

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

SUCCOT

29 SEPTEMBER - 6 OCTOBER | 15 - 21 TISHREI

## A Pumpkin-Spiced Succot



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I just love autumn. The cosy evenings drawing in, the crunch of colourful leaves underfoot, and the warm scents of crackling bonfires and pumpkin-spiced everything. It also happens to be the season of my favourite festival – Succot. But why exactly do we celebrate Succot in the autumn?

It is a classic question. Compared to all other major festivals, Succot doesn't seem to correspond to the time of year in which we celebrate it. The succah itself is said to commemorate the Clouds of Glory that accompanied our ancestors following the Exodus from Egypt – in the springtime! And if we are to leave our homes and inhabit fragile dwellings, then why do this as the

weather gets colder, damper and darker?

Several answers are given. A simple idea is that God specifically wants us to wait for the weather to cool so that we are leaving our homes for His sake, not merely for our own pleasure and enjoyment.

The great Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer, known as the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797), suggests that we are not in fact commemorating the original Clouds of Glory (which left the Jewish people following the sin of the Golden Calf), rather the Clouds of Glory which returned to us as we began the building of the *Mishkan* (portable sanctuary) on 15 Tishrei (the first day of Succot).

Another explanation is that Succot is directly related to the High Holy Days which precede it. Through dwelling in the succah, we can maintain the closeness to God we have just worked hard to attain.

The timing of the festival can be

beautifully explained by examining how the seasons of the year correspond to the spiritual seasons of the universe. Pesach celebrates our birth as a nation – and occurs in spring, a time of renewal and rebirth. Shavuot celebrates the receiving of the Torah and occurs in early summer as new seeds become fully grown plants. Succot is celebrated in the autumn – historically when the summer crops were gathered. And this is the time when we celebrate the fruits of our labours; our spiritual endeavours, how far we have come as a nation and our closeness to God.

So, this year as we sit in our cosy succah, perhaps enjoying a warming bowl of spicy pumpkin soup, let's celebrate how far we have come, whilst appreciating the gift of being close to God, and recognising the blessings He has bestowed upon us all.

(Ideas adapted from an article by Rabbi David Rosenfeld)

## Spot the 13 Differences

