

The Synagogue Journal

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Contact us: historicaljournal@kanestreet.org

Shabbat Succot

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Issue 40

Sukkot and Simchat Torah

In this issue ...

We feature the congregation's Sukkot and Simchat Torah traditions, beginning with six *Brooklyn Eagle* articles about nineteenth century events held at Boerum Place Synagogue. Articles by Ralph Kleinman and Howard Schneider describe sukkahs at home and at Kane Street. This year, emails went to members about ways to participate: How to purchase lulav and estrog for \$45; when to help erect the synagogue sukkah. (The email promised the crew pizza and a great time together, and assured them it wasn't necessary "to be a mechanical maven.") To fulfill the Mitzvah of *Leshev Ba'Sukkah* (eating and dwelling in the sukkah), people are encouraged to bring dairy or *pareve* meals into Kane Street's sukkah. (These meals may not be brought into the kitchen or synagogue utensils used.) During the week the synagogue has arranged breakfasts, lunches, snacks, a wine and cheese kiddush and dinners. Synaplex programming includes a concert for kids, environmental lecture, Sukkot songfest and tour of Brownstone Brooklyn sukkahs. At Simchat Torah, the congregation will parade with sefer Torahs and paper flags around the sanctuary seven times, proceed out to Kane Street, which is closed to traffic, and continue dancing into the evening.

Since the construction of the Goldman Educational Center, the congregation's sukkah is lovelier than ever. The Atrium is free of the old iron fire escape, cinder blocks, barbed wire and macadam paving. There's space for a large tent. We have good lighting. The heady smell of pine needles and apples (the *skhakh* or covering) remains just as intoxicating as in years past.

Joseph Goldfarb remembers sukkahs from the 1920s, "Succoth was better than almost any other shul that I've ever been in. We had a beautiful, beautiful set up... The whole place was decorated with foliage. At one period of time we used to buy it, but then we made arrangements with the Parks Department at the beginning of the season. They were always pruning trees, and they would bring cut boughs by the truckload. We had volunteers and the paid super ... and they decorated all the walls with foliage on both sides of that space and then we bridged it across with an overhead structure like a lattice. The whole thing, walls and ceiling, were all with these branches. After each service, we had long tables with white cloths. We had wine and we had cake, and we had the big party challahs and honey. The people used to come, say a blessing, make a motzi and wash their hands at the kitchen sink. That was a really nice sukkah."

Belle Goldfarb Lehrman, Rabbi Goldfarb's youngest daughter, recalled Sukkot and Simchat Torah: "We had a lovely Sukkah in the backyard. My father took such pride in decorating it. He used to do something with an egg somehow. He would blow something and take all of the fluid out of the interior of the egg without upsetting the shell. Then he would paint little things on the exterior of the shell. This was a family thing. We would string cranberries, yards and yards of cranberries, and hang them around.... Of course the synagogue had a sukkah. They had kiddush in the sukkah, but I don't remember it particularly because I didn't go into it so much... We went home to have lunch in the sukkah. Joseph would remember this, probably. He would go with father and the men for kiddush. Maybe Mother and the girls went home right after services to be sure that lunch would be ready. You couldn't set the table before you went to shul in the morning. Everything would be filthy. So we had to come and shake everything out, so when the men came home, we were able to have lunch and dinner too in the evening. We ate two meals a day in the sukkah." Belle said there was no dancing in the street during Simchat Torah when she was a girl. "No, there was nothing like that. We had dancing in shul. It was the usual. I don't remember anything special. We used candles in those years. We got flags that were pointed at the end of the flag. At the upper part of the stick, there was the handle, and we'd put a candle on top of it and light the candle. That was dangerous. It was in the synagogue. The flag was paper with all kinds of pictures on it... and designs. They're probably no different from the ones you use today."

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Reprinted from *The Scroll*, September 1979

About the Journal ...

The Synagogue Journal, a one-year online publication designed to highlight prominent individuals and events during the Kane Street Synagogue congregation’s past 150 years.

Special thanks to all who made this issue possible: the authors for their articles; the editorial assistance of Rabbi Weintraub, Jack Levin and Vivien Shelanski; the nineteenth century news article provided by Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online™, Brooklyn Public Library at www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle

We welcome submissions of reminiscences, letters and photographs to help shape the BIAE story for Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes. For a list of upcoming Journal themes or to read past issues, see “Archives” located under the Journal banner

LOCAL BREVITIES.

Henry A. Richard, the proprietor of a Sunday weekly, is reported to have sued Winchester Britton, District Attorney, for libel, laying damages at \$50,000, for alleged malicious statements in an interview with a reporter of the EAGLE.

General Van Buren, U. S. Commissioner of the International Exposition, at Vienna, Austria, will visit the Kings County Exposition, on Monday evening next, accompanied by Assistant Commissioner, Wm. Mayer, and will deliver an address at 8 o'clock.

The annual meeting of the Sunday School Union will be held on Tuesday evening next, at the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church. Addresses by Rev. Drs. Cuyler, Schenck, Inglis and Wild.

The case of the people by John T. Hildreth against the cow and milk stables, was adjourned to Thursday of next week, in consequence of the illness of the defendant's counsel, D. D. Morris.

James F. Curtis, a young lawyer residing in this city, doing business in New York, and a graduate of Fordham College, died yesterday of consumption. At the time of his death, he was a member of the firm of Haskin & Crooke, lawyers. He was much respected for his talents and social qualities.

Professor Sydney Woollett, will recite "Enoch Arden," at St. Ann's basement hall, on Tuesday evening, October 29.

The Hebrews are enjoying at present the Feast of Succoth, or Tabernacles. The Israelites, to celebrate this festival, are required to live in tents or booths made of branches of trees. In these later days of civilization, the requirement is met by erecting temporary booths of myrtle and willow boughs and palm leaves, which materials are necessary, in the yards of private dwellings, where the families meet and partake of meals. However, the practice is falling into disuse. It is designed as a remembrance of the times when their ancestors dwelt in tents. The religious importance is in the intention to check the rising pride in the heart.

The Feast of Tabernacles.

At sunset last evening commenced the annual Jewish Feast of "Succoth," or Tabernacles, and will continue for eight days. According to the Hebrew calendar this festival begins on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, (Tishri) which answers to our October. This festival, inaugurated by the great Jewish lawgiver, has a double significance, first, and principally to commemorate the nomad life led by this people in the desert, and in this sense takes rank with the two other pilgrimage festivals, the Passah and the Feast of Weeks. Its second meaning is agricultural, and celebrates the harvest and ingathering of fruits. Under the old Mosaic dispensation the people were enjoined to live during the feast in tents and booths. After the settlement in Palestine, these were commonly erected upon the flat roofs of the houses. The Feast of the Tabernacles is emphatically *the* feast, and is the most joyous of them all, answering in a measure to our annual thanksgiving. Special sacrifices and a greater number of burnt offerings were offered up on this occasion, and the time spent in a joyous manner. The eighth day was a day of solemn rest, and was celebrated with ceremonies of a peculiarly solemn and impressive character. The erection of booths and the carrying of harvest bunches is still in vogue among the strict adherents of traditional Judaism, but among the more modern believers in the faith, it is commemorated by special services in the synagogues and by social festivals.

THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS

Days Which They Sacredly Observe— New Year's Day, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles Rights and Customs.

The Jewish New Year begins with the setting of to-day's sun. Beside being New Year's Day, to-morrow is also the "Day of blowing the sophar," a trumpet made of a ram's horn. The Pentateuch fixes the vernal equinox as the beginning of the year, but the Jews have for more than twenty centuries past dated their years from the autumnal equinox. The Day of Atonement will occur on Monday week. The sophar is blown to sound a note of warning to the Jewish race to prepare for this latter day. The New Year's Day falling on Sabbath this year, the orthodox Jews will defer the blowing of the ram's horn till Sunday. The Jews throughout the world observe New Year's Day and the ten days which intervene between it and the Day of Atonement are called penitential days, and are supposed to be devoted to a rigorous self-examination and to a careful preparation for the great Fast Day, which is the most important in the Jewish calendar.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

beginning on Sunday, 20th, is ordained in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day; for it is a day of atonement for you before the Lord your God."

This day is kept holy by all who have any claim to the name of Jew. For more than three thousand years the Jews have gathered in their synagogues in all parts of the world on this day and made atonement for and repented for their sins. This is a day to the pious Jew who observes the Sabbath and all the festivities on which no worldly act or thought must be permitted. He generally goes to the synagogue at eight or nine in the morning and leaves when the sophar blows at the ending of the fast, about six in the evening.

THE TABERNALES.

Following the fast day comes "Tabernacles," the festival which was held annually in Judea after the ingathering of the harvest. It lasts seven days, the first and last of which are days of rejoicing. The seventh day of Tabernacles is known as "Hosanna Rabah." Among the orthodox Jews, and notably among the Spanish and Portugese, this is looked upon as the day when the atonement made on the great fast day is sealed and confirmed. Seven circuits of the synagogue are made by the congregants; bearing a palm branch and citron, those not having the palm being provided with a bunch of myrtle. Between each circuit the branch of myrtle is waved aloft, and in the Portugese synagogues the waving of the myrtle is accompanied by the sounding of the sophar, which is blown four times between each circuit. The airs sung are the same as those in use on Fast Day and New Year's, and the synagogues are draped in white as on those occasions.

MUSIC, MIRTH AND BEAUTY.

A Hebrew Festival Celebrated by a Ball at the Academy.

The Hebrew festival of Simchas Forah was celebrated with a grand ball, given last evening in the Assembly Rooms of the Academy of Music, by the Young Men's Hebrew Union of this city. The attendance was large and select, the management was excellent, and the Union added one more to the long list of admirable entertainments it has given during its existence. The Assembly Rooms were decorated with skill and taste. At both sides of the music stand were vases upholding choice flowers; bunting adorned the walls, and the floor was polished until it shone. The music, furnished by Luster's orchestra, was excellent. Previous to the ball a promenade concert was given, the programme including selections from Straus, Bernstein, Suppe, Weingarten and other noted composers. The opening dance was dedicated to the Union. Then came the lancets and the waltz, and so the programme continued until nearly every step in the graceful art had been executed. The toilets of the ladies were rich and beautiful. Gentlemen appeared in full dress. Shortly after ten o'clock Mr. M. Jacobs, former President of the Union, was presented with a heavy solid gold medal, in recognition of his endeavors to promote the welfare of the organization of which he was the head. The medal is elaborately ornamented, and on its back is the inscription, "Presented to M. Jacobs by the Young Men's Hebrew Union of Brooklyn." The presentation speech was made by Mr. Henry H. Davis, the present head of the Union. In responding, Mr. Jacobs said that although he was no longer called upon to preside over the Union, his efforts to promote its success would be none the less energetic, and he would ever treasure the elegant emblem of regard and affection with which he had been presented.

The festivities were continued until the gray light of morning peeped in through the windows, and the musicians had grown tired of applying resin to their bows.

Mr. Louis H. Davis was floor manager; Messrs. A. Rossman, Max Indig, H. Brandenstein, David Wiegel, Max Ball, N. Leopold, and H. H. Harris, being his assistants. On the Reception Committee were Solomon Harbloom, J. E. Pike, E. Levy, O. Sorgman, A. Hirsch, M. Abrahams and L. Manne.

Among those present were the following gentlemen, most of whom were accompanied by ladies: Louis H. Davis, Robert B. Sedgwick, M. Ullman, David Shorek, O. Schwarschild, M. Buchman, S. Leopold, J. Furstenberg, Edward Levy, Henry H. Harris, A. Rossman, O. Harbloom, M. Cohn, S. Lederman, Moses J. Harris, L. Ledysen, Daniel Stearn, M. David, H. Gross, Charles Sampson, J. Dreyfuss, Isaac Goldsmith, Max Rosenthal, Assher Goldsmith, G. Kesner, J. E. Pike, D. Wiegel, M. Nimden, Marcus Levy, D. Davis, Michael Furst, Henry H. Davis, Jacob Ahrens, Meyer Furst, S. Stein, Philip Ketchum, David Ketchum, M. Ball, Henry Levy, M. Abrams, Reuben Jacobs, H. Rothschild, H. Manne, Louis Manne, Bernard Sickles, Meyer Abraham, B. Aigman, H. Sellar, Max Bloom, N. Leopold, E. Levy, Herman Goldstein, S. Goldstein and Silas Steinberger. Messrs. H. Rothschild, Moses Jacobs, Silas W. Stein, Daniel Stern and Henry Manne were the Committee of Arrangements. The officers of the Union are H. H. Davis, President; Solomon Harbloom, Vice President; I. Sternberger, Secretary; M. Ball, Financial Secretary, and G. Selig, Treasurer.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

The Sojourn in the Wilderness Celebrated in the Synagogues.

To-day by the Jewish calendar is the fifteenth day of Tishree and inaugurates the Festival of Tabernacles (Succoth), which continues eight days. This festival is celebrated in commemoration of the dwelling of the Israelites in booths during their journeying through the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. Strictly orthodox Jews erect rustic booths in the court yards of their houses and dispense hospitalities to all who choose to call upon them. The synagogues are all decorated with green leaves and evergreens, and branches of the palm tree, with sprigs of myrtle and willow and the citron, are waved by the worshippers. On the seventh day of this festival of rejoicing, called in the vernacular Hoshanna-Robbah, or day of great salvation, a procession is formed and seven circuits of the synagogue are made while the palms are shaken and appropriate passages of Scripture recited. The following day (Shermenee-Artaras), eight day of solemn assembly, special prayers are offered for rain to replenish the earth in its due season and that the soil may be productive and fruitful for the coming year. The ninth day does not strictly belong to the festival, but has been added thereto. It is called (Simchas-Towra) rejoicing of the law. On this day is completed the reading of the Pentateuch or five books of Moses, a portion of which is read each Sabbath and holiday, and hence it has been kept as an occasion of joy that the believers have been mercifully spared to witness the close and begin anew. Two members of the congregation are selected and honored by being called to the Alm-Memor to the minister's side during the reading of the concluding and beginning chapters. It is considered a great honor and privilege to be so selected, and the persons chosen generally celebrate the event by a social and festive gathering to which their friends and the leading members of the congregation are welcomed.

Oc

FREE SONS OF ISRAEL.
y Dance and Dine and Entertain
in Saengerbund Hall.

Saengerbund Hall was filled with Hebrew elite of Brooklyn last evening, when King Solomon Lodge, No. 28, Independent Order Free Sons of Israel, celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its institutions, together with the Feast of Simchas Torah, which occurred on Friday. Simchas Torah is the eighth and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles and is symbolic of the acceptance of the Torah by the Hebrews. It is usually observed with a ball and general jubilation.

A banquet was had yesterday afternoon in the dining hall, at which fully one hundred and twenty-five couples took part. Speeches were made by Baldwin F. Strauss, president of the lodge; J. E. Lowenstein, grand master of District No. 1; First Deputy Grand Master L. B. Franklin, Second Deputy Grand Master S. Calmson, Police Commissioner Bell, Dr. H. Enton, B. F. Birdvall and Mr. James M. Meyer, first president of the lodge. The following letter of regret was read from Mayor Chapin, signed in his own handwriting:

MAYOR'S OFFICE, }
-BROOKLYN, October 15, 1889. }
B. F. Strauss, President of King Solomon Lodge
No. 28, I. O. F. S. I.:

DEAR SIR—I regret that I cannot accept the kind invitation to be present at the banquet. It will, I trust, be a most pleasant occasion in all respects. Thanking you very much for your own courtesy and that of your friends in remembering me, I am, very sincerely,

ALFRED C. CHAPIN.

The Rev. William Sparger was to have offered prayer, but also sent regrets.

Following the banquet the dancing hall was invaded and others who could not attend that celebration arrived. The hall was extensively decorated for the occasion. Flags and shields of all nations hung on the galleries, while parti colored streamers connected them with the center of the ceiling. At each entrance curtains were hung and over these was the motto of the organization, "Friendship, Love and Truth." Opposite the general entrance over the stage was a mass of bunting, Chinese lanterns, shields and fans, while in the center was the following:

Among the guests were the Rev. Mr. Friedlander, Deputy Health Commissioner Young, Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin F. Strauss, Mr. and Mrs. Isidore P. Cohen, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Hyams, Mr. and Mrs. D. Sherek, Mr. and Mrs. S. Calinson, Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Cohen, Dr. and Mrs. H. Euton, Mr. and Mrs. S. Manue, Mr. and Mrs. S. Rothschild, Mr. and Mrs. E. C. David, Mr. and Mrs. S. Lorch, Mr. and Mrs. M. S. Seelman, Mr. and Mrs. I. Tuck, Mr. and Mrs. I. M. Meyer, Mr. and Mrs. J. Gold, Mr. and Mrs. I. Sloman, Mr. and Mrs. M. Kurtz, Mr. and Mrs. M. Proops, Mr. and Mrs. F. Morris, Mr. and Mrs. L. Alexander, Mr. and Mrs. A. Paris, Mr. and Mrs. G. Fragner, Mr. and Mrs. G. Selner, Mr. Joshua Meyers, Mr. F. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Manasso, Mr. and Mrs. S. Rosenberg, Mr. and Mrs. David Cohen, Mr. B. F. Birdsall, Mr. and Mrs. Altheimer, Mr. and Mrs. B. Wasserman, Mr. and Mrs. C. D. Dawson, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Hart, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Hart, Miss B. Coleman, Mr. A. Deutsch, Mr. and Mrs. I. F. Weismar, Mr. and Mrs. J. Levy, Mr. I. Wolff, Miss Bertha Weisman, Mr. Henry W. Levy, Miss Rose Weisman, Mr. Louis Bass, Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Cantor, Mr. and Mrs. L. Rosenberg, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Symons, Mr. and Mrs. Leo Goldsmith, Mr. and Mrs. M. Stein, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Lehman, Mr. and Mrs. H. Meyer, Mr. and Mrs. L. Meyer, Mr. and Mrs. I. Muller, Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Mrs. and Mrs. Jacob Julian, Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Rosenstein, Mr. and Mrs. A. Bick, Mr. S. Hammerschlag, Mr. H. Lewis, Mr. M. Kurtz, Miss Kurtz, Mr. and Mrs. J. Jacobs, Miss Rose Jacobs, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Morris, Mr. J. H. Trott, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Gluckauf, Mr. H. Symons, Miss E. Symons, Miss Annie Morse, Miss Jennie Morris, Mr. and Mrs. Simon Henry, Mrs. A. Jacobs,

Miss Teresa Jacobs, Mr. and Mrs. L. Ross, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Newman, Miss Newman, Mr. and Mrs. L. Rice, Miss Rebecca Rice, Mr. Philip Laurea, Miss Etta Laurea, Mr. E. Bauer, Miss Annie Kalischer, Miss B. Kalischer, Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Goodman, Mr. J. Ross, Miss Sarah Gabay, Mr. Lawrence Levy, Miss Isabel Goodman, Mr. Benjamin Goodman, Miss Martha Altheimer, Miss Ray Brisk, Mr. Michael Alexander, Miss Jennie Levy, Mr. B. Altsheler, Miss Carrie Altsheler, Mr. and Mrs. Mark Symons, Mr. Max Lewinsky, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Kraus, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brandenstein, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Brandenstein, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Zoffer, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Furstenburg, Mr. and Mrs. Emanuel Cohen, Mr. Joseph Cohen, Miss Cohen, Mr. G. Silverman, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Jacobs, Miss A. Weinburg, Mr. Louis Mathias, Mr. Joseph Goldsmith, Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Goldsmith, Miss F. Jacobs, Mr. Benjamin Kalischer.

Sukkot at Kane Street

By Ralph Kleinman

Ralph Kleinman has been a member of Kane Street since 1983 and a member of the Board since 1987. He has been Treasurer, Executive Vice President and President as well as a member of various committees over the years.

It wasn't until Lisa and I moved to Brooklyn and started to come to Kane Street that Sukkot became part of my life. Once we moved to President Street in 1985, we decided that we would build a sukkah in our backyard, although neither of us had the slightest idea at the time of how to go about it.

So we visited many different sukkot (our quest might really have been the beginning of the Shul's sukkah walk – more about that later), and saw many different models, ranging from the traditional (lots of old doors and other pieces of wood somehow cobbled together), to the sculptural (more wood cobbled together, but done more artistically), to the prefab (with or without pictures of the Rebbe), to the free-form (use your imagination here). We eventually opted for the approach used by the Steins and the Levins, who at that time shared a sukkah that was located in the Levins' backyard. The frame for their sukkah was manufactured by a company that made booths for street fairs, and though I can't remember anything else about it, given the Levins' and Steins' taste and accomplishments, I'm sure that it was beautiful.

Our somewhat less magnificent sukkah went up in our President Street backyard the following year, much to the general amusement and consternation of the Scottos and the Nardiellos, our neighbors. As the years passed, I would get helpful advice from them when I would stare, puzzled, at all the pieces that I had brought up from the basement. Every year I forget exactly the best way to put it together without interfering with the phone lines while still clearing the fences without hurting myself. Phil Scotto and Joe Nardiello always remember exactly where the opening goes and how the thing is oriented, which probably says a lot both about their sense of ecumenism and my issues with three-dimensional space.

One Kane Street Sukkot memory that has left an indelible mark on me (I'm shuddering as I write this) is when we almost caused serious injury to the Rabbi Weintraub's parents due to faulty sukkah roof engineering. (this problem has since been repaired) and bad wind. In short, we had invited Sam, who was at that time the new Rabbi to lunch on Sukkot along with his extended family, including his parents. We were feeling very exalted, as we had three rabbis (Sam, his brother Simcha, and their father) During the main course (after a delicious soup garnished with pine needles that fell from the skhakh (evergreens on the sukkah roof)– the skhakh in the soup was a running joke in the family until we switched from evergreen to bamboo mats), a gust of wind blew up from Hoyt Street, and a chunk of the roof fell off and hit the table, just inches from Sam's parents' heads. We had taught a lesson in impermanence to the three rabbis at our table, but I don't generally recommend this approach to Jewish teaching. Anyway, the Rabbi's parents were extremely polite.

Speaking of the Rabbi, it should be duly noted that the idea to have a Kane Street Synagogue sukkah walk is fully to his credit. About four or five years ago he suggested that some of us open up our sukkot to the community at fixed times during one afternoon during the holiday. Participants could have a progressive lunch as they went from sukkah to sukkah. The event was extremely popular from the start. Everyone has a good time and eats too much, but there is also a sense of community, which is, in the end, what Kane Street is all about.

Lisa, Jacob, Roger, Elliot and I wish you a joyous Sukkot. We hope to see you in our sukkah at this year's open house.

Sukkahs at the Schneiders and the Synagogue

By Howard Schneider

Howard Schneider was an executive on Wall Street for many years and continues as a vice president at Kane Street. His wife Arlene is a physician specializing in the treatment of asthma and allergy. When their sukkah was first built, Martin was 18, Renee 16, Lisa 5, and Dan almost two. Throughout their nursery and early grade school years, Lisa and Dan invited their classmates into their sukkah for snacks and an opportunity to learn about their holiday celebration.

Sukkot is a wonderful week-long holiday that comes as a pleasant break following the intensity of the High Holidays. Yet until about two decades ago, except in the most traditional Conservative and Orthodox households in Brooklyn, the holiday was mostly observed only in communal settings such as synagogues, Jewish schools and Hillel houses. More recently, in part thanks to innovative firms offering modular and custom-built sukkahs, a larger number of families have realized they can easily build their own sukkahs at home in gardens or on balconies.

The Hebrew word *sukkah* is often translated as “booth”, but a more descriptive translation is “shelter”. Think of a temporary shelter that a town-dwelling farmer might build in his fields during the harvest to shade him, his family and workers from the hot sun during a midday break and to protect them from the breezes. The Torah relates the sukkah both to harvesting the bounty of G-d’s produce and to the protective cloud that G-d provided to shade the Israelites as they wandered for forty years under the desert sun. As a temporary shelter, a sukkah has four walls although one wall may be the permanent wall of a home or other adjacent structure. Its roof of bamboo poles or mats, branches and leaves, blocks at least half of the sunlight during the day and allows stars in at night, reminding us of our temporary setting and agricultural roots.

It was exactly twenty years ago that Arlene and I were shopping before the High Holidays in Borough Park. We stopped at a store named “Custom Succahs” to see whether there was a sukkah that could fit on the deck of our brownstone. We needed one with a frame tall enough to allow the kitchen door to open into the sukkah and large enough to accommodate our family of four children, Arlene’s late mother who was living with us, and guests. The store owner showed us the materials available in 8-foot heights that could be set-up with an open wall and against the rear wall of the house. We selected white fiberglass, which allowed daylight to shine through.

A few days later, the unassembled parts of our new custom sukkah arrived at our home. The salesman had recommended that we contact Tsippi, an artist who painted fiberglass panels. After sundown on Saturday night, I put one panel on the roof of our station wagon and shlepped it to the artist’s apartment at the far end of Coney Island Avenue. Tsippi painted a cornucopia of fruit, wine, and flowers on the panel, and I shlepped it home the following afternoon. We enjoyed her beautiful artwork for about twelve years until, inspired by the clear plastic walls of Nancy and Paul Fink’s sukkah, my son Dan and I replaced the fiberglass panels with clear lexan panels from a Canal Street shop. Thus, we switched from the beautiful but artificial decor to the natural view of our garden.

Sukkah decorations are often quite imaginative. Many people use the greeting cards they received for Rosh Hashanah. We hang fruits and vegetables of the season, buying as many exotic species as possible, such a cherimoya, key limes, and hot peppers on their branches. Arlene shops at country markets and returns with stacks of hay, stalks of corn, pumpkins, squashes, dry gourds and decorative kale. Cranberries are strung with needle and thread, and then hung along the walls and across the diagonals. We also hang posters from Borough Park that display the blessings for making Kiddush in the sukkah and for shaking the *lulav* and *etrog*.

Inevitably, not every fall evening in Brooklyn is blessed with mild weather. Some days and evenings in the sukkah have been especially delightful, but on others, diners must resort to heavy sweaters and jackets. Rain also can dampen the festivities. If stars can be seen in the sukkah, rain will come in as well. During rainfall, the most essential activity to retain is to make Kiddush in the sukkah on the first two holiday nights, being sure to be seated while drinking the wine. On the other five nights, the essential *mitzvah* is saying *hamotzi* and eating bread while seated. After these mitzvot are done, we can continue with dinner indoors.

Several years ago, Dan and I met the challenge of “rain.” We had observed sukkahs in the Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn that had tarps protecting them during rainy “off hours”. These tarps are removed for Kiddush and then quickly replaced afterwards if it’s raining. Dan realized with mechanical ingenuity that we too could have such a tarp. We fastened one end of our tarp to the second floor windows above the sukkah and angled it sufficiently so rain would run off past the deck railing. That’s the “on” position. At the other end of the tarp, we looped a rope to a set of pulleys that run from the roof of the house to the rear of the garden. Standing in the garden, we can raise the tarp vertically up to the rear wall of our house. This is the “off” position. The device satisfies the *halachic* requirement for the structure to be open – at least for *kiddush* and *hamotzi* – to the sun and the stars. In this way even in rainy weather, we can have a reasonably dry meal with family and friends in our harvest shelter.

The religious obligations are not only to build a sukkah and dwell in it, but also to invite guests into your sukkah. After all, not everyone in the community can build their own. Honored guests are traditionally referred to by the Aramaic word *ushpizin* from Babylonian times. Biblical *ushpizin* might include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David. Decorative posters welcoming the patriarchs are available in Hasidic neighborhoods. More modern traditionalists also include our female ancestors. In our sukkah, the honorees the first day are Abraham and Sarah. On the second day, we honor Isaac and Rebecca. In 2005 Kane Street Synagogue's annual Israeli Film Festival featured a charming movie entitled *Ushpizin* that told the story of a Hasidic couple in modern Jerusalem who welcomed an old friend and his buddy into their sukkah as *ushpizin*, unaware their guests were escaped convicts. This movie, screened a few months before Sukkot, reinforced our celebration.

The Synagogue's sukkahs have stories of their own. The congregation has erected sukkahs in the courtyard between the sanctuary and the community building since 1905 when Baith Israel moved to this site. At some point, supports were nailed to the two opposite building walls. Every year we placed 12-foot beams from support to support and lay bamboo and evergreen branches across the beams to create a lovely sukkah. The structure worked well enough for many years although some members worried about two possible halachic imperfections. The use of two permanent walls was questionable; one wall would be OK, but not two. In addition, the iron fire escape over a portion of the sukkah probably constituted an impermissible overhead structure. Nevertheless, our old sukkah accommodated fifty to sixty people, and enable us to enjoy the spirit of the holiday.

In 2003 and 2004 the old community building was mostly demolished to make way for the Goldman Educational Center. During the construction the congregation celebrated Sukkot in an intimate prefab sukkah in the narrow front yard between the sanctuary and the railing on Kane Street. In the renovation process, the old fire escape was entirely removed, enlarging the usable floor area between the buildings. The old courtyard became the new atrium. We purchased a new sukkah, customized for our atrium. Its 12 x 40 feet dimension has snap-together framed panels of white nylon walls with clear acrylic windows. The wall facing the new social hall, transparent to the glass wall of the social hall, allows the doors of the social hall to open into the sukkah. This new sukkah seems to spread into the social hall and vice versa, elegant visual complements in a handsome holiday setting. *Chag sama'ach!*

The year the Atlantic Antic fell on Shemini Atzeret:

Credit: *The Scroll*, September 1979

ATLANTIC ANTIC

The annual South Brooklyn street fair known as the Atlantic Antic, which in active political years attracts the big names in political activity, will be held on Sunday, October 14th. As usual, our congregation will be participating in it. However, because the Antic falls on Shemini Atzeret, our participation will have to be modified to conform to holiday requirements. These include the prohibition of selling, writing, or riding. Thus our booth will be concerned with distributing leaflets and giving out verbal information on our activities.

In explaining what could and could not be done on this occasion, Rabbi Scheindlin took the opportunity to state that we must comply with the rules of our religion, but that it is harmful to be any stricter than necessary because we are afraid of offending someone who may be over zealous in his/her interpretation of what is permitted. We will do what is right, he said, not what appears to be inoffensive.

If you are interested in helping from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m., please call Tucky Druker, at 875-0872 and volunteer your time.