miracles, which seem to be of vastly greater import than the Heavenly Clouds – the Jews could not survive without food and water, but they certainly had the means to erect tents to protect themselves from the elements – did not spawn any holidays.

And Sukkot isn't "just another holiday"; it is the most joyous of the three Biblically mandated festivals. In the holiday prayers, each festival is given a short description: Passover is the "Season of our Liberation," Shavuot is the "Season of the Giving of our Torah," but Sukkot is simply described as the "Season of our Rejoicing"!

Indeed, the Talmud states that "one who has not witnessed the Festival of the Water Drawing (held on the nights of Sukkot in the Holy Temple) has not seen joy in his lifetime!" Today, too, it is customary to assemble on the nights of Sukkot; to sing, dance, say "*l'chaim*," and be merry (be sure to find the celebration in your area). But why? What is the reason for the tremendous joy on this holiday?

Incredibly, the secret of Sukkot seems to be its lack of any great miracle. All miracles (or personal achievements) are limited in some way, causing the resulting joy to also be limited. The joy is limited by the scope of the benefit which the miracle or achievement produced; and when the effects of the miracle or accomplishment wear off, the joy becomes *passé*. Furthermore, there is a Mishnaic dictum: "He who has one hundred desires two hundred, and he who possesses two hundred craves four hundred." It is impossible for one to be ecstatic about a certain achievement when there is always so much more that

can be accomplished. For example: On Passover we celebrate our liberty. Yes we were liberated, but so many of us are still horribly enslaved—to our jobs, to peer pressure, and (most importantly) to our impulses and whims. Shavuot is about Torah, but have we taken full advantage of this magnificent gift which G-d gave us? True happiness comes from that which each and every Jew intrinsically has; a personal relationship with G-d. This relationship derives from the Divine Soul which every Jew possesses and which was hopefully uncovered during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The awareness that no matter what a Jew's personal spiritual state may be, this relationship is always there – after all, a son or daughter continues to be a son and daughter even if they do not exactly follow the parents' wishes – triggers incredible joy. *No matter what, you are connected to G-d, and He really cares about you!* So on Sukkot we leave the security and comfort of our homes, recognizing that true happiness does not come from our beautifully decorated homes, our designer furniture, or any of our other belongings or achievements. We venture out into the Sukkah, which the Zohar dubs "The Shade of Faith," and focus on our most important asset—our G-dly soul and our special relationship with G-d. *By Rabbi Naftali Silberberg*

The Broken Etrog It had been a difficult year. Poor weather, dangerous travel conditions and high tariffs had made it almost impossible for the Jews of Ukraine to import *etrogim* (citrons) for the holiday of Sukkot. The *etrogim*—waved together with the *lulav* bundle every

Sukkot after the recitation of special blessings—were normally brought from faraway Italy or even the Holy Land, but that year there were almost none to be found. In the city of Berditchev, home to tens of thousands of Jews, there was but one *etrog*. Of course, it was given to the town's rabbi, the famed Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, for safekeeping. Everyone knew the plan. On the first day of the holiday the rabbi would rise early in the morning, immerse himself in the purifying waters of the *mikvah*, and then make the blessing while holding the *etrog* and *lulav*. Then the *etrog* would be passed from hand to hand, allowing every Jewish person to fulfill the biblical obligation to take the "Four Kinds."

Now, the rabbi had an assistant, a simple fellow who was tasked with overseeing the proceedings. "I know what will happen," said the assistant to himself. "First, the rabbi will make the blessing and wave the *lulav* and the *etrog*. Then the learned men will come for their turn to do the mitzvah. They will be followed by the respectable householders. Next will be the simple folk, who will all get their glorious moment. Then, when the sun is about to set and the day is about to fade away, I'll be the very last one to finally say the blessing over the *lulav* and *etrog*. Why must I always be the very last?"

"I know what I'll do," he thought. "Early in the morning, on the first day of Sukkot, when the rabbi is out immersing in the *mikvah*, I'll take the *lulav* and *etrog* and recite the blessing over them. No one will know but me."

And so, just after the sun rose, he sneaked into the rabbi's study, took the *lulav* and *etrog* in his trembling hands, and was about to chant the required blessings. But then—disaster struck. Maybe it was because his palms were sweaty. Maybe it was because he was shaking nervously. But for whatever reason, the *etrog* slipped from his grasp onto the hard wooden floor below. To the attendant's horror, the *etrog's* *pitom* (wood-like protrusion) cracked right off its crown, rendering the fruit invalid.

Oh, he would have given all he had to be swallowed up by the earth. How would he face the crestfallen rabbi? How would he face the disappointed city? How would he face himself? Every minute seemed like eternity as the attendant waited for his master to return. When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak entered his home, ready to do the mitzvah, the attendant had no choice. Gazing downward, in a trembling whisper, he told the rabbi what he had done.

"Master of the World," cried the rabbi in a booming voice filled with love and wonder, "look how precious Your children are! Even this simple, unlearned son of yours is so eager to fulfill Your commandment that he risked his job to fulfill Your will at the earliest opportunity!" *By Rabbi Menachem Posner*

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, September 27, 2020 --- 9 Tishrei, 5781

Burial of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (1791)

The great Talmudic sage Rabbi Elazar, son of the famed Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, was buried near his father in Meron. (*Bava Metzia* 84b)

Monday, September 28, 2020 --- 10 Tishrei, 5781

Rebecca Born (1677 BCE)

Birth of Rebecca (1677-1556 BCE), wife of Isaac, mother of Jacob and Esau, and one of the Four Matriarchs of Israel.

2nd Tablets (1313 BCE)

On the 10th of Tishrei of the year 2449 from creation, 82 days after the people of Israel betrayed their newly entered covenant with G-d by worshipping a Golden Calf and after Moses twice spent 40 days atop Mount Sinai pleading on their behalf, "G-d restored His goodwill with the Jewish people gladly and wholeheartedly, saying to Moses 'I have forgiven, as you ask', and gave him the Second Tablets" -- thereby establishing the day as a time for atonement, forgiveness and teshuvah for all generations.

Ezekiel's Vision of the Third Temple (410 BCE)

The prophet Ezekiel saw a vision in which he was transported to the Temple Mount, where an angel holding a measuring rod gave him a detailed tour of the Third Temple. (Ezekiel 40:1)

Tuesday, September 29, 2020 --- 11 Tishrei, 5781

Jethro Advises Moses (1313 BCE)

The day after Moses' descent from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur, his father-in-law Jethro encountered him attempting to singlehandedly judge the Jewish nation. This prompted him to offer advice:

You will surely wear yourself out...for the matter is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me [and] I will advise you...You shall select from the entire nation men of valor...and you shall appoint over [Israel] leaders over thousands, leaders over hundreds, leaders over fifties, and leaders over tens. They shall judge the nation at all times, and it shall be that any major matter they shall bring to you, and every minor matter they shall judge themselves. This will make it easier for you, and they shall bear [the burden] with you (Exodus 18:18-22. Rashi to ibid. 18:13).

Wednesday, September 30, 2020 --- 12 Tishrei, 5781

Passing of R. Abraham "The Angel" (1776)

The 12th of Tishrei is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Abraham (1740-1776) the son of Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch and study partner of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi; known as "Rabbi Abraham the Angel" for his saintliness and asceticism.

Thursday, October 1, 2020 --- 13 Tishrei, 5781

Passing of Rebbe Maharash (1882)

Tishrei 13 is the yahrtzeit of the fourth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, known as "Maharash" (a Hebrew acronym for "our master Rabbi Shmuel").

Rabbi Shmuel was born in the town of Lubavitch on the 2nd of Iyar of the year 5594 from creation (1834). His father was the third Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789-1866). Though the youngest of Rabbi Menachem Mendel's seven sons, Rabbi Shmuel was chosen to succeed his father as the leader of Chabad Chassidism in the movement's capitol, Lubavitch, at the latter's passing in 1866 (four of his brothers established branches of Chabad in other towns in White Russia and Ukraine).

In addition to authoring and delivering more than 1,000 *maamarim* (discourses) of Chassidic teaching, Rabbi Shmuel was extensively involved in Jewish communal affairs and traveled throughout Europe in order to generate pressure on the Czarist regime to halt its instigation of pogroms against the Jews of Russia. Rabbi Shmuel passed away at the age of 48 on Tishrei 13, 5643 (1882).

Friday, October 2, 2020 --- 14 Tishrei, 5781

Passing of R. Israel Hopstein, the Maggid of Kosnitz (1814)

R. Israel of Kosnitz was a disciple of a number of great chassidic Rebbes, including R. DovBer of Mezeritch. A famed miracle worker, he authored the work *Avodat Yisrael* and was one of the disseminators of Chassidism in Poland.