

Class on Tishrei – Section 4

Sukkot

Right after Yom Kippur we build ourselves Sukkot which is also the name of the holiday. It follows the week after Yom Kippur. This is held during the full moon of the harvest season. Sukkot are the huts we build outside that commemorate the huts that were lived in while we were in the desert. At that time, in the desert, we had nothing to depend on for basic sustenance but G-d. So, the idea is that once Yom Kippur is over, we build our sukkahs secure in the fact that we have been forgiven and acknowledge G-d as our only Source. People live in their sukkahs for a week or just eat all of their meals in the sukkah. In places where many Jews live close to each other, there is a custom to go Sukkah hopping, eating in many friends' and families' Sukkot.

Hoshanot

Prayers requesting help from G-d are recited every day through Sukkot and Simchas Torah. These prayers are said as the men walk around the “bimah” - a stand that holds the Torah during the service when it is read out loud. It's astonishing watching the men march round and round saying, “Help us, we beseech You! For Your sake, our G-d, help us, we beseech You! For Your sake, our Creator, help us, we beseech You. For Your sake, our Redeemer, help us, we beseech You. For Your sake, You who seeks us, help us, we beseech You.” Each day a different paragraph is read, listing things like, “For the sake of Your Torah”, “For the sake of Your kindness”, “For the sake of Your Divine Presence”.

Lulav & Etrog

There are ritual objects that accompany us on our journeys through Sukkot and take part in our prayers of Hoshanot. There are many beautiful meanings to the symbology inherent in these objects. In general, the Lulav and Etrog symbolize the many types of personalities in our community and we bind them all together and bring them to our hearts literally and figuratively. As we wave them in all of the 6 directions on earth, we symbolically bring in new beliefs, insights and perspectives covering the gambit of human experience. Waving them can uplift us and be a meditation for our goals and plans for the new year. Here's a [pictorial guide](#) to how to “wave” the Lulav and Etrog each day of the holiday. And here's more on Lulav and Etrog along with [the prayers](#) to say. Lastly, here's a [YouTube video](#) of one of my teachers, Rav Doniel Katz, demonstrating a more advanced meditation with the Lulav and Etrog waving in all directions and summoning the 6 Sefirot on the Tree of Life that are associated with the directions!

Prayer for Rain

During the spring and summer months, the prayer said every day is for the dew to fall, starting on day 1 of Passover. Then, right after Sukkot, the prayer for wind and rain starts and is substituted in the daily prayers.

Simchat Torah

The last of the holidays in Tishrei is Simchas Torah. On this holiday we end the yearly cycle of Torah readings and begin again, starting with Bereshis (Genesis). This is a happy holiday full of letting loose in a celebration that involves dancing and singing and drinking. It's lots of fun seeing all the men sing and dance carrying the Torah! It's a totally joyous holiday!

Torah

Torah starts and ends the cycle of the Jewish calendar. It is called “the Life and length of our Days”. In our prayer book every morning we recite a line saying that the study of Torah is equal to every other good deed or mitzvah/commandment that G-d wants us to do, including honoring one's mother and father and bringing peace between man and his fellow. Studying the Torah is the best way to connect with our Divine Source. When we are studying, our brains are being changed and transformed so that they are able to hold onto the sacred. The mind becomes immersed in the Highest mind of All. This is what we hope to attain during the month of Tishrei full of the High Holy Days.

I will end with a quote from R. Tzvi Freeman's daily dose email.

Natural Response

Elul 21, 5774 · September 16, 2014

Based on letters and talks of the Rebbe, Rabbi M. M. Schneerson

There is an easy path to fulfill the Torah. Not by forcing yourself, not by convincing yourself, but by achieving awareness:

A constant awareness that all you see and hear—the wind that strokes your face, the pulse of the heart within your bosom, the stars in the heavens and the earth beneath your feet, all things of this cosmos and beyond—all are but the outer garments of an Inner Consciousness, a projection of His will and thoughts. Nothing more than His words to us, within which He is concealed.

And the Master of that consciousness speaks to you and asks you to join Him in the mystic union of deed and study. In such a state of mind, could you possibly choose otherwise? Tanya, part 1, chapters 21 and 41.

Assignment: Participate in a Simchat Torah celebration – you will be surprised how fun it can be, especially if you like dancing! [Purchase a set of Lulav and Etrog](#) for your own waving.