

UNITY IN THREE DIMENSIONS

"In Sukkot you shall dwell for seven days; all citizens of Israel shall dwell in Sukkot" - Leviticus 23:42

"It is fitting that all of Israel should dwell in a single Sukkah" - Talmud, Sukkah 27b

When is something yours? When you control it? When you have legal and moral right to its use? When it is yours alone, to the exclusion of everyone else? Ownership may mean many things, depending on the individual and social circumstances that define it.

A legal difference between the two major observances of the festival of Sukkot - dwelling in the sukkah and acquiring the "Four Kinds" - is one example of the different possible definitions of ownership. Regarding both these Mitzvot, the Torah stipulates that the object of the Mitzvah must be "yours"; but the definition of "yours" varies from Mitzvah to Mitzvah.

In the case of the Four Kinds, the Torah states:

"You shall take for yourselves on the first day [of the festival] the splendid fruit of a tree (Etrog), fronds of dates (Lulav), the branch of the thickly leafed tree (Hadas), and aravot of the brook..."

Our sages explain that the words "You shall take for yourselves..." come to teach us that these must be the absolute property of their user: one who uses a stolen etrog (or Lulav, Hadas or Aravah), or a borrowed Etrog, or even an Etrog which he owns in partnership with another person, has not fulfilled the Mitzvah of taking the Four Kinds on the first day of Sukkot.

Regarding the Mitzvah of Sukkah, the Torah likewise stipulates, "You shall make, for yourself, a festival of Sukkot." But here, the words "for yourself" are more broadly defined. In this case, says the Talmud, the verse comes only to exclude a stolen Sukkah; a borrowed or partially owned Sukkah is considered to be sufficiently "yours" to satisfy the Mitzvah's requirements.

To support its broader interpretation of ownership as applied to the Sukkah, the Talmud cites another of the Torah's statements regarding the Mitzvah of dwelling in the Sukkah. In Leviticus 23:42 we read: "In Sukkot you shall dwell for seven days; all citizens of Israel shall dwell in Sukkot." In this verse, the word Sukkot, which is the plural of Sukkah, is spelled without the letter

vav. This means that the word can also be read as Sukkat, "the Sukkah [of]," and the verse can then be understood as saying that "all citizens of Israel shall dwell in the Sukkah." Explains the Talmud: the Torah wishes to imply that the entire nation of Israel may, and ought to, dwell in a single Sukkah! Aside from stressing the brotherhood and equality of all Jews, this also has the legal implication that a Sukkah need not be exclusively "yours" in order for you to fulfill the Mitzvah of dwelling in it. If all Israel may dwell in a single Sukkah, then the requirement to make it "for yourself" cannot to be understood in the narrow sense of exclusive ownership, but in the sense of the right to a thing's use.

Why does the "yours" of the Sukkah-dweller differ from the "yours" of one engaged in the mitzvah of taking the Four Kinds? Obviously, there is an intrinsic difference between these two Sukkot observances - a difference that extends to the very identity and self-definition of their observer.

The Joy of Giving

Sukkot is the festival that celebrates Jewish unity. Unity is the underlying theme of the festival's three precepts: joy, the taking of the Four Kinds, and dwelling in the Sukkah.

All of the festivals are referred to as "occasions for joy" (Mo'adim Lesimchah), but the Torah stresses the centrality of joy to the festival of Sukkot more than with any other festival. Thus, only the festival of Sukkot is defined, in our prayers of the day, as Zeman Simchateinu, "The Time of Our Joy." (Passover is subtitled "The Time of Our Freedom," and Shavuot, "The Time of the Giving of Our Torah.") Indeed, there is a unique joy associated with Sukkot - a joy that reaches its height in the nightly "water-drawing" celebration held during the festival.

And joy, for the Jew, is an exercise in empathy and communal concern. "You shall rejoice on your festival," enjoins the Torah, "you, your son, your daughter, your servant, your maid, the Levite, the stranger, the orphan and the widow..." In the words of Maimonides: "When one eats and drinks, one must also feed the stranger, the orphan, the widow and the other unfortunate paupers. One who locks the doors of his courtyard and feasts and drinks with his children and wife, but does not feed the poor and the embittered - this is not the joy of the Mitzvah, but the joy of his stomach."

Selfish festivity is divisive, accentuating the differences between

the haves and the have-nots, between the full and empty stomachs of society. But the joy of a Mitzvah, joy as defined by Torah, unites. Master and servant, family man and loner, wealthy man and pauper, are all united by the giving and compassionate joy of the Jewish festival.

Nevertheless, even the most generous joy cannot be said to achieve a "unity" in the ultimate sense of the word; at most, it introduces a connection between disparate individuals. The pauper remains separated from the rich man by a gulf of status and economic station, as does the servant from the master and the stranger from the homesteader. Joyous hearts and giving hands extend across these gulfs, but the division and distance remain.

So to inspire a deeper and truer unity, the Jew acquires the Four Kinds on Sukkot.

Taste of Knowledge and Scent of Deed

The Midrash explains that the Four Kinds represent four spiritual classes within the community. The Etrog, which has both a delicious taste and a delightful aroma, represents the perfect individual - one who is both knowledgeable in Torah and replete with good deeds. The Lulav, whose fruit (dates) have taste but no smell, personifies the learned but deed-deficient individual - the scholar who devotes his life to the pursuit of the divine wisdom, but shuns the active sphere of Jewish life. The Hadas's delightful scent and lack of taste describe the active but ignorant individual. Finally, the tasteless, scentless Aravah represents the Jew who lacks all outward expression of his Jewishness.

On Sukkot, the Lulav, Hadas, Aravah and Etrog are bound and joined together, reiterating the underlying oneness of a topically diverse people. Whatever may divide the scholarly from the ignorant and the more observant from the less so, Sukkot is a time when all are held together in the single hand of Jewish identity.

So while the joy of Sukkot introduces a unifying give-and-take relationship between various segments of the community of Israel, the Four Kinds take this unity a step further, integrating us into a single entity. By taking the Four Kinds in hand, we reiterate that, despite our disparities, we are all one.

The Enveloping Home

Despite our disparities, we are all one. For the disparities remain, as

SUKKOT

13 - 19 Tishrei 5786
5 - 11 October 2025

1ST DAY OF SUKKOT

Torah: Leviticus 22:26-23:44
Mafkir: Numbers 29:12-16
Hafkorah: Zachariah 14:1-21

2ND DAY OF SUKKOT

Torah: Leviticus 22:26-23:44
Mafkir: Numbers 29:12-16
Hafkorah: Kings I 8:2-21

3RD DAY OF SUKKOT

Numbers 29:17-25; 17-22

4TH DAY OF SUKKOT

Numbers 29:20-28; 20-25

SHABBAT OF SUKKOT

Torah: Exodus 33:12-34:26
Mafkir: Numbers 29:23-28
Hafkorah: Ezekiel 38:18-39:16

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalm 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

PSALMS DAILY

SEFER HAWITZVOT

Positive Mitzvah 98 Ritual Impurity of Food and Drink

We are commanded regarding food and drink that have contracted ritual impurity.

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

even the unifying Four Kinds express.

The Lulav towers above the lot in scholarship and erudition. The Hadas exudes its scent of good works, while the Aravah is marked by its obvious ignorance and fruitlessness. The Etrog, of course, outshines them all with its sublime perfection. Even as they symbolize the unity of the various segments of Israel, the Four Kinds underscore the differences between them - indeed, they stress these very differences as the complementary components of a one people.

There is, however, yet a higher form of unity that is realized by the festival of Sukkot. This is the unity of the Sukkah - the unity embodied by the structure worthy of accommodating an entire people within its walls.

"The entire nation of Israel may, and ought to, dwell in a single Sukkah." For the Sukkah represents a oneness so deep and all-embracing that all distinctions pale to insignificance before it.

"Sukkah is the only Mitzvah into which a person enters with his muddy boots," goes the chassidic saying, and this expresses the very essence of the sukkah. When a person enters a Sukkah, its walls and roofing encompass him entirely, and equally encompass his entirety. His mind is no more and no less in the sukkah than his toes; his heart is simply another occupant of its space, as are his "muddy boots." So when the entire nation of Israel dwells in a single sukkah, the unity expressed is one that transcends all differences and distinctions between them.

This is not the unity that is created by our love and compassion for each other. Nor is it the deeper unity that stems from the way in which our individual roles, talents and strengths complement and fulfill one another, forming the organs and limbs of a single, integrated body. Rather, the Sukkah brings to light the oneness implicit in our very beings - the simple and absolute oneness of a people rooted in the utterly singular oneness of their Creator and Source.

Self and Selves

This explains the different ways in which our sages interpret the Torah's requirement of "for yourself" regarding the Mitzvot of the Four Kinds and of the Sukkah. The Jew taking the Four Kinds is uniting with his fellows in a

manner which preserves - indeed, employs - his identity as an individual. Hence the Torah's use of the word Lachem, "for yourselves" (in the plural); in addressing the people of Israel as they relate to the Four Kinds, the Torah is speaking to many individuals, each with his or her own unique contribution to the communal whole. In this context, "yours" is something that is unique to your individual self; a borrowed or jointly owned object is not "yours."

Regarding the making of a Sukkah, however, the Torah addresses us in the singular Lecha ("for yourself"). For the Mitzvah of Sukkah touches on the intrinsic unity of Israel, a unity in which we are all seamlessly one. Here "for yourself" is the singular self of Israel; as long as your use of a Sukkah does not violate the integrity of this unity (as does the use of a stolen Sukkah), the Sukkah of your fellow is no less yours than your own.

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson OBM

SUKKOT TORAH READINGS IN A NUTSHELL

First Days

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.

Intermediate Days

On the five intermediate days of Sukkot we read Numbers 29:17-34, a portion which describes the communal offerings brought on each day of the holiday. Thirteen bullocks are brought on the first day, twelve on the second, eleven on the third, and so on in descending order until the seventh day, when seven bullocks are offered, bringing the total of bullocks over the seven days of the festival to seventy. Two rams and fourteen goats were also offered each day.

Additional offerings of the prescribed meal, wine and oil supplements were brought as well: three tenths of an efa of fine flour, and half a hin each of wine and oil, per bullock; two tenths of flour and a third of a hin of each of the liquids for each ram; and one tenth and one quarter respectively for each lamb.

Shabbat

G-d agrees to Moses' request that His presence only dwell amongst the Jews. Moses requests to be shown G-d's glory. G-d agrees, but informs Moses that he will only be shown G-d's "back," not G-d's "face."

G-d tells Moses to carve new tablets upon which G-d will engrave the Ten Commandments. Moses takes the new tablets up to Mt. Sinai, where G-d reveals His glory to Moses while proclaiming His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.

G-d seals a covenant with Moses, assuring him again that His presence will only dwell with the Jews. G-d informs the Jewish people that He will drive the Canaanites from before them. He instructs them to destroy all vestiges of idolatry from the land, not to make molten gods, to refrain from making any covenants with its current inhabitants, to sanctify male firstborn humans and cattle, and not to cook meat together with milk.

The Jews are commanded to observe the three festivals - including the holiday of Sukkot, "the festival of the ingathering, at the turn of the year." All males are commanded to make pilgrimage to "be seen by G-d" during these three festivals.

The Maftir, from the Book of Numbers, discusses the public offerings brought in the Temple on this day of Sukkot.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, 13 Tishrei 5786 - 5 October 2025

Passing of Rebbe Maharash (1882)

Rabbi Shmuel Schneerson, the fourth Rebbe of Chabad, was born in the town of Lubavitch in 5594 (1834). His father was the third Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (5549-5626, or 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 (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 Ma'amarim (discourses) of Chassidic teaching, Rabbi Shmuel was extensively involved in Jewish communal affairs and traveled throughout Europe 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).

Tuesday, 15 Tishrei 5786 - 7 October 2025

Hamas Pogrom (2023)

The Hamas pogrom (massacre) of 5784 (2023), in which nearly 1,200 Israelis were massacred, and hundreds more taken hostage, took place on Simchat Torah, which in 5784 was the 7th of October.

Wednesday, 16 Tishrei 5786 - 8 October 2025

Passing of Rabbi Moshe Zacuto (1697)

Rabbi Moshe, known by the acronym Ramaz, was an Italian rabbi and Kabbalist, well-known for his erudition and piety. A scion of Portuguese hidden Jews, he authored numerous works, many of them on Kabbalah, as well as several liturgical hymns. He passed away on 16 Tishrei 5458 (1697).

Friday, 18 Tishrei 5786 - 10 October 2025

Passing of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1810)

Passing of the famed Chassidic rebbe, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Ukraine (1772-1810). A great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, he championed a unique path of divine service that entails simplicity, joy, and solitude. He left no successor, but his teachings remain influential more than 200 years after his passing.

Shabbat, 18 Tishrei 5786 - 10 October 2025

Passing of Vilna Gaon (1797)

Passing of the famed Talmudist and Kabbalist, Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna (now Vilnius), Lithuania (5480-5558, or 1720-1797), known as the "Vilna Gaon." Rabbi Eliyahu was the leading figure in the opposition to the Chassidic movement in its early years.