

May You Have A Blessed *Sukkot*!

Let's not forget about the Garden of Eden! It has not disappeared—it is still very much alive in Jewish belief as an aspiration of our existence. At a wedding, it is invoked as a Messianic ideal that the union of the couple could shepherd us to. At Sukkot, as we sit in our own sukkah gazing outward, we can catch a glimpse of its potential as we admire the sense of beauty and Divine Providence that surrounds us.

The Chasidic master, the Sefat Emet, believed that Sukkot is designed to rekindle that spark within us. Remember that Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden after they sinned—they ate fruit from the forbidden tree. In God's eyes, we did something that Adam and Eve didn't do—repent! That's right, 4 days before Sukkot, we gathered in synagogue and atoned for our transgressions. The Chasidic sage wrote: "God above is surely happy because Israel has purified themselves before God on Yom Kippur. We now partake of the LORD's joy as it says in Torah: Before the LORD you have been purified—thus God's joy in what we have done is found in the *mitzvah* of the Sukkah." For the Sefat Emet that joy is just a taste of the Garden of Eden, something that would become more intense in a Messianic redeemed world.

As liberal Jews, such thinking is a bit out there for us. So, view it this way—after the intensity of Yom Kippur, we receive a special weeklong treat—sukkot. And let's face it, Sukkot is the perfect holiday in upstate New York—foliage is full of various colors, it is warm enough to bask in the sun as Fall sets in, and the abundance of harvest from apples to pumpkins is delightful.

So treat yourself to something special... pull up a chair and sit in a sukkah! Sure it is a *mitzvah*... but it is a special treat for both your body and soul!

L'chaim!!