



MENTAL HEALTH USHPEZIN

The sukkah is a place for gathering, community and guests. The Talmud states:

דְּכָתִיב: "כָּל הָאֲזָרַח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסּוּכּוֹת", מְלַמֵּד שְׁכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאוּיִם לֵישֵׁב בַּסּוּכָה אַחַת

As it is written: "All the homeborn in Israel shall reside in sukkot" (Leviticus 23:42). This teaches that all of the Jewish people are fit to reside in one sukkah. (Talmud, Sukkah 27b.)

Like all holidays, it is customary to invite friends and family to your holiday celebration. Some communities actually have the practice of "sukkah hopping" on the final days of Sukkot, with people visiting each others' sukkot and eating different treats in each one. But Sukkot's emphasis on guests has a unique component expressed in the Zohar's idea of the ushpezin.

Literally meaning "guests," the idea of the ushpezin comes from a mystical tradition that every night of Sukkot is associated with a different founding figure of the Jewish people visiting our sukkot, representing a different sefira. Sefirot is a Kabbalistic term for the 10 qualities of God that we connect with through our actions. For example, one quality in this tradition is "Chesed," or kindness; through doing our own acts of kindness, we connect with God's kindness and act as vessels bringing Godliness into the world.





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The traditional ushpezin and their corresponding godly qualities are as follows:

Day 1 | Abraham | Chesed: "Benevolence" or "Love"

Day 2 | Isaac | Gevurah: "Restraint" and "Discipline"

Day 3 | Jacob | Tiferet: "Beauty", "Harmony" and "Truth"

Day 4 | Moses | Netzach: "Victory" and "Endurance"

Day 5 | Aaron | Hod: "Splendor" and "Humility"

Day 6 | Joseph | Yesod: "Foundation" and "Connection"

Day 7 | David | Malchut: "Sovereignty", "Receptiveness" and "Leadership"



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Through performing mitzvot (commandments), we emulate and embrace these character traits. Rabbi Yanki Tauber explains:

As each supernal “guest” graces our sukkah, he empowers us with the particular quality that defines him. This is the deeper reason that they are called the “shepherds of Israel,” for like a shepherd who provides nourishment for his flock, these seven leaders nourish us with their spiritual essence: Abraham feeds us love; Isaac, self-discipline; Jacob, harmony and truth; and so on.*

On Sukkot we “invite” these beings into our homes at a time when we are most open to this kind of growth and inspiration. Images of ushpizin are popular decorations for sukkot across the world, serving as the physical presence of these invisible guests and character traits for us to meditate over. However, the guests we invite into our homes aren’t limited to these figures. Over time, communities have embraced different ushpizin, decorating their sukkot with images of figures who inspire them and who embody qualities they would like to invite into their spaces and embrace more fully in the new year.



* https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/571505/jewish/The-Ushpizin.htm#footnote2a571505
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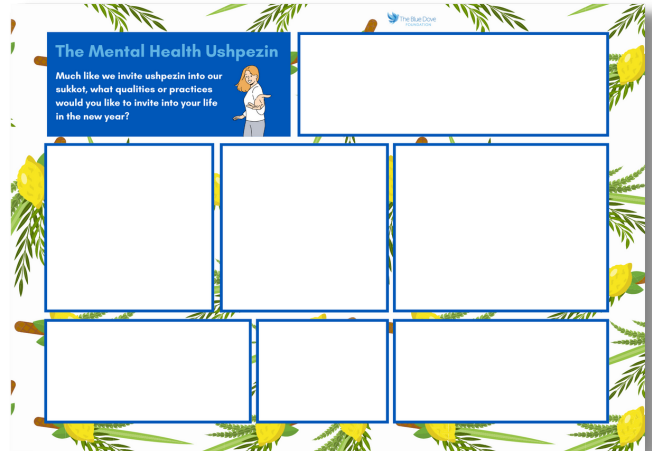
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Activity

Much like we invite ushpazin into our sukkot, what qualities or practices would you like to invite into your life in the new year? Maybe you want to focus inwardly on forming new self-care and gratitude practices. Or, maybe you want to focus outwardly and commit to reaching out to friends and family more often? You can choose qualities or practices that feel big or small to you – even small steps can make a big impact on our mental wellbeing.* Using our **downloadable ushpazin poster**, assign one new quality or practice to each night of the holiday, and draw a picture or jot down a quote depicting what it would look like for you to bring more of that quality or practice into your life. Then, print it out and hang it in your own sukkah or home this Sukkot. **Or download our Mental Health Ushpezin poster.**



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