



Chagim Netzer Sukkot



In aid of the World Jewish Relief refugee crisis appeal

Sukkot: The Festival of Hospitality and Universalism

Whoever eats and drinks on the Festival is obliged to feed the stranger, the orphan and the widow, together with the destitute poor. But if the door is locked and the family eat together without providing for the poor, that is not 'joy of fulfilling commandments', but 'joy of the stomach'. Rejoicing of this kind is a disgrace.

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah

On Sukkot, Israel offered a total of seventy offerings to G-d to make atonement for the seventy nations of the world.

Bamidbar Rabbah

Hospitality to the wanderer is a greater *mitzvah* than welcoming of the divine presence.

Talmud

The joy of Sukkot is a celebration of the privilege of starting on the road to freedom, knowing that to finish the the task is not decisive, but failure to start is.

Irving Greenberg

Sukkot is a welcome break from the serious contemplation of the period which comes immediately before it. Rather than fasting and contemplating our own mortality, we get to eat outside, shake bits of tree around and are even **commanded that we must be happy for the entire week!**

But, of course, that doesn't mean Sukkot hasn't got some important themes of its own. Living in our fragile Sukkah alerts us to the problems faced everyday by those who don't have the safety and shelter which we take for granted, Jews and non-Jews. A key mitzvah of Sukkot is *Hachnasat Orchim* - providing hospitality to the stranger by welcoming the needy into our Sukkah. Just as Sarah and Abraham were willing to share all they had with strangers they met wandering in the wilderness, we are commanded to follow their dogma and be more opening and welcoming to people who need our help.

Following the period of reflection given to us by Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur where we entirely focus on thinking - about what we've done right and wrong and how we can be better people - Sukkot comes very quickly to put us to the test. We repented for our sins and promised to be better people and straight away Sukkot comes to find out whether we mean it. **Are we all talk and no action, or will we straight away get on with the work of repairing the world and helping those much more needy than ourselves?**

The Ushpizin

Reflecting Sukkot's theme of welcoming people to celebrate with us, it is traditional to invite seven figures from Jewish history into our Sukkah; one for each day of the festival. The traditional seven are: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David.

Looking at the traditional list may make us feel uncomfortable - for example, women not welcome?

Many people have made alternative Ushpizin or Ushpizot to better reflect our true rolemodels—the people we would be excited to welcome into our Sukkah and learn from - and the diversity of our community. Some include Sarah, Leah, Miriam or Hannah Senesh. Who would you want to invite to celebrate with you?



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The Refugee Crisis

The growing refugee crisis represents the single-largest movement of refugees since the Second World War. Over 4 million refugees have now been registered by the UN in countries neighbouring Syria, who are struggling to cope with the scale of the problem they are facing - currently approximately one-quarter of the population of Lebanon are refugees.

Hundreds of thousands of people are taking extraordinary risks to escape the region completely and seek asylum in Europe. More than 200,000 have made it to mainland Europe, but it is estimated that at least 9 people per day are dying in attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea. That so many people are going to such lengths to make this journey reflects the dire situation the refugees face staying in refugee camps locally.

Two of the most-affected countries are Turkey and Greece. Turkey is currently home to around 2 million refugees from Syria, whilst Greece is where many refugees attempting to reach Europe arrive and they simply can't cope, in the midst of their own economic crisis. **We are supporting the World Jewish Relief refugee crisis appeal this Sukkot**, who are acting on the ground to provide humanitarian aid in these two countries for the millions of people who need our hospitality and shelter at this time.

For more opportunities to do something and to learn more, visit our movement Refugee crisis mini-site via the website (www.rsy-netzer.org.uk) or visit the cross-communal response website (www.supportrefugees.org.uk).

The ongoing migration crisis has touched our community in the UK in a way we have not seen before. When we look across at Calais and beyond, we see ourselves. I believe future generations will judge Britain against its response to today's crisis.

Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner
Senior Rabbi to the Movement for Reform Judaism

Share your bread with the hungry, provide shelter for the destitute and clothe the naked.

Isaiah 58:7

World Jewish Relief's response

In the 1930's World Jewish Relief assisted tens of thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing horrific persecution in Nazi-occupied Europe, including through the Kindertransport and are proud to build on this incredible history and use our expertise to respond to the current challenge.



In Turkey, World Jewish Relief are partnering with the International Blue Crescent to ensure that 2,000 vulnerable and, in many cases, traumatised children receive the protection and education they need in these most difficult and disruptive circumstances. This will ensure these children can comfortably and safely settle into their new schools.

In Greece, World Jewish Relief will be working in partnership with two trusted local organisations, as well as the Jewish community of Athens to purchase humanitarian aid in-country and distribute essentials such as clothes, blankets and other materials to thousands in need. World Jewish Relief will be focusing on those most in need, providing shelter for mothers with new born babies, people with disabilities and other vulnerable people.



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