

Before I start my drash I'd like to tell you about a holiday hol hamo'ed greeting I love

It's common in Israel, but I rarely hear it here. If you like it, maybe we'll get to use it together.

It's a set of phrases from the kiddush and the Amida for the holidays, used in a kind of call and response mode. One person greets with

מועדים לשמחה. festivals for happiness. And the other responds with חגים וזמנים לששון. holidays and times for joy

According to the Academy of Hebrew language, this greeting predates חג שמח, but I won't go into the history now

Some use מועדים לשמחה and the response חגים וזמנים לששון only on hol hamo'ed, others use it anytime during the 3 pilgrimage holidays .

Today being shabbat and HM succot,

The initial greeter,- shabbat shalom, moadim lisimha. responder חגים וזמנים לששון, shabbat shalom

So, I greet you now with- shabbat shalom, moadim lisimha.

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I'm speaking today to celebrate and highlight succot themes, and also as the chair of the CNS community action working group to tell you about a project we have been planning.

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As with our other holidays, there are many levels on which to understand sukkot, and the various names for the holiday reflect some of these

1] The name Hag haSukot commemorates our narrative of going out of Egypt, to freedom, and having the shelter of sukkoth in the desert - [Vayikra 23:42-43]

יָמִים שִׁבְעַת תֵּשְׁבוּ בִּסֻּכֹּת You are to sit in succot seven days,

מִצְרַיִם מֵאֶרֶץ אוֹתָם בְּהוֹצִיאִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־בְּנֵי הוֹשִׁבְתִּי בִּסֻּכֹּת כִּי דִרְתִּיכֶם יֵדְעוּ לִמְעַן

so that your generations will know that I [God] sat the children of Israel in succot when I took them out of Egypt

2]. The holiday is also called Hag Ha'asif.- the harvest holiday --- It is said that in ancient Israel during harvest time people slept out in the fields, often in sukkot, basically to reduce their commute because there was so much work to do before the rains came.

[3] Succot is also called Zman simhatainu - The time of our joy - the most happy of holidays. Yet on shabbat succot, today, we read kohelet, which often has a cynical tone, an ennui of the soul. Sometimes we need to hold different, even contrasting, emotions at the same time.

And in addition to the names of the holiday — 4]. The frailty of a succah as a dwelling can increase our awareness of the tenuousness of what we have, of our shelter, of our lives, and can help us appreciate what we have

In that sense Sukot is a fitting sequel to HH, which also remind us that we might live or might die, be tranquil or suffer. While Ne'ila on Yom Kippur is described as the time the gates of mercy and forgiveness close, it is also considered that the gates stay open through hoshana rabba, the last day of hol ha mo'ed sukot

Being aware of the tenuousness of homes, of life, can also encourage us to be aware of others who live with tenuousness and vulnerability, who may lack shelter and other necessities.

And this brings me to a project you may have heard about, that our CNS community action group is working on:

Early next year, some vulnerable people will be moving in across the street from us, in the building going up across Univ. Ave. They will be going from being unhoused to the Step Up program which will provide them with housing and case management to help them rebuild their lives. We are hoping that as their neighbors, we can play a small role in that process. Two of our community action working group members, Joe Meresman and David Gill, are in contact with the organization that will be managing this project, BOSS, an acronym for Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency.

BOSS, which is about to celebrate its 50th anniversary, actually began as the Hillel Streetwork Project organized by Claire Sherman's mother, Ursula Sherman, and members of the Berkeley Jewish Community in the early '70's to serve the homeless mentally disabled population. This group became BOSS. and its first shelter and program for homeless disabled adults, the Ursula Sherman Village in Berkeley is still operating. BOSS has expanded and changed, and its Jewish roots are no longer salient, but its mission of social justice continues.

https://www.self-sufficiency.org/_files/ugd/f1eabd_5cfb8fea81c2418aa9f603a57822e980.pdf

The Step Up project also relates something in our torah reading today. We read In Shmot/Exod 34 that God tells Moses to sculpt two stones like the first ones, to replace the tablets that Moses broke - a second chance, a new opportunity.

One might say we are here today as Israelites because of this second chance. The new residents of the Step Up program, too, will have a new opportunity, and that's not necessarily an easy road.

What is our role in this project?

The CAWG is planning to organize and provide welcome baskets for the 39 residents who will be moving in, and we invite you to join us. Participation could involve donating time, energy or funds to the project. We will need help planning, buying items for the new residents to use in their small apartments, assembling the welcome baskets, writing welcome notes. David Gill and Ken Schnur have just completed setting up a CNS designated fund to accept donations and it just came online on shulcloud. Once BOSS hires the managers for Step Up, we will have more information about dates and specific items needed. Please look for notices about Step Up in the coming weeks, or talk to Joe or David, or other of our community action group members about this project: Jane Rubin, Judith Radously, Joan Bradus Ednah Beth Friedman, Carol Dorf, Ruth Konoff or me,

There's another quality of mitzvot associated with succot that is relevant here - Hidur Mitzvah. - making a mitzvah beautiful - the word hidur comes from the word hadar, splendor - hadar also refers to citrus. Hidur mitzvah most directly applies to the Lulav and Etrog [pri etz hadar] and hidur mitzva is one of the reasons it's customary to decorate the succah.

In the context of Step Up, hidur mitzvah means in our kavana and the objects we provide, we want to make sure we come with beauty: generosity, usefulness, respect and caring. We will be shopping for new, attractive items, and will take the time to write welcome notes.

I'd like to highlight one more aspect of the sukkah: The image of the Sukah associated with peace and protection. As it is said, "Spread over us your Sukah of peace". ופרוש עלינו סוכת שלומך.

That prayer resonates strongly for US this year. We also hope that the new Step Up project will provide protection and peace to its residents.