

## **Diversity Thoughts: next Jewish Holidays**

September 23, 2018

Starting Sunday evening 9/22, begins the Jewish holiday of Sukkot (booths, huts).

I want to bring to attention not just this but other "more obscure" holidays that coworkers and patients or clients from non-dominant religions may be observing. In some work situations, it can be difficult to ask for time off for a less well known holiday after just needing to miss work for more widely observed holidays. [Rosh Hashanah--Happy Jewish New year! Yom Kippur--we understand; Sukkot--what's that? And you need 4 days off?]

Sukkot is a harvest celebration and based on the temporary dwellings that were used near fields during harvest time.

In modern days, this is not a holiday as widely observed as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, or Passover (or even the actually minor holiday of Hanukkah).

The temporary shelters have to have 2.5 walls or more and a natural roof that stars can be seen through. They are used for meals (except if it is raining), but some people sleep and study in them also. They are often decorated with a harvest theme and/or religiously inspiring pictures.

In Israel, school is out for the whole week and many people take vacations.

In the diaspora, there are two Yomim Tovim at the beginning and the end, (days of no work, driving, or use of electronics if you live in an orthodox community as I do), making it an onerous holiday in terms of time off work (9/23, 9/24, as well as 10/1 and 10/2 this year). The last day is a separate holiday called Simchat Torah (the celebration of the Torah--5 books of Moses), when we finish reading the text of the Torah start again with the beginning of the first book. That last day, everybody gets to have a turn at the Torah, there is much dancing and some drinking. [It is a bit of a release after the string of demanding holidays that are then ending].

The holiday of Sukkot is beautiful (decorated sukkas, hosting and being guests in the sukkas of others, harvest-themed foods), and also a reminder of the humility and impermanence of life--exposing ourselves to the weather more than when we live indoors).