



Dear CBAJ Family,

Following a very different *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, we are most certainly in for a different kind of Sukkot. A holiday whose usual highlights are close dancing and *Ushpizin* (guests) will, sadly, include neither. What can we do *this* Sukkot?

We are generally familiar with two genres of traditional Jewish texts: Jewish law and Jewish thought. If you have studied any text or attended any *shiur*, you will note that they fall into one of those two categories: their goal is either to explain “what we ought to do” (Jewish law), or “how we can think about something in Judaism” (Jewish thought).

The *Tur*, among the earliest of codes of Jewish law, usually focuses on legal matters: what are the details of the *Mitzvot* and should we fulfill them? In the *Laws of Sukkah*, however, the *Tur* breaks from his genre. Rather than usual law, the *Tur* waxes philosophical:

You shall dwell in sukkot for seven days...in order that you should know throughout the generations that I caused the Jewish people to dwell in sukkot when I led them out ... [from Egypt]’ (Vayikra 23:42). The Torah makes the *mitzvah* of sukkah dependent upon the Exodus from Egypt...since this is a matter that we saw with our eyes and heard with our ears and no one is able to deny it. It teaches us about the truth of the existence of the Creator, may He be exalted, and that He created everything according to His will. It also teaches us that He has the power to do as He so desires...

We would expect in the *Tur* the necessary dimensions and materials for a Sukkah. It is atypical for him to include such a long description of the philosophy behind a *Mitzvah*.

Rabbi Yoel Sirkis in his commentary to the *Tur* (the *Bayit Chadash*) notes this divergence from the *Tur*’s typical style. He concludes that when it comes to Sukkot, knowing the philosophy is an integral part of doing the *Mitzvah*—the philosophy is also the law. We must not think we are merely sitting in huts. For our dwelling in the Sukkah to “count,” we must know the reason why we are dwelling in the Sukkah. We must *know* that it is a reminder of the Exodus, God’s kindness to us after He took us out of Egypt, His protective clouds of glory that followed us through the wilderness, and through those acts a sign that He created the world.

This Sukkot, I suggest we highlight the knowledge. Included in this bag is a copy of *HaMizrachi*, a publication containing Torah related to the holiday. Following Sukkot, we will begin our full slate of Virtual Classes for 5781, including weekly classes, special series, and guest lectures, all meant to strengthen our knowledge of Judaism, both legal and philosophical. You will receive e-mail announcements of these initiatives. Especially in the last several months, we have learned that our connection to Judaism cannot only be the synagogue and communal events; we must also *know*. I invite you to join me in at least one of our educational initiatives this season – you can do it from your own living room; together, we will bring the Sukkot message of the importance of knowledge into the rest of the year.

Once again, I’d like to thank our Programming Committee and especially Amanda and Josh Gurock and their children, Chana Israel, and Dina and Malky Reznik for putting together these wonderful bags (please note that the *Angry Orchard Hard Cider* contained in the bag, although unmarked, is under the Kosher supervision of the *Star-K*).

The leadership of CBAJ joins me in wishing you and your families a *Chag Sameach*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy J. Feldman'.

Roy Feldman