

ק"ק שַׁעֲרֵי צִיּוֹן
CONGREGATION
SHAARE ZION



2030 OCEAN PARKWAY • BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11223-4000 • (718) 376-0009 • Fax (718) 339-4072

Dr. Victor H. Sasson, President

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Sukkot and Simhat Torah

The joy surrounding the Torah on Simhat Torah is awesome. The passuk states “You Shall draw water in joy”. In our day, the water of this verse refers to Torah. As R. Shemuel Pinhasi says, the indispensability of Torah for day to day life is not always evident. But if we take the time to contemplate, we will realize that “water” is an essential component of all things. We may now find ourselves in a building made of concrete. The concrete is a mixture of materials, the main ingredient of which is water. Without water, you could not pour concrete. We may be sitting before a table made of wood. Without water, the tree from which the table was made could not have grown. Even metals must be liquefied before they can be shaped to meet our needs. Water comprises a significant percentage of even the human body.

Realizing this requires more than a superficial view of things. On the surface, we see no water in the building or the table. A primitive person may even have trouble seeing any connection.

So it is with the Torah, which is compared to water. Without a doubt, many people who are distant from Torah do not see it as an essential part of Jewish life or the factor which is at the basis of Jewish survival. But we must be the ones to draw Torah from the springs of salvation, and quench our thirst from that water which brings life to both body and soul. In this way, we will be worthy of true life both in this world and in the next.

Tizku Leshanim Rabot Neimot Vetovot!

Rabbi Yaacov Ben Haim

Laws of Sukkot

- After Yom Kippur, Tahanun is not said until the end of the month of Tishri.
- Sukkot begins **Sunday night, October 13th**.
- All males are required to eat at least a Kazayit of bread in the Sukkah on the first two nights of the Holiday.
- Women are exempt from eating in the Sukkah; however they do fulfill a mitzvah and get a zechut if they sit in the Sukkah.
- Sheheheyanu is recited in the Kiddush on both nights of Sukkot. However, on the first night, we make Lesheb Basukkah first followed by Sheheheyanu, for the Sheheheyanu is also going on the Sukkah. On the second night, Sheheheyanu is said before Lesheb Basukkah.
- If it rains on the first night, one is *Patur* (exempt) from eating in the Sukkah. However, many have the custom to be stringent and wait a while for the rain to stop in order to be able to make Kiddush and eat the Kazayit in the Sukkah.
- During the rest of the Holiday including Hol Hamoed, one may eat *Achilat Arai*, a “snack” out of the Sukkah. A “snack” can include up to 2 oz. of bread (approx. one Pita) out of the Sukkah. Mezonot may also be eaten out of the Sukkah only up to 2 oz. However, one who is particular to eat even his snacks in the Sukkah is praiseworthy.
- Fruit, vegetables, rice, meat, chicken and wine may be eaten out of the Sukkah, but only when not part of a meal with bread. During a meal of bread or mezonot, all the foods are considered part of the meal and must be eaten in the Sukkah.
- When eating in the Sukkah recite the blessing Lesheb Basukkah if the meal contains 2 oz. of bread or 8 oz of mezonot (except rice). We make Hamosi first and then Lesheb Basukkah. Some have the custom to say Lesheb BaSukkah first and then Hamosi.

- We invite the *ushpreezen*- the seven guests who visit us in the Sukkah, Abraham, Yis’hak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and David. One should be careful to speak Dibrei Torah and proper conversation in honor of these special guests.
- One should make sure that a proper Erub is in place before Sukkot in order to allow carrying back and forth to the Sukkah on Shabbat.
- All decorations in the Sukkah are Mukseh and should not be handled if they fall down on the Yom Tob.

Lulab

- All men are required to shake the Lulab and Etrog on the days of Sukkot.
- One should try to purchase a *Mehudar* (beautiful) Etrog. This is in fulfillment of the Pasuk *Zeh Keli Veanvehu* - this is my G-d and I will glorify Him. Our Rabbis explain “*Etnaeh lifanav Bemisvot*-I will beautify myself in front of Him with (beautiful) Misvot”
- We say the Beracha on the Lulab before Hallel and make the *Nanu'im* during the Hallel.
- After Hallel, we make the Hoshanot, circling the Tebah with the Lulab.
- We recite the whole Hallel all the days of Sukkot with a Beracha.

Hol Hamoed

- We say the full Hallel during all of Hol Hamoed. The Lulab is shaken with a Beracha every day except for Shabbat.
- Hol Hamoed is a minor holiday. One should celebrate with festive meals.
- One is permitted to do *Dabar Ha'abed*- work that if not performed on Hol Hamoed would result in a loss.

Hoshana Raba

- Saturday night (Oct 19th) and Sunday (Oct 20th) is **Hoshana Raba**. Our Rabbis teach that the judgment, which was sealed on Yom Kippur at Neilah, is sealed a second time and handed over to the Angels who execute the sentence on Hoshana Raba. Therefore, the custom is to have a special reading on this day and we add extra prayers. In addition, our Rabbis teach that on Sukkot we are judged on the water we will receive during the year. Since Hoshana Raba is the last day of Sukkot, we add additional prayers for bountiful rainfall.
- We read the entire Sefer Debarim during the night.
- Many have the custom of staying awake all night learning Torah and reading Tehillim in order to ensure a good year.
- The Hoshanot are much longer as we circle the Tebah seven times instead of one, similar to the service in the Bet Hamikdash.
- After Musaf, we perform the minhag of Habatat Arabah banging the five branches of Arabah on the ground five times.

Shemini Aseret

- *Shemini Aseret* is its own Holiday. It has its own Mizmor and we say in the prayers and in Kiddush *Shemini Hag Aseret Hazeh*. We also say *Sheheheyanu* in the Kiddush on *Shemini Aseret* and on *Simhat Torah*.
- We eat in the Sukkah on *Shemini Aseret* but we do not make *Lesheb Ba'sukkah*
- We recite the whole *Hallel* on *Shemini Aseret* and on *Simhat Torah*.

Simhat Torah

We read the final Parasha of the Torah *Vezot Haberacha* on Simhat Torah. We celebrate this with singing and dancing. One should make an effort to be happy and sing and dance to honor the Torah. In the holy Sefer *Hemdut Yamim*, it says that one should learn from David Hamelech who was dancing with all his might in honor of the Torah. We make seven Hakafot with the Torah in happiness.