

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot
October 11, 2025 *** 19 Tishrei, 5786

Shabbat Chol Hamoed Torah in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1019831/jewish/Shabbat-Chol-Hamoed-Torah-Reading-in-a-Nutshell.htm

G-d agrees to Moses' request that His presence only dwell amongst the Jews. Moses requests to be shown G-d's glory. G-d agrees, but informs Moses that he will only be shown G-d's "back," not G-d's "face."

G-d tells Moses to carve new tablets upon which G-d will engrave the Ten Commandments. Moses takes the new tablets up to Mt. Sinai, where G-d reveals His glory to Moses while proclaiming His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.

G-d seals a covenant with Moses, assuring him again that His presence will only dwell with the Jews. G-d informs the Jewish people that He will drive the Canaanites from before them. He instructs them to destroy all vestiges of idolatry from the land, not to make molten gods, to refrain from making any covenants with its current inhabitants, to sanctify male firstborn humans and cattle, and not to cook meat together with milk.

The Jews are commanded to observe the three festivals — including the holiday of Sukkot, "the festival of the ingathering, at the turn of the year." All males are commanded to make pilgrimage to "be seen by G-d" during these three festivals.

The maftir, from the Book of Numbers, discusses the public offerings brought in the Temple on this day of Sukkot.

Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot Haftarah in a Nutshell: Ezekiel 38:18 – 39:16
https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1019866/jewish/Shabbat-Chol-Hamoed-Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The subject of the haftarah of this Shabbat is the war of Gog and Magog that will precede the Final Redemption. Its connection to the holiday of Sukkot is that according to tradition the war will take place during the month of Tishrei, the month when the holiday of Sukkot falls. In addition,

this war is identical to the one described in the fourteenth chapter of Zachariah, the haftorah read on the first day of Sukkot, which concludes by saying that the gentile survivors of this war will be required to go to Jerusalem every year on the holiday of Sukkot to pay homage to G-d.

The prophet describes Gog's war against Israel and G-d's furious response. G-d will send an earthquake, pestilence, great floods and hailstones and fire—utterly destroying Gog's armies.

"And I will reveal Myself in My greatness and in My holiness and will be recognized in the eyes of many nations, and they will know that I am the Lord. . . . I will make known My Holy Name in the midst of My people Israel, and I will no longer cause My Holy Name to be profaned, and the nations will know that I, the Lord, am holy in Israel."

The haftorah concludes by saying that the weaponry of the defeated armies of Gog will provide fuel for fire for seven years! The Jews "shall carry no wood from the fields nor cut down any from the forests, for they shall make fires from the weapons."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

[Impermanence, Empathy, and the Shadow of Faith by Yitz Landes](https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/impermanence-empathy-and-the-shadow-of-faith/)
<https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/impermanence-empathy-and-the-shadow-of-faith/>

It can feel odd that just as it begins to get chilly, and just after the long High Holiday prayers may have left us wanting to simply stay home, we must go outside to sit in the sukkah—an impermanent dwelling that brings us closer to the elements. And it may seem odd that precisely at this moment of impermanence, the Jewish tradition places extra significance on the welcoming in of guests—hakhnasat orhim. Why is it that that we must now enter a place of discomfort? And why is it that we must be extra careful to welcome in guests at this time? In order to answer these questions, we can turn to the representation of Sukkot and its rituals in the Jewish mystical tradition, beginning with the Zohar.

In the Zohar, sitting in the sukkah is likened to sitting in the “shadow” or “shade” “of faith”—tzila di-meheminuta. Faith is usually imagined as a

state of being that is personal, even one that is inherently internal; we usually experience and talk about faith as something that exists within us. But according to the Zohar, by sitting in the sukkah, we surround ourselves with faith. In presenting the sukkah as “the shadow of faith,” the Zohar is playing on an aspect of the ritual that appears already in the Talmud (Sukkah 11b). The Talmud makes a connection between contemporary sukkot and the booths in which the Israelites resided while wandering the desert, which Rabbi Eliezer claims were not physical structures but divine “clouds of glory.” When cast in this light, the sukkah becomes a place of faith precisely because of its impermanence: stepping out of our comfort zone, putting ourselves in a liminal space like a temporary booth, prompts us to be faithful, as we reflect more on our reliance on God’s protection.

The Zohar and the ensuing Jewish mystical tradition continue to transform the sukkah into a place of faith through the ritual of ushpizin, Aramaic for “guests.” On every evening of the holiday, a different figure from the Jewish past is ritually invited to join those sitting in the sukkah. Originally, this meant the forefathers. But over time, Jews have added additional guests, including women and figures from more recent memory.

The Zohar argues for the importance of bringing in these heavenly guests by pointing to the repetition of the commandment to sit in the sukkah in Leviticus 23:42, “בַּסֹּכֹת יִתְּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבוּ בַסֹּכֹת”; “[You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths.](#)” Rabbi Aba explains this repetition as follows:

R. Abba said, “It states, ‘[You shall live in booths seven days,](#)’ and then ‘[shall live in booths](#)’—first you shall dwell and then they shall dwell. The first refers to the guests, and the second, to people of the world.”

Before one enters the sukkah, one must bring in the heavenly guests, and this ritual models for us the importance of bringing in earthly guests. What makes the sukkah a place of faith is not only that being outside makes us reflect more on our reliance on God. Rather, the Zohar teaches that when we force ourselves into these places of discomfort, into liminal spaces that are neither fully inside nor fully outside, we can actually

encounter the divine—so long as we invite others to join us. Thus, it is by creating community that the sukkah becomes a site of holiness.

But what is holy about being somewhat outside, and somewhat inside? Why do we go into a hut in order to learn this lesson? Can't we just invite the heavenly—and earthly—guests into our dining room? These questions feel especially acute here in New York City, when going into the sukkah often means being closer to the streets and to the alleys, places we may not normally find ourselves—places that we may associate with the unhoused, or with people who are otherwise on the margins of our society.

By forcing us into a liminal space, the sukkah thus brings us to a place of empathy. We cannot have a truly holy community without also thinking of those who live with impermanence year-round. Going out into the sukkah, dwelling both in and on impermanence, should be an opportunity for us to think about those in the liminal places of our society, who regularly deal with the issue of what the roof over their heads will look like.

After the intensity and spiritual highs of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, it is enticing to withdraw during the fall and winter. Yet Sukkot comes to remind us that our community's work is far from over. (*Yitz Landes is Assistant Professor of Rabbinic Literatures and Cultures at JTS*)

[Shabbat Shalom: Chol Hamoed Sukkot by Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin](https://ots.org.il/shabbat-shalom-chol-hamoed-sukkot-5786/)

<https://ots.org.il/shabbat-shalom-chol-hamoed-sukkot-5786/>

Efrat, Israel – This magnificent three-week festival period – Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot – may be viewed and experienced in two dimensions simultaneously; the universalist, nationalist dimension, and the particularistic, individual/family dimension. Rosh Hashanah is the day on which the world was born, when the sigh-sob t'ruah sound of the shofar cries out against the tragedies and injustices of an imperfect world and the sharp, joyous t'kiyah sound reminds us of our responsibility – and ability – to help perfect the world in the Kingship of God by conveying the moral message of ethical monotheism; a God who demands justice, compassion and peace.

On Yom Kippur, the Almighty declares His readiness to forgive the nation

Israel of its great sins – the idolatrous golden calf, the faithless cowardice of the scouts with the vision of our Holy Temple reaching out to all of humanity, “For My house is a House of Prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7).

Sukkot is the climax of the season, taking us out of our egocentric, partisan lives and ordaining that we surround ourselves with fruits of the Land of Israel living beneath a roof of vegetation through whose spaces we look up at the stars. Seventy bullocks were sacrificed in the Holy Temple during the Sukkot Festival, symbolizing the seventy nations of the world.

And finally, Shemini Atzeret announces the onset of the rainy season: rain is, after all, a gift of God to the world.

Shemini Atzeret moves into the uninhibited joy of Simkhat Torah – the Rejoicing of the Torah, when all Torah Scrolls are taken out of the Holy Ark and become the focus of frenzied dancing not only in the synagogues but also outside in the streets – the public domain – in order to imbue the world with its message of “Thou shalt not murder” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

However, Judaism understands only too well that one dare not focus on humanity without concentrating on individuals. One cannot be a concerned universalist without hearing the cries of one’s next door neighbor. Yes, it is the Jewish mission to convey the message of ethical monotheism to a world. The people of the covenant must perfect the world in the Kingship of our God of justice, compassion and peace. But first we must perfect ourselves: not only our nation, but our community; not only our community but our family; and not only our family but ourselves.

A disciple once approached Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (1800-1870), founder of the Ethicist (Mussar) Movement in Judaism, seeking permission to spread the ethical and moral message of the Master to Germany and Austria. The rabbi responded: “And is the City of Salant so imbued with my teachings that you can afford to leave Lithuania? And is the street on which you live so morally inspired that you can teach in another community? And is your own family so careful in their conduct that you can preach to other families? And what about you, my beloved disciple?”

Are you on such a high level of ethical integrity that no one could criticize you?”

And so, Rosh Hashanah ushers in a ten-day period of repentance and introspection when we must be mindful of the need to perfect the world, but we must first attempt to perfect ourselves. Rosh Hashanah is the day on which the world was born, but it is also the “Day of Judgment,” when everyone passes before the Almighty to be evaluated and judged, when each of us must evaluate and judge ourselves from the perspective of Divine standards.

Yom Kippur may be a historic and national day of forgiveness, a day on which we invoke our Holy Temple as a “House of Prayer for all nations,” but it is first and foremost a day in which the individual stands in isolation from the world in the presence of the Divine. No food, no drink, no sexual relationship – with almost the entire day to be spent in God’s house. Each of us rids ourselves of all materialistic encumbrances, separates ourselves from physical needs and blandishments, enters a no-man’s land between heaven and earth, between life and death, dons the non-leather shoes worn by the mourner, and in effect feels what it’s like to mourn for oneself by asking what legacy would I leave, were I to be taken from the world today?

And then comes Sukkot. Leave your fancy surroundings for a week; go back to basics. Spend seven days with your family in a simple hut. Remember that “when familial love is strong, a couple can sleep on the edge of a sword; but when familial love has gone sour, a bed of sixty miles does not provide sufficient room” (B.T. Sanhedrin 7a). Forget Netflix and Facebook; bring the special guests of the Bible into your simple but significant space, commune with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Lea, Miriam, Deborah and Ruth. Introduce them to your children – rather than today’s pop stars and Instagram influencers – and sing and speak and share together. Remember – and communicate – that what is important is values not venues, content not coverings, inner emotions and not external appearances. And let the sukkah lead you to Simkhat Torah, to the love and joy of Torah, which will help form the kind of individuals and families who can build communities and, ultimately, change the world. (*Rabbi Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone*)



Yahrtzeits

Edna Axelrod remembers her mother Edna Kaplan Ball Zehner on Sat. Oct. 11

Perry Fine remembers his father Melvin Fine on Mon. Oct. 13

Mel Zwillenberg remembers Susan's Mother Trudy Altman on Fri. Oct.

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