



תשפ"ד Sukkos Shofar

September 29-October 8, 2023

Service Schedule

Erev Sukkos/Erev Shabbos, September 29	Candle lighting: 7:10 pm Mincha: 7:15 pm
Sukkos 1st Day/Shabbos, September 30	Shacharis: 9:00 am Mincha: 7:10 pm Candle lighting <i>from a pre-existing flame</i> : after 8:29 pm
Sukkos 2nd Day, Sunday, October 1	Shacharis: 9:00 am Mincha: 7:10 pm Yom Tov ends after 8:27 pm
Hoshana Raba/Erev Shabbos, October 6	Candle lighting: 6:59 pm Mincha: 7:00 pm
Shemini Atzeres/Shabbos, October 7 Yizkor	Shacharis: 9:00 am Mincha: 7:00 pm, <i>followed by Maariv & Hakofos</i> Candle Lighting <i>from a pre-existing flame</i> : after 8:18 pm
Simchas Torah, Sunday, October 8	Shacharis: 8:45 am Mincha: 7:00pm, <i>followed by Neilas Hachag</i> Yom Tov ends after 8:16 pm



Sukkos

The Ten Days of Awe & Repentance are followed by the "Season of Our Rejoicing." This is one of the names given to the holiday of Sukkos, for the Torah commandment to "rejoice" is mentioned more often in connection with the holiday of Sukkos than for any other Yom Tov.

Sukkos begins on the fifteenth day of Tishrei, at the time of the ingathering of the crops in Israel - a further cause for rejoicing as one looks with a sense of pride & accomplishment upon the fruits of one's labor of the previous months.

The seven-day holiday of Sukkos is one of the Sholosh Regolim, the three festivals when all Jewish males over the age of thirteen were commanded to come and celebrate the Yom Tov in the proximity of the Holy Temple. (The other two Regolim are Pesach & Shavuot).

The Temple celebration during Sukkos was highlighted by the ceremony of water drawing. The ceremony was unique in that all year the libations on the Altar were performed with wine, but on Sukkos, water was also used. Our sages have stated that "whoever has not seen the joy at the place of water drawing has never seen true joy in his life!" (Sukkah 51). The joy expressed in this ceremony was the joy of a simple & pure acceptance of G-d's will as symbolized by clear water, in contrast to the acceptance that is based on understanding, symbolized by wine.

The dominant mitzvah, of course, is the Sukkah. The Sukkah is built before the holiday begins. Almost anything can be used for the walls, but the roof covering must be kosher S'chach, which is plant life material meeting certain specifications. Evergreen branches, corn stalks, or bamboo are popularly used. During the entire festival, we live in these temporary dwellings as much as possible. It is the practice to recite the blessing for the Sukkah whenever eating a meal there.

The Sukkah is symbolic of the clouds of glory which protected the Jews during their forty years in the wilderness. These clouds of glory, serving as shade & shield, were an ever-present reminder of G-d's kindness and love for His children. As we sit in the Sukkah, we too are aware of the need to be grateful for G-d's protection.

A most beautiful & meaningful mitzvah of Sukkos is the "taking of the Four Species." The four plants enumerated in the Torah are the Esrog (citron), Lulav (palm branch), Haddassim (myrtles) and Aravos (willows). Much energy & money is expended in acquiring the most beautiful ones possible. This mitzvah should be done early in the day, but it is permissible until sunset. The Lulav, Hadassim & Aravos are taken in the right hand & the Esrog in the left, held next to the other three species. A left-handed person would reverse the procedure & hold the Lulav in the left hand & the Esrog in the right. All are swayed together, in accordance with various customs. The "Four Species" are also used during Hallel & Hoshanos every day of Sukkos with the exception of Shabbos.

While women are not obligated in this mitzvah, they have generally taken it upon themselves to perform it throughout Sukkos.

This mitzvah has extraordinary relevance to our lives today. In our oral tradition, it is explained that each of these four kinds corresponds to a different type of person, from the Esrog which has both refreshing taste (Torah learning) and delightful fragrance (good deeds), to the aravah, which has neither of these qualities. Despite their differences, the Torah instructs us to take these four & bind them together, for they complement one another, and only when there is true harmony among the Jewish people can we hope for an ideal existence.

Hoshana Rabbah

Hoshana Rabbah is the name of the seventh day of Sukkos. It is the final day of Chol Hamoed Sukkos (the Intermediate Days) & is the last day on which we can make the blessing on the lulav. Special prayers, called Hoshanas are said towards the end of the morning services. These prayers are accompanied by the beautiful ceremony in which everyone circles the Shulchan seven times, Lulov and Esrog in hand. Hoshana Rabbah is the final day on which G-d might change our inscription for a good year. Although the gates of heaven have officially been closed at the conclusion of the Yom Kippur service, it is still possible for G-d to open them one last time on Hoshana Rabbah, as we ask him to do so in our prayers on this day.

Shemini Atzeres

Shemini Atzeres corresponds to the eighth day of the holiday of Sukkos, but it is a separate & complete Yom Tov in its own right. The Midrash likens Shemini Atzeres to the special feast of a king for his beloved son. For a full week, the king celebrated with all his kingdom. After the festivities, the king said to his son, "it is difficult for me to part with you. Please stay another day to celebrate." For seven days of Sukkos we brought seventy sacrifices to the holy Temple on behalf of all the nations. ("If the nations of the world would have known the value of the Temple for them, they would have surrounded it with fortresses in order to protect it" -Midrash Rabbah). G-d set aside an eighth day of celebration on which only one holiday sacrifice was offered, this one on behalf of the Jewish nation, and it became a day of unique celebration between G-d & his loyal children, the Jews. The above parable can be linked to the name of the holiday itself. Atzeres means holding back, referring to the king who held back his son from leaving with the rest of the celebrants. Outside the Land of Israel, we eat in the Sukkah on Shemini Atzeres. However, the blessing for "dwelling in the Sukkah" is not recited.

Simchas Torah

Simchas Torah is celebrated the day after Shemini Atzeres. "Simcha" denotes joy & great rejoicing. That is certainly the case on Simchas Torah. The Torah scrolls are taken out from the Ark, & everyone, scholars & laymen alike, dance around the shul, proudly taking turns clutching the holy Torah scrolls to their hearts. Everyone present becomes passionately involved in the hakafo, as these dances are called.



Next Year in Jerusalem!

לשנה הבאה בירושלים!