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Shulamit Reinharz

Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues, Number 6, Fall 5764/2003, pp. 50-52 (Article)

Published by Indiana University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/nsh.2004.0017>



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11. New Profile, which I helped establish in 1998, has compiled an information package detailing the legal status of young women who object to service on grounds of conscience. It explains how to navigate the military-bureaucratic maze on the way to realizing this right. The information package, compiled by Attorney Yossi Wolfson and conscientious objector Moran Cohen and posted on the New Profile website has served many dozens of young women in the three-some years since its creation. A network of New Profile activists throughout Israel also answer many phone enquiries and often meet with young COs and their parents.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF SUKKOT INTO *SUKKAT SHALOM*

Shulamit Reinharz, The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute

A contemporary Jewish joke has it that most Jewish holidays can be summarized as follows: They tried to kill us, we survived, let's eat.

In actuality, this formula applies to only a few holidays—primarily Hanukah, Purim, and Pesach. Perhaps the quintessential celebration of survival is Pesach. The theme of leaving slavery for freedom has become an enduring motif in Judaism. Each holiday that deals with survival or freedom invokes cunning, military prowess, courage, and defiance of authority. Reliving these states of mind each year allows Jews to experience emotions of relief, strength, and hope.

Sukkot, the subject of this essay, has the potential of enabling Jews to deal not with survival and victory, but with the fragility of life and peace. What is the desired emotional experience of Sukkot? According to scripture and Jewish liturgy, Sukkot is *zeman simhatenu*—the time of our joy. On Sukkot Jews should feel joy without grounding that joy in the relief of having overcome murderous foes.

Jewish feminists have paid attention to the holidays that mark the Jewish calendar. We have reinvigorated Purim with celebratory and critical re-evaluations of Vashti and Esther, Ahasuerus and Mordechai. Feminist activists have also had a major impact on interpreting and observing Pesach, by initiating women's seders and, more recently, by introducing the orange to the seder plate.¹ What about Sukkot? Do we as feminists have anything to bring to a *sukkah*?

The answer is yes, but we are at a very early stage in its reinterpretation. The holiday of Sukkot could be closely tied to women's experiences, both traditional and contemporary. Furthermore, if feminism, as I understand

and experience it, is deeply bound up with the quest for peace, Sukkot has great potential for enabling us to move toward peace during a time of war.

It is not hard to find feminine significance in the flimsy but beautiful and fragrant structures in which we are bidden to dwell during Sukkot. A *sukkah* is a temporary home that does not so much look like a home as symbolize one; it creates a sense of home, as so many women have done for their families throughout the centuries.² A *sukkah* is decorated, echoing the major role played by women in caring for the aesthetics of their homes. The *sukkah* can be experienced as a room of one's own, very personalized and ever-changing. And the *sukkah*, neither in the house nor in the public domain, is a liminal space like that occupied by women and emergent feminists—a space where many things might happen. But what about the joy associated with the *sukkah*?

The joy welling up through the past may be welded to the memory that the wandering of the Israelites came to an end, that the wandering included the receiving of the Torah, and that the people were sustained in their wandering. But what might renew our joy in this day and age? The only joy that I think is meaningful today is the relief we would feel were the violence in the Middle East to come to an end. Our *sukkot* could be joyful places if they were *sukkot shalom*—tabernacles of peace.

Echoing this theme, the American Jewish Committee produced a Thanksgiving Haggadah in 2001 to respond to the profound grief that Americans felt after the September 11 terror attacks. Drawing on the Jewish liturgy, they wrote:

Spread over us the shelter of your peace.
Remove the adversary from before us and from behind us,
and in the shadow of your wings, shelter us.

Is there anything that feminists can do to add to the holiday of Sukkot, to strengthen its connection to peace, to reinforce the meaning of a *sukkat shalom*?

As Yitzhak Rabin reminded us, we need to make peace with our enemies, not with our friends. That is the challenge. Jews have a tradition of *hakhnassat orhim*, of hospitality, that is given a special emphasis on Sukkot. There is a desert tradition of inviting people into your tent: *Mah tovu ohaleikha Ya'akov*—How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! I suggest that we ask not only for the adversary to be removed from before us and behind us, but for our

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relationship with our adversaries to be transformed when we invite them to sit with us in the *sukkah*.

A *sukkah* takes a certain amount of work and effort. It must be built and decorated, and food must be carried out to it. The *sukkah* does not simply appear. So, too, does *sukkat shalom* require work and effort. It must be created; it does not simply appear.³ Feminist Jews could take a step toward realizing the joyous potential of the *sukkah* by truly making it a *sukkat shalom* and doing the work necessary to create peaceful relations with others—both personal intimates and political adversaries. The aroma and beauty of the *sukkah*, and its fragility, might help create new experiences and new relationships.

Notes

1. See Sonia Zylberberg, “Oranges and Seders: Symbols of Jewish Women’s Wrestling,” in the last issue of *Nashim* (no. 5, 2002: *Gender, Food, and Survival*), pp. 148–171.

2. The first *sukkah* I built on my own went up the night before I gave birth to my second daughter. I used strings and twigs, like a bird, and built a nest.

3. The principal of a local Jewish day school told the following story: Her school has a *sukkat shalom*, and when students have problems with each other and want to try to resolve them, they go into the *sukkat shalom*. One young boy tried it the other day, and then reported to her: I went in and nothing happened! He had been under the impression that simply “being there” made peace.

BEING A FEMINIST PEACE ACTIVIST—AND ASHKENAZI

Erella Shadmi, Beit Berl College and the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies

It was a nice, warm winter evening in Tel Aviv, but I was cold. I felt lonely, misunderstood. I had just left a strategy-planning meeting of radical peace activists, mainly women, many of them my friends in a lifelong peace struggle. An academic, an expert on Israeli extra-parliamentary and peace movements, had argued on the basis of a report she had just concluded that the combined struggle for peace and social justice was not working (it was never really tried, I said to myself). She suggested that the peace camp, by attempting so vigorously to enlist major parts of the public (meaning, I think, Mizrahi and working class-people), was losing its natural supporters (meaning, I think,