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## **Chol Hamoed Sukkot**

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*Class of 2017*

After the intensity of personal introspection of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, Sukkot is the holiday allows for the reintegration into being part of the community.

There are two main mitzvot of Sukkot; taking the Arba Minim (the Lulav, Etrog, Hadasim, and Aravot), and sitting in a Sukkah.

Taking the lulav is an action of the individual. One must have ownership of the lulav they use to fulfill the mitzvah. Additionally, there is an idea that the arba minim represent the different limbs that make up a person . “Etrog refers to the heart, the place of understanding and wisdom. Lulav refers to the backbone, uprightness. Myrtle corresponds to the eyes, enlightenment. Willow represents the lips, the service of the lips (prayer).” (Sefer HaChinuch #285) It is not just that an individual takes the lulav, but the Lulav is the representation of the individual. In a way, one is using themselves to connect to God.

The Sukkah on the other hand is an external mitzvah. It is made outside. We are forced to sit in public places. Everyone around us can hear what is going on. The entrance might be easy to enter, more so than our house are. And unlike the lulav, a person can fulfill the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah no matter what sukkah they sit in.

The verse “every citizen of Israel shall sit in a sukkah” is the source that teaches us that we must sit in the sukkah, and it is also the source that teaches that there is no maximum size of a sukkah. Theoretically, the gemara explains, there should be a sukkah that could house the entire Jewish people.

In practice such a sukkah would be difficult to build, but the idea of including others in our sukkah is preserved in the custom of Ushpizen. The Zohar teaches the concept of Ushpizen, that each night of Sukkot we invite one of our forefathers and great leaders of Bible into our sukkah.

The Zohar, as well as other texts seem to learn from this that it should not only be a custom of welcoming in spiritual guests, but rather a person has an obligation to bring in physical people as well, “In order for a person to truly merit in the act of welcoming in the spiritual guests, it is a mitzvah to invite 7 physical people, one each night of the holiday” (Zohar, Emor 103-104). It is the responsibility of those with a sukkah to look outside of themselves, outside of their individual unit and reach out to the people that are living around them.

The seven days of Sukkot are the period that helps us transition from being in the world of the individual to the world of the community. The mitzvah of the 4 species highlights the individual, and encourages continued introspection. While the mitzvah of sukkah forces us to go outside of ourselves, outside of our walls, and to go out of your way to notice who needs an invitation. Together these mitzvot help us in our transition so that we are able to fully celebrate and dance with the Torah, as a community on Simchat Torah.

Shabbat Shalom & Moadim L’simcha



*Rabbi Eryn London, is a chaplain resident at New York Presbyterian - Weill Cornell Medical Center. She earned her B.A from Goucher College, where she majored in theatre, minoring in psychology and Judaic studies. Eryn subsequently earned an M.A. at Goldsmiths, University of London. She specialized in applied drama: theatre in educational, community, and social contexts. Eryn made aliyah in February of 2010 and studied at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and at the Susi Bradfield Women’s Institute of Halachic Leadership at Midreshet Lindenbaum. She is one of the co-founders of “Gam Yachad”, a multi-denominational Beit Midrash for Israeli rabbinical students. Eryn has served as scholar in residence and rabbinic intern at the ACT Jewish Community in Canberra, Australia, Adath Shalom B'nai Israel in Chicago, Illinois, and at the Mt. Freedom Jewish Center in Randolph, New Jersey. In addition, Eryn has lectured in various communities in Israel, Canada, Colombia, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.*