

Sukkot Thought

כי עזה כמוות אהבה

There is a glaring paradox when it comes to Sukkot.

On the one hand it is a time of joy, a time of wholeness and simplicity. (Re)entering the natural world prior to the abasement and framing of nature. The Sukkah- the potential space in which the newly emergent subject exits the womb of *teshuvah* to find itself embraced, held and nurtured- the space of joyful simplicity is enabled by the newfound recognition of the simplicity of joy. The building of this space of joy, uninhibited by the previous years perception of happiness leads us to the simple recognition: joy must be built. Happiness is not some preexisting framework towards which we must walk, nor some prescribed space in which we must be. It is a choice, one that must be built from the excess and the surplus (*p'solet*) of last years joy. On Succot we a faced with the harrowing realization: if we are to be happy, we must choose, we must agree, we must believe in joy.

However,

We also read *Kohelet*, a mournful scroll that would make Sartre blush. A story of futility. The emptiness of air. A reading that opens the abyss, lets it yawn. Nothing will last, all turns to nothing. You remember life, for the sake of life, with the Giver of life? Death says otherwise. You want joy, wholeness and compassion? Sadness, lack and loneliness say otherwise.

Perhaps,

Joy must be measured by loss. Our teachers have long spoke of the pristine quality of joy that comes from pain, of light born of darkness. A simple sequential pattern. The joy that comes after the fall is endowed with a greater measure of intensity, due to its proximity to its opposite.

This is something else.

To live in a space of joy, one must relinquish control over the next moment. To experience the intensity, the urgency of *this* moment, one must lose hope in the past and future. Joy demands abandonment. Unhinged from the walls of the narrative sequence of our lives, the

past that bleeds into the present only to enable a greater future, we allow ourselves to live in a space where nothing is lacking.

To truly love, one must also be aware of the transiency of all things, particularly the beloved. Joy is as strong as Nothing. Love is as strong as death.