



## **PLOW, SOW, REAP AN INTERFAITH SUKKOT GATHERING**

October 8 – October 15, 2014 :: Tishrei 15 – Tishrei 21, 5775

### **WHAT IS SUKKOT?**

During the holiday of Sukkot, Jews across the world eat, meet, and sleep inside temporary dwellings called sukkot (singular: sukkah). The sukkah's origin is in the temporary dwellings that agricultural workers lived in during autumn harvest seasons in the past. They also symbolize the dwellings that ancient Israelites stayed in during the 40 years they spent travelling through the Sinai desert after the Exodus from Egypt. These structures have come to represent Jews' liberation from slavery, and Sukkot is a time when we honor that liberation.

But Sukkot is also a time when we reflect on the precariousness of our freedom. This summer, we witnessed 2,153 Palestinian deaths in Gaza and Occupied Palestine. The Israeli military destroyed thousands of homes and buildings in Gaza – including hospitals, schools, crucial infrastructure like electricity plants, mosques, and even cemeteries. Some people lost everything they had. The violence was horrific, destructive, and it remains ongoing, even for those who survived – over 400,000 people are living in refugee camps.

So, this Sukkot, we have chosen to come together across faiths, cultures, and traditions. Let us reflect not just on Jewish people's liberation thousands of years ago, but also on the struggle for liberation happening today in Palestine and the call to support the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement to put pressure on Israel to end the Occupation.

The seasons are changing. Sukkot is a time to harvest the summer crop and to plough the fields to prepare to sow the seeds for the next planting. We know our interfaith partnerships are vital and powerful in this struggle; sowing the seeds for our work together in shared commitment to justice.

To learn more about each other, we invite you to go-around, share your name, a community you are a part of, and share answers to one of the following questions:  
*What gives you strength in times of great struggle?*  
*What have you learned in your own family or faith tradition about survival and resiliency?*  
*What work do you hope to plant this fall, in order to reap its rewards next spring?*

## **MULTIFAITH BLESSING HANDS: These Hands Work for Justice**

In Jewish tradition blessings are often given with hands resting on the head of the person being blessed, as the priests did in the ancient Temple.

In that spirit, we invite you to help transform our sukkah into a sukkah of blessing: *sukkat bracha*. We invite you to bring with you (or make one when you arrive), a blessing hand. To do so is simple:

1. Trace your hand on a piece of paper
2. Cut out your hand with a pair of scissors
3. On your hand you just cut out, share a blessing, rooted in your faith tradition or your family.
4. Cut a hole in it with a hole punch.
5. Thread a piece of yarn, string, or ribbon through the hole and dangle the hand from the sukkah's roof.

### Materials needed:

- paper
- pencil
- scissors
- marker
- hole punch
- string, yarn or ribbon

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## **USHPIZIN: Inviting in guests**

Ushpizin is the Aramaic word for guests. It is traditional to invite ushpizin into the sukkah as part of the celebration of the holiday.

The inspiration for ushpizin goes back to Abraham, who would sit outside waiting for the opportunity to invite weary travelers into the shade of his tent, and then run to prepare them a meal. The ancient rabbis taught that the first sukkah, on which the holiday Sukkot is based, was built by Abraham when he greeted the three Angels who came to tell him his wife Sarah would at last bear a child [Genesis 18:1-10].

In the hasidic tradition, each of the seven days of sukkot is linked to a divine attribute we might strive to emulate. These attributes link beautifully to our role as faith-based social justice organizers.

As we review each of the attributes, we invite you to call out the names of the ushpizin you would like to invite in that embody these attributes. They may be mythical or human, living or dead.

### **Chessed – Love**

As Che Guevara said: “At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love.”

*Who do you invite in to this sukkah with us, whom you love?*

### **Gevurah – Commitment**

It is critical for our work to succeed that we live out our commitment to this work and to each other.

*Who do you invite into the sukkah with us that embodies or models commitment?*

### **Tif'eret – Harmony**

Often it is challenging to work in harmony in multifaith coalitions, but how beautiful it is when it works!

*Who are some community leaders that help lead justice coalitions into harmony that you invite into the sukkah with us?*

### **Netzach – Endurance**

This can be linked to the arabic word “samoud”, steadfastness, a concept central to Palestinians living under occupation, embodying the reality that for them existence is resistance.

*Who do you invite in to this sukkah with us that embodies steadfastness?*

### **Hod – Humility**

Jewish ethics teaches that we the humble make everyone their teachers. Who have been your teachers?

*Who do you invite into this sukkah who has taught you valuable lessons?*

## **Yesod – Connection**

Part of what allows our work for social justice to succeed is through connecting to one another, and to our sources of inspiration to sustain us for the long haul.

*Who do you invite into the sukkah that you look to for connection?*

## **Malchut – Leadership**

Ella Baker said, “I have always thought what is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing the leadership of others.”

*Who do invite into this sukkah with us who is a leader in the way Ella Baker imagined?*

## **Zochrot – Remembrance**

A critical part of our work is remembrance. Of the leaders and organizers that came before us. Of those that have lost their lives.

We now call to mind all those who have died over the decades of struggle and occupation in Israel and Palestine. We call to mind all those killed this summer. We particularly hold up the children--1 Israeli and hundreds of Palestinian children murdered. As the world loses their light, we hope their memories serve as a blessing and an inspiration to continue, even more boldly and even more intensely--to end the occupation and realize justice, safety, and self-determination for all people.

We offer this prayer in their memories:

God filled with mercy, dwelling in the heavens' heights, bring proper rest beneath the wings of your Shehinah, amid the ranks of the holy and the pure, illuminating like the brilliance of the skies the souls of the beloved and the blameless who went to their eternal place of rest.

May you who are the source of mercy shelter them beneath your wings eternally, and bind their souls among the living, that they may rest in peace.

And let us say: Amen

## **A RITUAL FOR SHAKING LULAV & ETROG**

Sukkot includes a tradition of creating and shaking the lulav and etrog, a woven bundle of grasses and fruit, used only on this holiday. This tradition is mentioned in the Torah: “And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days” (Leviticus 23:40). In some Jewish cultures this bundle includes an etrog (the fruit of a citron tree), in others, a palm frond.

In honor of recreating our own traditions, rooted in social justice and community, we invite you to create your own lulav and etrog bundle using plants that grow locally in the place where you live. Try to find plants from four different species of grass, tree, flower, or fruit: one that has a smell and taste (like a grape vine or fig branch), one that has a smell and no taste (like lilac or rose), a taste and no smell (like dandelion or honeysuckle), and one with no smell and no taste (like a willow branch or celery leaf). Draw the branches or grasses together and bind them with string or yarn for this ritual.

And if you can't find any of these, or you forget, just get creative! Four blades of grass, four sticks fallen on the ground, four autumn leaves, etc...

Then stand facing east. Bring your two hands together so that all four grasses or fruits are touching. If you wish, say or chant the traditional blessing:

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu al netilat lulav*

Or, give a blessing from your faith tradition or a prayer of your choosing.

Hold the lulav out in front of you and shake it three times. Each time the motion of shaking should be drawing into you – reach out and draw in, reach out and draw in, reach out and draw in.

Repeat the same motion three times to your right (south), behind your shoulder (west), to your left (north), raising the lulav and citron above you, lowering it down below you.

As you shake the lulav, commit to an action you will take within your congregation or community to work towards justice and end the Occupation of Palestine – helping plan a event, talking to someone you know or a stranger, sharing an article or a story, or urging your group to endorse a local BDS campaign. Draw in your intention to act; reach out and draw it in.

Pass on the lulav and etrog to the next person to shake and tell them of the action you commit to take as you do so.

## **MEDITATIONS ON PEACE**

“We often think of peace as the absence of war, that if powerful countries would reduce their weapon arsenals, we could have peace. But if we look deeply into the weapons, we see our own minds- our own prejudices, fears and ignorance. Even if we transport all the bombs to the moon, the roots of war and the roots of bombs are still there, in our hearts

and minds, and sooner or later we will make new bombs. To work for peace is to uproot war from ourselves and from the hearts of men and women. To prepare for war, to give millions of men and women the opportunity to practice killing day and night in their hearts, is to plant millions of seeds of violence, anger, frustration, and fear that will be passed on for generations to come.” --Thich Nhat Hanh

Mark 5:9

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called children of God."

Peter 3:10,11

"He that will love life, and see good days....let him seek peace, and ensue it."

Quran (8:61)

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

“But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and (put your) trust in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.”

Jeremiah 6:14 יִרְמְיָהוּ

וַיִּרְפְּאוּ אֶת שִׁבְרֵי עַמִּי עַל נִקְלָה לֵאמֹר שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם וְאֵין שְׁלוֹם

“They have healed the brokenness of my people shallowly, saying: “shalom, shalom,” when there is no shalom.”

"Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal." - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

#### **Building and Decoration Ideas:**

- [Sukkah Building Ideas](#)
- [Gaza Pinwheel Project](#)
- [Buy Pinwheels Here](#)
- [BDS Victories and Current Campaign Posters](#)

