

Delivered by Rabbi Aaron Krupnick 9/28/18

### ***Sukkot Sermon 2018***

I need a new computer. My Apple at home is probably five or six years old now. There is really nothing that I need that it cannot do, but it is getting slow; like me, it is showing its age. I mean I have to wait like five whole seconds for a website to load, and that is clearly way too long! Right? But I can remember, as if it were yesterday, when I got to Beth El. I was the first person in the building to have a computer. It was a "386" with real floppy discs. The phone I got rid of five years ago was infinitely faster and more powerful than the computer I am now ready to dump. Life just gets faster and faster; we can do more, in less time than any time ever, so why not? All of us acknowledge how we so often rush through life. If our flight, traveling thousands and thousands of miles, is an hour late, we complain as if the sun refused to rise. We forget that we are sitting in a rocket ship that is flying at 30,000 feet at more at 500 miles per hour. We want to be there now! One used to write a letter and then wait a week or so for a response. Now you write a note, or rather an e-mail, and if you don't hear back in 15 minutes you start to guess why you have not gotten a response yet...

Thankfully, there is Sukkot. Sukkot is a deliberately slow festival, one that focuses, in a way, on time. During this holiday we read the book of Kohelet, Ecclesiastes. Kohelet reminds us that there is a "time for everything under heaven." In the famous third chapter we are told that there is a time for living, for dying, for laughing, for weeping. We think ourselves masters of time but King Solomon reminds us that the true artistry of life is to live fully in time's passing, not in trying to accomplish as much as possible in each fleeting hour. Sukkot slows everything down.

The sukkah is a symbol of impermanence; a reminder that we must enjoy what we have in the here and now because life itself is fragile. If a sukkah is built so that it is too sturdy it is not a kosher sukkah. We must sit in something that is fragile, fleeting, sure to disappear in time as a reminder that we must enjoy it now while it is still in good shape. The sukkah itself is a symbol of impermanence and it's also a reminder of our own impermanence. And if you think about it, that's what makes this holiday such a perfect follow-up to Yom Kippur. What is the "take-away" from "who shall live and who shall die?" It is that time moves on, but we must slow down to consider who we are, what we are, and what we have right now, in this moment. On Yom Kippur we are looking at our watches. On Sukkot, not so much...

I have never seen clock in a Sukkah. No, instead of focusing on time and productivity, we focus on the people with us in our Sukkah. Taking time to talk and to listen, to connect and to reconnect - that all slows down the march of time. How many times have you had a good meal with good friends in the Sukkah and totally lost track of the time? Sukkot has a way of slowing life down...

Not only must a sukkah be fragile, but its roof must be porous. You cannot fulfill the mitzvah of sitting in a sukkah unless the braches that form the roof have sufficient space between them so that one can see the stars. The stars remind us that there is something much larger than "us" and our frantic lives. Looking at the stars helps us keep things in perspective. It helps us to understand that sometimes, seen from above, we are only running in circles.

I think that the underlying message of Sukkot is that it is not the beauty of a building that you should look at. It's the construction of the foundation that will stand the test of time. So let us slow down, breathe deeply, and take time to appreciate the strong foundations on which our lives are built.