

Sukkot Perspectives

Sukkot Celebrations and Communal Concerns

In his laws of festivals, the Rambam codifies a *halakha* that is stated in the Talmud, that every Jew has a responsibility to rejoice on Yom Tov and enjoy special items in honor of the day. Meat, wine, fine clothes, candy... Yom Tov should be a time for celebration.

However, the Rambam goes on to make a point which isn't found anywhere else, not in the Talmud, and not in any earlier medieval writing. He explains that if someone rejoices on Yom Tov, but does not provide for the destitute and dejected, then God figuratively shoves it back in their face and is disgusted by their indulgence. If one does not hear the cry of those in need, then one's Godly service is, in fact, sinful and despised.

When I learn this Rambam, I don't only think of those who are hungry and homeless. Of course we need to provide food and shelter for those who lack those basic necessities. For me, the message of the Rambam goes one step further: when we celebrate on Yom Tov, we must concern ourselves with the pain of all those who are suffering within our own community. We must hear their cries and feel their pain. If not, then our learning, our celebrations, our service of God, is fundamentally flawed.

The Rambam's insistence on addressing the needs of the dejected is a novel concept. Where did he get it from?

The mitzvah to rejoice on festivals is learned from the verse *Ve-samachta be-chagekha*. The concept of *Ve-samachta be-chagekha* is stated in the Torah specifically about Sukkot. In the Talmud, however, it is expanded to all of the Yamim Tovim.

On Sukkot, we leave the safety and security of our homes in order to enter into the public domain. We become subjected to the elements and learn to recognize our own vulnerabilities. As we sit in sukkot, we lack the basic amenities of our homes: plumbing, heating, air-conditioning, or even a watertight roof. We're vulnerable and insecure. It is through this experience that we learn to hear the cries of those in pain, and recognize the needs of those who are vulnerable and scared not just on Sukkot, but every day of the year. We've walked out of our dead-bolted doors, and entered into the public domain. It is through this experience that we realize the critical importance of having a community of friends and supporters to turn to when we need them most.

Building communities of concern and compassion is the message of Sukkot which the Rambam applies as a fundamental value in celebrating Yom Tov. We cannot celebrate if we turn a deaf ear to those who are crying for help.

Jeremy Stern is a gabbai at Mount Sinai and the director of case management at ORA: The Organization for the Resolution of Agunot.

To submit a Dvar Torah to the weekly Keshet, please contact bulletin@mtsinaishul.com.

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The Mount Sinai Keshet

October 2-4, 2009 • 15-16 Tishrei, 5770 • Sukkot

Sukkot Yom Tov Schedule

Shabbat - First Day of Sukkot

Candle Lighting	6:18 p.m.
Mincha	6:23 p.m.
Shacharit	7:00, 9:00 a.m.
Kri'at Shema before	9:49 a.m.
Mincha	5:55 p.m.
<i>Divrei Torah following Mincha</i>	
Maariv/Candles after	7:21 p.m.

Sunday - Second Day of Sukkot

Shacharit	7:00, 9:00 a.m.
Mincha	6:15 p.m.
<i>Divrei Torah following Mincha</i>	
Maariv/Yom Tov ends	7:19 a.m.

Sponsorships

Eruv, Keshet, and Seudah Shlishit sponsorships are available every week. Please contact the office for details.

Tefillah Notes

- Mincha on Wednesday of Chol HaMoed will be upstairs.
- Shacharit on both Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah will be at 8:30 a.m., **not** 9 a.m.

Chol HaMoed Schedule

<i>Shacharit</i>	
Monday-Thursday	6:30, 7:10, 8:00 a.m.
Friday (Hoshana Raba)	6:00, 6:30, 8:00 a.m.
<i>Mincha/Maariv</i>	
Monday -Thursday	6:15 p.m.
<i>Next Shabbat, Shemini Atzeret</i>	
Candles	6:06 p.m.
Mincha	6:11 p.m.

Please send all announcements to office@mtsinaishul.com and bulletin@mtsinaishul.com by 5 p.m. on Wednesday. Thank you!

“ושמחת בחגך...
והיית אך שמח!”

*Wishing the entire
Mt. Sinai community
a very happy Sukkot.*



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