

## **Celebrating *Sukkot*** By Rabbi Mike Lotker

It comes when you just might have decided that you have had about enough of the Jewish Holidays. During the High Holy Days you've sat through services and torah readings and sermons and sermons and sermons and sermons (four High Holy Day sermons to be exact). You've introspected and examined your soul, you've confessed, asked for forgiveness, fasted and broken your fast. So why do we need another holiday, *Sukkot*, a mere four days later?

Good question! In a way, *Sukkot* is the response to the High Holy Days in general and to Yom Kippur in particular. Yom Kippur is a solemn day, a day of denial, a day to contemplate one's own mortality. *Sukkot* reminds us of Rabbi Israel Salanter's statement that to be a good Jew, one must have every human quality and its opposite. So the seriousness and self denial of Yom Kippur leads to the joy and abundance of Sukkot. Tradition holds that one should start building the *Sukkah* right after breaking the fast.

*Sukkot* is also connected to the holiday of Passover. For one thing it comes exactly six months to the day after Pesach. On a deeper level, just as *Pesach* celebrates the moment of liberation and freedom, *Sukkot* celebrates the long journey of liberation and freedom. The small hut that we dwell in and eat meals in during Sukkot reminds us of the temporary dwellings that were our homes during the 40 years of wandering in the desert. *Pesach* recalls one momentous meal; *Sukkot* recalls the forty-three thousand meals, the seemingly endless fourteen thousand six hundred days and nights of the journey. As Rabbi Irving Greenberg put it in his wonderful book, *The Jewish Way*, even as Passover recalls the great *event* of liberation, Sukkot recalls the *way* of liberation; Passover is the holiday of faith, Sukkot is the holiday of faithfulness.

I know that many of us don't have the opportunity to build our own *Sukkah* but you do have the chance to join us at Temple, have a snack in our *Sukkah* and to take your chance at waiving the traditional *Lulav* of four species. Since it's a once a year mitzvah, I hope you won't pass up your chance. *Sukkot* this year begins on the evening of October 14<sup>th</sup>.

*Chag Sukkot Samayach* (Happy Holiday of *Sukkot*)

Rabbi Mike Lotker