REPAIR THE WORLD

סוכות – Sukkot – סוכות – Sukkot – סוכות – Sukkot – סוכות

GUIDE NO / 01

SHELTER OF PEACE



SUKKOT CAMPAIGN 2021/ 5782

SHELTER OF PEACE

Introduction

Over a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, houselessness has been exacerbated and continues to be a growing concern in the United States. As numbers of unhoused or housing-unstable individuals have steadily increased over the past four years, the rate is expected to increase by 49% as a result of unemployment rates and the end of the eviction moratorium, ending October 3rd, 2021. These increases are disproportionately high in Black (3 times as likely as white counterparts) and Latinx populations (twice as likely). Jewish tradition requires us to consider the vulnerable among us, including those who are or at risk of becoming unhoused. Shelter, both physical and spiritual, is essential to both human survival and dignity; as the Hashkiveinu prayer, a prayer for peace, says "*spread over us Your shelter of peace.*"

THE HOLIDAY OF SUKKOT, IS THE TIME WHEN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY BECOMES MOST AWARE OF OUR HOUSING SECURITY OR LACK THEREOF.

Jews are instructed to build temporary huts and to dwell in them for a week. For those privileged to leave permanent homes and dwell in spaces exposed to natural elements and less secure than they may be accustomed to, it is a time to reflect on the blessing of having a home that feels safe and secure and to raise our awareness of those who do not have permanent housing to return to when the holiday concludes.

For seven days, we are asked to construct an impermanent dwelling with three walls and a roof through which one could see the stars.



DURING
SUKKOT

During Sukkot we have a full week in which we can fulfill the obligation of *"welcoming the stranger"* into these temporary dwellings. This custom implores us to honor the needs of those who have no permanent dwelling. During this *z'man simchateinu,* season of joy, we are instructed to celebrate and the community provide enough so that everyone has what they need, whether they hold the most or least resources in the community. During this time, we must recommit to seeing those who are most vulnerable as valued members of our community, and take collective responsibility to ensure that everyone has enough to participate in this communal celebration. This call to action informs us that everyone should have the right to joy and to celebration, regardless of housing status. Tradition implores us to open our sukkot and our minds to our neighbors, both housed and unhoused.

01. The **sukkah** is a deliberately fragile shelter that exposes us to unpredictable outside forces. This is done in consideration of the biblical understanding *"that your generations know that I made the children of Israel dwell in sukkot when I brought them out from the land of Mitzrayim."* **(Leviticus 23:44)**

02. A sukkah must be stable enough to live in for a week, but unstable enough to not be confused with permanent shelter; we must be able to eat, drink, and sleep within it without it providing true protection.

03. **Rabbi Jill Jacobs** writes, *"From this discussion of the sukkah, we can infer that permanent housing should allow a person to live a full and dignified life year-round, and not only for a week."*



01/

HOUSELESSNESS AS DEFINED BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT:

An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

01. They have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation.

02. They are living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements.

02/

HOUSELESS AND UNHOUSED VS HOMELESS:

Repair the World is committed to using the terms *"houseless"* and *"unhoused"* in our service-learning. Why do we use the language of houseless and unhoused throughout this guide?

01. Though someone might not have a permanent residence at the time, this is not to say that they are without a home.

02. The term *"homeless"* has become intertwined with toxic narratives, othering individuals experiencing housing-instability.

03. It is imperative when speaking about those who are currently unhoused or housing-unstable that we acknowledge the individual first and not their positionality.

04. The term *"unhoused"* recognizes the systems in place that have led to a person experiencing houselessness, it denotes that people are being pushed out of their dwelling units by inequitable housing policies.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Judaism teaches us to value the preciousness of each human *(kavod ha'briyot)* and to put the safety of life above all other religious obligations. In the Jewish calendar, this year is a Sabbatical year (known as *shmita*), the seventh year in a seven-year agricultural cycle. Traditionally during the *shmita*, all debts are forgiven, agricultural lands lie fallow, private land holdings become open to the commons, and staples such as food storage and perennial harvests are redistributed and accessible to all. Just as Sukkot invites us to welcome in guests, the *shmita* invites us to hold ourselves accountable for the needs of our community. The first step to combating systemic injustice is to recognize that it is occurring, and take strides to reduce the immediate impact. This is both a communal and individual responsibility and each person in a community has a role to play in addressing it. Below is a non-exhaustive list of next steps you can take to start combating housing injustice in your community.

01. **Create care kits to donate to a local organization or to distribute to your unhoused neighbors.**

02. **Donate water bottles and can openers to your mutual aid groups and local food pantries.**

03. **Donate your time through volunteering in the housing justice sphere; check out what's happening in our Repair the World cities**

---

04. Make eye contact with and/or say hello to your unhoused neighbors. Whether or not you have something tangible to give, each of us can recognize the preciousness of every human being.

05. Ask your unhoused neighbors what they want when you offer to buy them something to eat. This could also include cash or a gift card to a local food establishment so they maintain the dignity of choice in the process of receiving.

06. Commit to/register for your local Point in Time Count, the annual survey of houseless individuals in the United States. NOTE: In most cities, these take place in January.

01/ BUILDING CONNECTION

Unhoused members of our community deserve respect. Here are ways to empathetically engage and build connections with houseless community members.

---

01. **Don't make assumptions.** It's hard to discern if someone is houseless by looking at them. Respectfully: say 'hi,' make eye contact, or send well wishes to people you meet regardless of their situation.

---

02. **Respect their privacy.** People who live on the street may have limited privacy. Be mindful not to interrupt them, as they may not want to interact.

---

03. **Ask them what they need.** People with unstable housing may not have access to storage for non-essentials. Ask what they need and then do your best to provide those supplies.

---

04. **Seek a point of connection.** This can be as simple as a shared smile and eye contact, or a full conversation.

---

05. **Work with a local organization.** Research which organizations are doing work in your community and support them

02/ DISTRIBUTE ESSENTIAL ITEMS AND ASSEMBLE CARE KITS

Distributing essential supplies (such as food and hygiene items) is one way to offer support to your unhoused neighbors. We recommend that you find a local organization serving the unhoused. They will know what items are the most requested in your area, and may have access to distribute the supplies directly.

Here are a list of items that may be useful for you to carry around to distribute to unhoused individuals requesting support:

- Cash (preferred) or debit-card style gift card
- Masks and hand sanitizer
- Hygiene items: toothbrush, toothpaste, bar soap, shampoo, conditioner, body lotion, shave gel, deodorant, comb, razor, lip balm, facecloth, bandages, tissues, nail clippers, hair ties, baby wipes, and menstrual care products (tampons and pads)
- A pair of new socks
- Bottle of water
- Non-perishable snacks with high nutritional value. High-protein options such as: beef jerky, tuna salad and cracker packs, peanut butter cracker packs, breakfast/protein/granola bars that won't melt, raisins, craisins, and other dried or fresh fruit.