

SUKKOT: A REFLECTION ON TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT HOUSING INSECURITY

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Overview

Late Modern Gem. Well appointed. We are looking to invite in the perfect stranger to share this unit in our up -and- coming neighborhood. 40X income. No Guarantors.



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Sweet Fixer upper. 1st, last and security to move in. Proof of Income and 870 credit score required.



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Overview

Spacious junior studio. 7 square feet. 0 baths. Rare find. Credit Check. No Pets.

Imagine being priced out of your Sukkah's neighborhood. Imagine a costly point of entry instead of the spirit of all being welcome as you cross the threshold. In the above housing listings you may have noticed the descriptions are not quite in line with the spirit of the harvest holiday that asks us to make merry with family, friends and welcomed guests in temporary shelters. But the truth is, many this year are facing the reality of housing insecurity and the fact that their shelter is precarious, with no place to return to after a seven day celebration. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development defines housing insecurity as "an umbrella term that encompasses several dimensions of housing problems people may experience, including affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing." With the threat of eviction moratoria ending throughout the country, we are about to face a great reckoning, perhaps by the time we raise the lulav and etrog.

Sukkot is largely about gratitude for what we have, as we are reminded by [Rashbam](#), R. Shemuel Ben Meir's commentary on [Leviticus 23:43](#): "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."

In some way or another I have experienced housing insecurity all of my life. Growing up hopping from budget hotel to budget hotel in search of "home", to paying for rent by the skin of my teeth, to now making an elective choice to [Digitally Nomad](#) with no lease signed, once again finding myself without a permanent home. Undoubtedly, because of my personal history, I think a lot about what being housed means, why so many in this country struggle with what the Torah proclaims to guarantee for all people.

This year, where and how we lived, dwelled, or took shelter put into perspective our relationships to what it means to have a home or not have one.

Many people hunkered down and found ways to love their living spaces. Perhaps this was you, redecorating or buying an important new piece of furniture in order to work better from home. Perhaps your kitchen became your sanctuary where a weekly challah was a pride and joy.

While some folks moved or bought houses, others sat in their small spaces fantasizing about what a better living situation could be while toughing it out in their [circumstances](#). Meanwhile, frankly, others lost or were forced to leave theirs completely. Housing this year was everyone's concern in some way.

So, perhaps, this season, as we hold that ritual, annual gratitude, willingly building our ancient "tiny houses" with three walls and a view of the stars, we will also make space to ask ourselves how we have created a society where so many among us are facing the threat or [reality](#) of being unhoused. Perhaps this holiday as we elect to dwell in temporary shelters, safely and distanced, to break bread and remember when we as a Jewish People had no homeland, we will spend a bit more time reflecting on the fact that although we make this choice and celebrate our good fortune compared to years gone by, this year our *past* is another human's *today*.

If you feel drawn this holiday season to get involved in issues surrounding housing, please find below a short list of Jewish organizations and projects already doing good work you might volunteer with or donate to.

We would also like to invite you, in the space below, to please share with the Avodah community your own links to organizations you know about.

Lastly, if you feel called, please add your own reflection on your personal housing situation, past experiences, or concerns so others feel less alone.

Organizations to volunteer with or donate to:

- [People Assisting the Homeless \(PATH\)](#)
- [Religious Action Center \(RAC\)](#)

Additional Resources

- [Article about housing insecurity](#)
- [Rabbi Jill Jacobs discusses the relationship between Jews and Homelessness](#)

Space for personal reflection: