



Kol Nidre/9 Tishri 5778
September 29, 2017

Dear Shir Tikvah:

Tonight and tomorrow, we will gather for the great Shabbat Shabbaton, Sabbath of Sabbaths, Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is one of the most widely observed holidays among even non-observant Jews. No matter how one observes Yom Kippur, it is an important annual opportunity to reflect on our lives, to be sure we're being the best we can be, to make amends, to affirm life.

What happens when Yom Kippur is over - tomorrow night?! What happens next, after such deep soul work? Certainly we eat, with gratitude for our water and caffeine, carefully walking that balance between enjoying our food and not getting sick from too much food on an empty stomach. Then what?

Coming off Yom Kippur's exalted tones - of high liturgy, self-deprivation, confessions, and hopefully forgiveness and a love-fest at the end - it's strange to return to the ordinary again. Can we embrace the mundane with fresh appreciation, knowing that in the common moments is where most of life takes place?

Our tradition gives us an answer: Yom Kippur is not complete without Sukkot. Rabbi Irving Greenberg wrote in *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*:

The days of Sukkot are the response to the denial and self-criticism of the High Holy Days. The two periods together give one the capacity to live through triumph and tragedy, aware that this, too, shall pass. Life in all its bewildering and uncontrollable variety becomes possible. (p. 112)

Sukkot comes just four days after Yom Kippur, the most ascetic, self-denying, guilt-ridden, awesome holy day of the Jewish year. On the Day of Atonement, Jews reenact their own death, only to be restored to life in the resolution of the day. Only those who know the fragility of life can truly appreciate the full preciousness of every moment. The release from Yom Kippur leads to the extraordinary outburst of life that is Sukkot. On this holiday, Jews are commanded to eat, drink, be happy, dance, and relish life to the fullest in celebrating the harvest. (p. 187)

Throughout the cycles of the year and of our lifetimes, Judaism constantly invites us to experience opposite ends of the spectrum of existence. So we go from Yamim Noraim, days of awe and introspection, self-criticism and encounter with death - to z'man simchateinu - the "Season of our Joy" - another name for Sukkot. Celebrating the range of human experience, feeling joy even within our vulnerability in the sukkah. We share the bounty, with tzedakah and inviting guests into our sukkah. We are awake now, to chesed (compassion), to a love of life that accepts and treasures life as it is.

G'mar chatimah tova - May you be inscribed for good in the Book of Life,
Debra

p.s. We'll be building the Shir Tikvah sukkah this Sunday at 2pm; please let Forrest know if you'd like to participate.

Stu Henry will be giving a climate-focused Sukkot D'var-Torah at next Friday's Shabbat service, followed by S'mores in the Sukkah. Hope to see everyone there!

Rabbi Debra Rappaport