

## Rabbi Lewis' Message for October, 2009

By the time this newsletter arrives in your (e-mail) box, we will find ourselves in a brief period between the holidays. After fasting and repenting on Yom Kippur, we will be getting ready for Sukkot. We begin the new year by putting our prayers into action. Our tradition teaches us that the first act you should perform after getting up from break-the-fast is to hammer the first stake of your sukkah into the ground.

We are told to rejoice on Sukkot. Sukkot is a happy holiday that simultaneously makes us aware of our fragility. The midrash tells us, "When Job complained about his misfortunes, the Holy One of Blessing showed him a sukkah with three walls." A three-walled sukkah, says Rabbi Sidney Greenberg, is God's way of reminding Job that every person's sukkah has one wall missing. "Sure everyone would like to have a four-walled sukkah," writes Greenberg, "A happy marriage, gifted children, a successful career, good health and a long life. In actual life, however, no one has a four-walled sukkah. Sorrow, failure, loss of health, disappointment - in varying degrees, these are our common human lot. There is democracy in suffering - no one is exempt...Three-walled sukkahs are the rule, not the exception. And yet a three-walled sukkah is kosher for us. Despite the missing wall, the sukkah continues to stand. Life is full of heartbreak but it is also full of ways of overcoming it. So God was saying to Job, stop thinking only of the pains you suffer, you also have pleasures to enjoy. Stop counting and recounting your losses and begin counting your blessings. Sure you have lost a wall of your sukkah but there are three walls remaining. Make the most of those three walls. You will be held accountable for what you do with those remaining walls."

That is the challenge of this new year: "Make the most of those three walls." We all have too much to do, but our tradition tells us that is not an endpoint, merely a beginning. Our Center needs you. Pick a goal for the year. Do one thing around the Jewish Center you have never done before; join a [committee](#), come to [Adult Education](#), learn to read Hebrew, join the PTO, volunteer to make a craft in [Sunday School](#), read Torah on a Friday night, start a congregational choir. The list of possibilities is only as limited as your own imagination.

Hag sameach.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis