

Berlin rededicated its only major synagogue to survive the Holocaust.

San Diego Archive, September 2007

Printer friendly

guest column

by kimberly gadette

camping for jews

The holiday of Sukkot is referred to as "the time of our joy." Per the Torah, Leviticus 23:40: "And you should be happy before the Lord your God for seven days." It's no coincidence that the Yiddish pronunciation of Sukkot ("sook-us") rhymes with tuchis, since there's a whole lot of sitting around on that particular body mass, schmoozing, enjoying, eating grains and oh yes, laughing.

So, nu, is Sukkot one big giggle? Let's examine:

1. The Sukkot Vacation: About 10% of Jews do not work on the first two days of this holiday. Taking time off is not only allowed, it's encouraged. And because this year, Sukkot starts on a Wednesday, we're looking at a four-day weekend. Already this is delightful.
2. The Sukkot Housekeeping: Jewish law states that within the Sukkah, there are to be no pots and pans, and no washing dishes. Since cooking in a straw hut is even more flammable than Sid Goldenberg's Ex-Wife, you know, the one still wearing the red silk and spangled jumpsuits, cooking, like the Ex, is out. Even better, if seven days of meals are to be consumed in the Sukkah, then what could be better than having the local Chinese take-out restaurant on retainer. You want décor? Fruits and flowers are fine, but how about neighborhood take-out menus fluttering down from the ventilated ceiling? As for cleaning, not even the most fastidious will consider washing a canvas wall or sweeping the dirt-packed ground.
3. The Sukkot Fress: For all those who have been religiously sticking to an anti-carb diet, make room for the challah right along with the joy. It's Jewish law to eat bread in the Sukkah, particularly on the first night. Take that, you sadistic goy Atkins, you.

Let's review: sanctioned time off work, no cooking, no cleaning and a nice big bread allowance. Such a holiday like I can't believe.

Oy, but what about the actual making of the lean-to? Tricky, no? No. Even if a great many Jews actually own a hammer, most do not know how to wield the tool appropriately. The Lord, being the Lord, knows this – hence, the rules about construction are less than precise. It's no big to-do ... you throw up maybe a wall or three, let's say two-and-a-half, tops. Any material is fine, be it wood, canvas or Aunt Sadie's Jello mold from last Pesach. As for the roof, why make a mishegoss? Slop on a few branches, some loose vegetation (Aunt Sadie's Jello mold does not count) and genug es genug, you're done. With any luck, no one breaks a neck, a sweat or a nail. But as for breaking bread, see rule #3 above.

But wait – there's more. For the mothers among us, this may be the first time we get to have more than a one-grunt exchange with our teenage children since their bar/bat mitzvahs. (No X-Boxes, computers or cell phones in the Sukkah... with the exception of phoning for food.) The same goes for getting visiting time with that man who runs out of the house in the morning, and returns late at night, a.k.a. The Husband.

As for the single ladies and their suitors: a loaf of bread, a jug of wine and wow! How romantic to dine by the whites of each other's eyes, lit only by candlelight and the moon up above.

But with such an open-air roof, what if it rains? Jewish law not only suggests, but insists, that we run inside our homes to take cover. No need to be uncomfortable during this time of Sukkot, the holiday of joy.

Short and sweet, Sukkot is camping for Jews, without the threat of bears. And with our homes a mere ten feet away, we can't get lost in the woods. Well, most of us can't. Have I mentioned my husband, the one with no direction? Shame on me... I'm giggling all over again.

For feedback, contact editor@sdjewishjournal.com.