

The Joy and Obligation of Hospitality

October 2012

I write on the first intermediate day, Chol Ha"mo'ed Sukkot. Among the many powerful traditions of Sukkot is hospitality. A Sukkah which has four complete walls is not Kosher - it must open out. Every night of the Holiday, in the Ushpizin ceremony, we invite two of these fourteen Jewish heroes and heroines into our Sukkah: Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Ruth, David, and Deborah. These had one thing in common: all were wanderers or exiles.

Spending one week in the Sukkah reminds us of the basic vulnerability of the human condition, and also of the obligation, privilege and joy of sharing homes with others.

Hospitality in Hebrew is called *Hachnasat Orchim*, literally "bringing in guests." The term implies that we should actively seek opportunities to host others, and to be guests in other's homes. Hospitality is not just a way to share a meal, but to share our character and values, and build a more caring and just world.

So, Abraham and Sarah received guests enthusiastically. Moses was able to go on and liberate the Jews and bring Torah to humanity only because earlier, people like the daughter of Pharaoh and the Midianite priest Jethro took him in.

As we began to announce on the High Holidays, we are delighted to begin a new program "Living Shabbat," which will facilitate the matching of hosts and guests for Shabbat dinner and lunch over the coming year. A Yashir Ko'ach to the devoted committee that has put this program into place. I encourage all to read the description below and participate.

Chag Samei'ach
Rabbi Weintraub