

Shemini Atzeres 5782  
September 27th, 2021



## Lulav Esrog, Hand Grenade

by Rabbi Dani Locker

It was a dynamite plan that blew up in her face. I read a news story today, a true one that happened just a few days ago, and I thought I just had to share, because it's so timely. And ridiculous.

A woman living in Maine was upset because her boyfriend didn't spend enough time with her. "Hmmm..." she must have thought. "How can I possibly arrange to spend more time with Jim?" At this point, most people would have decided that a text message, or maybe even fresh baked cookies would do the trick. But noooooo. Not this woman. Uh uh. She decided to call in a bomb threat. Yes, she called the local police and told them she planted a bomb at the medical supply factory her boyfriend works at. She was hoping that if the factory closed, Jimmy would have lots of free time on his hands. By the way, they manufacture COVID tests, so if you can't get the test you want, it's probably her fault. Then

one measly bomb threat might not be serious enough, so she called the police again and told them she planted 4 more bombs. Go big or go home, right?

Well, of course she was caught, arrested and jailed.

God did the same thing, just without the self-destructive behavior. Well sort of the same thing. Well... okay, nothing even remotely similar. Yet God created an entire holiday (essentially closing down our factories, and sending us home) just to get to spend more time with us. Let me explain what I mean.

We just finished the holiday of Sukkos. According



Candle lighting

- Scottsdale 5:58
- Honolulu 6:04
- Henderson 6:11
- Las Vegas 6:11
- San Diego 6:20
- Irvine 6:22
- Los Angeles 6:24
- Reno 6:29
- Oakland 6:39
- Park City 6:56

the heroine of our story decided that



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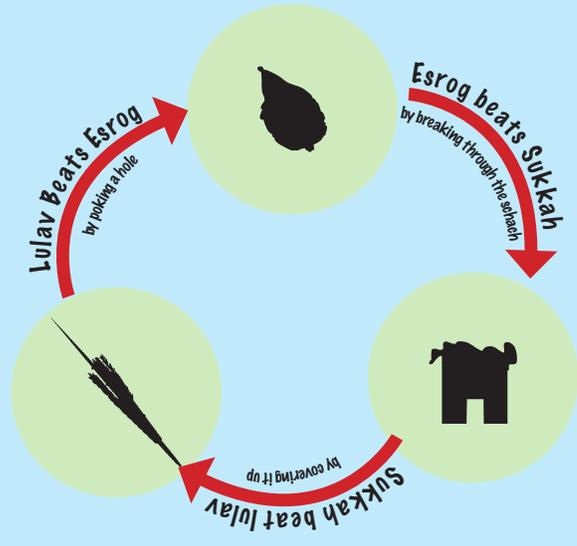
to the Torah, that's a 7 day holiday during which we shake plants and live in huts. After that 7 day holiday ends, there's a completely new holiday, called Shemini Atzeres (that's probably today, depending on when you're reading this). Sokkos commemorates God's protection of our ancestors in the desert. Shemini Atzeres (SA) commemorates \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_. Sukkos has the special mitzvah of Lulav and Sukkah. SA has \_\_\_\_\_. That's right. SA doesn't seem to commemorate ANYTHING or have any specific mitzvahs (sure, there's the celebration of Simchas Torah which is full of beautiful customs, but none of those are of biblical origins- they were all developed later). So WHY do we have a holiday that is about nothing?

The Midrash tells us that God simply wants to spend a bit more time with us. Holidays are wonderful chances for us to bond with our spiritual side. We have beautiful prayers, opportunities for study and best of all, no work (or school) to distract us. The actual words "Shemini Atzeres" means "The 8th day get-together." After the business of Sukkos with all its waving, building, sitting, and circling, God instituted a holiday with no specific objective, no busy mitzvahs, just so we can chill together. I think that's pretty cool. God really wants us to have a

relationship with Him, and He didn't even have to create a bomb scare. He's saying "You are mine (not the explosive kind)."

### LULAV, ESROG, SUKKAH THE GAME

Based on Rock Paper Scissors



# PICKLE JEWS

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## Holiday Roasts

Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to [stump@nageelawest.org](mailto:stump@nageelawest.org)

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed.

**Note:** We call this 'Stump The Rabbi' for fun, but that's not really the point. The goal is to learn something important in an interesting way.

# Stump the Rabbi



## #181 Intermediate Mode

Hi Rabbi,

It's the holiday. It's not the holiday. It's the holiday! It's maybe kind of the holiday? Why are some parts of the holiday like Shabbat and some parts aren't but are still holidays? If we're supposed to celebrate, why don't we do it all the way? If we don't need to celebrate, then why do we do it halfway?

Thanks,  
Eddie Hamo

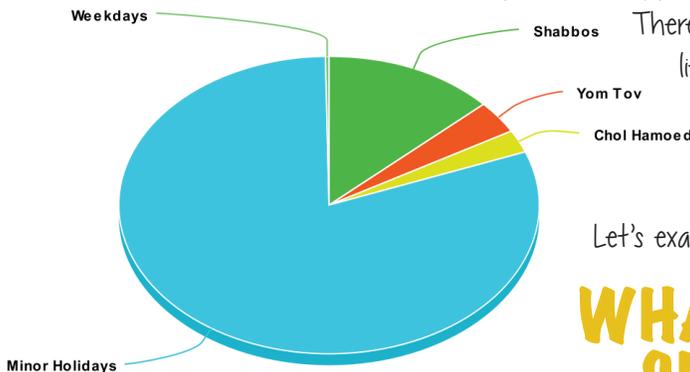
Dear Hamo, Ed,

It took me some time thinking about this question and researching it. First the background for our other readers: The two holidays of Passover and Sukkos each have two parts. There's the 'Yom Tov' (literally, good day) part of one day (in Israel) or two days (everywhere else) at the beginning and end, which is pretty much like Shabbat. Then there are a few days in the middle called 'chol hamoed' (literally, the ordinary part of the festival). During these days, which are more like a week-day, certain work is OK. Yet on Chol Hamoed of Sukkos we still use a sukkah and wave our plants around. On Chol Hamoed Pesach, matzah is used instead of bread, and during all of the above, certain special holiday prayers are still said.

There is a TON in Jewish literature about HOW to celebrate Chol Hamoed, but very little about WHY. Let's examine why it is that

these holidays are seven days to begin with. In the case of Passover it kinda makes sense because it took 7 days to fully escape Egypt (we left on the first day of Passover, but we were still chased for a week until the Egyptian army took the plunge into the sea (it can be argued that Sukkos simply follows the Passover format, as there are many parallels, but let's try for a better explanation). Maimonides gives a different answer. He explains that doing something for a day (I ate some matzah today, hooray- really, I did) is nice, but it may not have a lasting effect. When we eat matzah or live in a Sukkah for an extended period of time, we hammer the habit into our minds and into our souls. It becomes more likely that we will pay attention to and absorb the lessons these mitzvahs provide. 7 days is a natural length of time, says Maimonides, between a day and a month. There's a reason a week is seven days- that's a significant number (there are many, many symbolic elements of the number seven which won't fit here). The Torah therefore established

### JEWISH CALENDAR EXPLAINED: A PIE CHART



**WHAT DO LITTLE BIRDIES SEE SPINNING AROUND WHEN THEY GET HIT ON THE HEAD?**

deep thoughts Torah



these holidays as 7 days festivals so the offerings and practices we engage in will truly affect us. OK, so why don't we make all 7 days intensely holidayish, like Shabbat? One possible explanation might just be that people would have a hard time surviving without doing some work. "Sorry boss, I need 8 months off because I'm Jewish." But seriously, there are certain things that just would not be practical if we had a full 7 day holiday. Yet I believe there's a deeper reason, too (the disclaimer is that I haven't found this reason brought up in any classical books, though I did hear a very respected Rabbi confirm its validity). God wants us to gain from celebrating the holidays. He wants it to change us. Sukkos, for example, centers around trust that God cares for us (like He did in the desert), and using that trust to lead us to happiness (because we've got nothing to stress about). If we experience those feelings on a Shabbat- type holiday, it might not carry over naturally to our schools or places of work. By creating different parts of Sukkos, some of which are more holidayish and some of which are more similar to a week-day, we are more likely to

holiday into more parts of our lives and exit the holiday season as more complete people. Lots of people translate chol hamoed as 'intermediate days.' I dunno. I say we turn off intermediate mode and go into full ninja mode. Chag Sameach,

## the Rabbi



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I took a pole, and 100% of people were upset...

When their sukkah collapsed.

OUCH! GRRROOAAAN!  
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bring the lessons of the

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

Best wishes to our friends and family members celebrating this week...

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