

## Homelessness Awareness in Succot

### What is this project?

Succot is an excellent opportunity to talk about homelessness, through its themes of vulnerability and the idea of tzedaka. This is to start to conversation on what we can do as students on campus through positive social change.

### What can you do?

#### Donation Drives

Is your J-Soc or any local synagogue or Jewish organisation hosting meals in a Succah? Encourage those coming for a meal to bring a non-perishable food item or toiletries in return for your meal, to donate to a local shelter. [Find your local shelter here.](#)

#### Letters to your Member of Parliament

Write to your local MP to ask them to do more for homelessness in your hometown or city of study. UJS will be happy to assist you in doing this.

#### Peer-Led Lunch and Learn

UJS have created a peer-led lunch and learn resource pack (the rest of this booklet), for you to pick and choose different elements to create a tailor-made session just for your J-Soc. You can pair this with the collection drive for a meal in your Succah, as mentioned above!

There are so many different things you can do in your area to make a change. Anything you think of, know that UJS are here to help in any way that we can.

## Homelessness Awareness in Succot – Session Guide

### Introduction

This session will look into how homelessness and Succot connect. From that, there will be a discussion into what we can do as Jewish students on campus.

This booklet is set up into different sections:

- Options and tips for delivery
- Session Points
  - What is Succot?
  - Why are we in the Succah?
  - What is Tzedaka?
  - What is homelessness and who does this effect?
  - Who are we as members of society, at university, at home and where do we fall into this?
- What next?
- Source sheets

For each section, you should pick and choose what is best for your J-Soc in the way they learn, whether that is lectures, discussions or anything in between.

Each section will be broken down into:

#### What is in this section?

A brief explanation of what the section is and what you will see.

#### Discussion points

This will be bullet points for what you can discuss and learn about, some with additional questions and statements to further a discussion.

If you have any questions please contact Grace at [graced@ujs.org.uk](mailto:graced@ujs.org.uk)

### Options and Tips for Delivery

You could...

- Discuss in large or small groups then share ideas.
- Lecture style, with or without sources.
- Short introduction of different statements followed by a group discussion.

Do not be afraid to challenge any views people offer, it helps with the discussion process.

Select discussion points to make this something you find interesting, as your own enthusiasm will be portrayed through your delivery. You can print off source sheets and handouts, make a PowerPoint or just use this booklet. The way in which you deliver a session is up to your personal preference.

Do not feel the need to follow this session from start to finish, make it your own and add your own source sheets and points if you so wish!

## Session Points

**What is in this section?** This is key as it allows for you to contextualise what you will be learning about.

Pick and choose different questions in this section for your J-Soc to learn about or answer.

## What is Succot?

- Succot celebrates the gathering of the harvest and commemorates the protection of the Israelites when they left Egypt.
- Arba'ah Minim (The Four Kinds)
  - Etrog
  - Palm Myrtle
  - Willow
  - Lulav

The acts of waving or shaking the lulav brings in the person who offers the blessing closer to G-d. The lulav obtains the Hebrew letter *vav* which is part of G-d's ineffable name. Shaking of the lulav then brings one closer to G-d's name and channel the divine energy.

A continuation from this is each different species is a hint or allusion to G-d: Etrog- written in Psalm 104:1 as "You are clothed in glory and majesty." The Etrog is called the fruit from the goodly tree from the Hebrew word *Hadar*.

בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי גִדְלַת מֵאֹד הוֹד וְהַדָּר לְבִשְׂתָּ:

Bless the LORD, O my soul; O LORD, my God, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty,

Palm- written in Psalms 92:13 as: "The righteous bloom like date palm."

צַדִּיק כַּתְמָר יִפְרַח כְּאַרְז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה: 13

The righteous bloom like a date-palm; they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon;

Myrtle- written in Zechariah 1:8 as “he stood among myrtle trees”

רָאִיתִי | הַלַּיְלָה וְהִנֵּה-אִישׁ רֹכֵב עַל-סוּס אָדָם וְהוּא עֹמֵד בֵּין הַהַדְסִים אֲשֶׁר 8  
בְּמִצְלָה וְאַחֲרָיו סוּסִים אֲדָמִים שְׂרָקִים וְלִבְנָיִם:

In the night, I had a vision. I saw a man, mounted on a bay horse, standing among the myrtles in the Deep, and behind him were bay, sorrel, and white horses.

Willow - written in Psalms 68:5 as “Him who rides on the clouds [aravot/willow], the Lord in His name.”

שִׁירוּ | לְאֱלֹהִים זְמִירוֹ שְׁמֹן סִלּוֹ לְרֹכֵב בְּעֲרֵבוֹת בְּיָהּ שְׁמֹן וְעֲלִזּוּ לְפָנָיו: 5

Sing to God, chant hymns to His name; extol Him who rides the clouds; the LORD is His name. Exult in His presence—

- Ushpizin

During Succot we symbolically invite people into our Succah called Ushpizin. There are seven supernal guests who have come to visit us, one for each day of the holiday. We invite those who have been wondering into our dwelling place.

- Here in an excerpt of what is said on the first day of Succot:

בְּיוֹם הַרְאִשׁוֹן אוֹמֵר:

בְּמַטֵּי מִינַח אַבְרָהָם אוֹשְׁפִיזִי עִילָאֵי דִּיתְבִּי עִמִּי וְעִמָּךְ כָּל אוֹשְׁפִיזֵי עִילָאֵי יִצְחָק  
יַעֲקֹב מֹשֶׁה אַהֲרֹן יוֹסֵף וְדָוִד:

“May it please you, Abraham, my exalted guest, that all the other exalted guests dwell here with me and with you – Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David”

### Discussion points:

- Jewish unity is a theme of Succot and the four kinds symbolise this. Bringing together represents our unity, despite being different.

- From the symbolism of the four kinds and how they are combined to make the lulav which can bring one closer to a divine power. What does this say about many forces coming together and what they can achieve?
- Discuss how this would then lead to the discussion of homelessness and Succot.
- What we can do as different people to achieve something together?
- Relating to Ushpizin, how does this symbolically translate into homelessness and Succot, by bringing others in need to our succah?

## Why are we in the Succah?

See source sheet 2 for more information

The Succah is a temporary structure that is roofed with branches and often decorated with autumnal harvest.

- Thanks for the harvest
  - Exodus 23:16

וְחַג הַקְצִיר בְּכוֹרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע בַּשָּׂדֶה וְחַג הָאֶסֶף בְּצֵאת הַשָּׁנָה בְּאֶסְפֵּךָ  
אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂיךָ מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה: 16

and the Feast of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field.

- Deuteronomy 16:13

חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לְךָ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בְּאֶסְפֵּךָ מִגֶּרְנֶךָ וּמִיקְבֶּךָ: 13

After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the Feast of Booths for seven days.

- We sit in the Succah to maintain a historical link to our ancestors and to remember what G-d did for us when we left Egypt.
  - Leviticus (23:42-43)

בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֲזֻחַ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכּוֹת: 42

You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths,

לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 43

in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the LORD your God.

- A lesson in Humility
  - The RashBam, R. Shemuel Ben Meir who lived in France in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, known for his commentaries on the Talmud and bible commented on Leviticus (23:43).

בַּסֶּפֶת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֶּפֶת: 42

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מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 43

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### Discussion points:

- Remembering the less fortunate
- Sitting in a shelter with no roof, insulation and barely anything coming between you and the outdoor elements reminds us of those that are less fortunate, that don't have a home to go into to warm up in.
  - How do we share our wealth and privilege with those that do not have access to what we have?

## What is Tzedaka?

### Definition

Tzedaka is not just about charity but as a direct translation it is about justice and righteousness.

In Judaism the support of those less fortunate is a requirement, this is through a formulaic strategy of how much to give, how to limit embarrassment to the recipient and how to set priorities for those in need.

### Contemporary Issues in Tzedaka as Discussion Points

- The social and economic realities of modernity have raised new questions and challenges for those that want to act on the traditional obligation to assist the poor.
- What extent is welfare provided by the state remove the necessity for individual initiative in tzedaka?
- What balance should be placed between supporting the wider society and supporting other Jews?
- To what extent must Jews today return to the biblical origins of tzedaka in a wider concern for fairness and justice, shaping a Jewish imperative to address the root causes of poverty and social injustice?
- How do we negate these contemporary issues?

### What is homelessness and who does this affect?

There are different types of homelessness.

- Rough sleeping
  - This is the most visible form of homelessness, this is someone who sleeps on the streets. Many people who sleep out will suffer from multiple health conditions, including mental health problems.
- Statutory homelessness
  - Local authorities have to secure homes for some groups of people. Tens of thousands of people each year apply to their local authority for assistance.
  - To be legally defined as homeless you must lack a secure place to live or not reasonably able to stay. There are strict criteria to meet for the local authority to provide temporary housing.
- Hidden homelessness
  - Many people who are not entitled to housing, or who don't even approach their councils for help, are not counted in statistics.
  - These people stay in hostels, B&Bs in overcrowded accommodation or concealed housing. Or on the floors or sofas of friends and family.

### Discussion point

- Is this safe or healthy, physically and mentally?
- What kind of cycle does this create within society?
- What can we do to change this?
- Why should we think about homelessness in Succot? See “Why are we in the Succah?” and Source sheet 1.
- Who are we as members of society, at university, at home and where do we fall into this?
  - This could be a useful way to discuss what has been learnt and use people’s personal impression of the session to relate it to the following section of “What Next?”

**Is there anything you have seen recently, a story, article or video? Share it with your J-Soc during your session.**

### What Next?

**What is in this section?** There will be suggestions of how you can be involved as part of an ongoing social change project throughout the year. This is also a great opportunity to discuss and come up with your own action points.

- Write letters to your local MP, UJS can help you with this. Find you MP here.
- What is going on in your city to help? Are there drop in centres or homeless shelters that need volunteers?
- Can you organise a donation drive on your campus. Are there other J-Soc events that you can exchange tickets for non-perishable food items or toiletries? Contact your local food bank and see what they need the most.
- Mitzvah Day is coming next month you can use this day to volunteer in your community, help at a food bank or homeless shelter.

## Source Sheet 1- What is Succot?

### The Four Kinds

#### Etrog- Psalm 104:1

בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי גְדֹלַת מְאֹד הוֹד וְהַדָּר לְבִשְׂתָּ: 1

Bless the LORD, O my soul; O LORD, my God, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty,

#### Palm- Psalm 92:13

צַדִּיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרַח כְּאַרְז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה: 13

The righteous bloom like a date-palm; they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon;

#### Myrtle- Zechariah 1:8

רָאִיתִי | הַלַּיְלָה וְהִנֵּה־אִישׁ רֹכֵב עַל־סוּס אָדָם וְהוּא עֹמֵד בֵּין הַהַדְסִים אֲשֶׁר  
בְּמִצְלָה וְאַחֲרָיו סוּסִים אֲדָמִים שְׂרָקִים וְלִבְנָיִם: 8

In the night, I had a vision. I saw a man, mounted on a bay horse, standing among the myrtles in the Deep, and behind him were bay, sorrel, and white horses.

#### Willow- Psalms 68:5

שִׁירוּ | לְאֱלֹהִים זַמְרוּ שִׁמּוֹ סֹלוּ לְרֹכֵב בַּעֲרֵבוֹת בְּיָה שִׁמּוֹ וְעִלְזוּ לְפָנָיו: 5

Sing to God, chant hymns to His name; extol Him who rides the clouds; the LORD is His name. Exult in His presence—

#### Ushpizin- Day one prayer

ביום הראשון אומר:

בְּמַטֵּי מִינָה אֲבָרְהָם אוֹשְׁפִיזוּ עִילָאֵי דִיתְבֵי עָמִי וְעַמְךָ כָּל אוֹשְׁפִיזֵי עִילָאֵי יִצְחָק  
יַעֲקֹב מִשָּׁה אֶהְרֹן יוֹסֵף וְדָוִד:

May it please you, Abraham, my exalted guest, that all the other exalted guests dwell here with me and with you – Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David

## Source sheet 2- Why are we in the Succah?

Exodus 23:16

וְחַג הַקִּצִּיר בְּכוֹרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע בַּשָּׂדֶה וְחַג הָאָסִף בְּצֵאת הַשָּׁנָה בְּאָסְפֶךָ  
אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂיךָ מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה: 16

and the Feast of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field.

Deuteronomy 16:13

חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בְּאָסְפֶךָ מִגֶּרְנֶךָ וּמִקִּבְּבֶךָ: 13

After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the Feast of Booths for seven days.

Leviticus (23:42-43)

בְּסֻכּוֹת תִּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֲזֻחַח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁבוּ בְּסֻכּוֹת: 42

You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths,

לְמַעַן יָדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בְּסֻכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 43

in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 and Rashbam, R. Shemuel Ben Meir's commentary

וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ כֹּחִי וְעֹצְמוֹ יָדַי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת־הַחֵיל הַזֶּה: 17

and you say to yourselves, “My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me.”

וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הִנְתֵּן לְךָ כֹּחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל לְמַעַן הַקִּים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתָּיִךָ כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה: (פ) 18

Remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers, as is still the case.

Commentary from Rashbam, R. Shemuel Ben Meir

Why do I command you to do this?... Do not say in your hearts, “My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me. Remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17-18). Therefore, the people leave houses filled with good at the harvest season and they dwell in sukkot as a reminder that they had no property in the desert or homes to inhabit. This is why God designated Sukkot at the harvest season, so that a person’s heart should not grow haughty because of houses filled with everything good, lest they say: “Our hands made all of this wealth for us.”