Introduction to Sukkot

Sukkot means “huts.” The *Jewish festival* of *Sukkot* celebrates and commemorates the shelters in which the Israelites lived for 40 years after leaving Egypt.

Symbols
The main symbols associated with *Sukkot* are living in a *sukka* (eating and, when possible, sleeping in the *sukka*) and the *lulav* and *etrog*.

Sukkot is observed at fall harvest time. When many Jews were feeling wealthy due to their produce, we were commanded to live in temporary shelters--in part, to ward off feelings of arrogance or pride in what we had accomplished in the material world. Instead of thinking or feeling that our hard work or great wisdom has made us wealthy, we are reminded that whatever we have comes from God, and that God will take care of us, even in a flimsy “house.”

The *lulav* and *etrog* have many meanings. Here are two:

Likening to the Human Body
The four components are compared to four parts of the human body:

- Palm branch: Spine.
- Myrtle leaves: Human eyes.
- Willow leaves: Human lips.
- *Etrog:* Human heart.

When we hold the four parts of the *lulav/etrog* together, we are symbolically taking the various components of our bodies together to serve God.

Likening to Types of Jews
The four components are likened to four types of Jews:

- *Etrog* smells nice and tastes nice--like a *tzadik* who is knowledgeable in *Torah* and does *mitzvot*;
- Myrtle smells nice but does not have a good taste--like a person who does *mitzvot* but is not knowledgeable in *Torah*;
- Palm tree (date palm) has a nice tasting fruit but no scent--like someone who has knowledge but lacks *mitzvot*;
- Willow does not smell nice nor has a good taste--like a person who has neither.

By holding them together, we show that all types of Jews are to be consider as one nation.

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