

Darfur Reading for Sukkot

Sitting in the sukkah in the rain of our time

by Rabbi Michael Strassfeld

It is the time of the ingathering of the year,

We have passed through the challenging shoals of the High Holidays. We heard tell of the knife halted in mid-air, of wells appearing out of nowhere, of the barren bearing fruit in old age.

Where are the miracles of our time?

There is a time and purpose for everything under heaven.

We sit in our sukkah, those fragile booths, to remind us of days of old when we were wanderers in an unsoiled land.

It is a time to remember what it was like to be refugees from home, from everything you knew even if that home was called Egypt.

We look up through the leafy branches of our roof to see the sky, the twinkling stars, to perhaps catch a glimpse of heaven.

Yet, it is a time to look around, not up, to see what tasks remain unfinished at this time of the year.

We hear the rustling of the leaves and canvas in the wind and try to stay warm with soup.

Yet it is a time to listen to the voices carried from afar by that wind,

Voces crying *Hosha Na* — Please save us.

As you saved us from the plagues of Egypt — *Hosha Na* — Please save them!

As you saved us from slavery — *Hosha Na* — Please save them.

As you led us across the sea — *Hosha Na* — Please save them.

As you fed us manna in the desert — *Hosha Na* — Please save them.

As you led us during forty years of wandering — *Hosha Na* — Please save them.

As you took us to the promised land, and we were saved — *Hosha Na* — Please save them.

continued on reverse



American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is an international development organization motivated by Judaism's imperative to pursue justice. AJWS is dedicated to alleviating poverty, hunger and disease among the people of the developing world regardless of race, religion or nationality. Through grants to grassroots organizations, volunteer service, advocacy and education, AJWS fosters civil society, sustainable development and human rights for all people, while promoting the values and responsibilities of global citizenship within the Jewish community.

Sitting in the sukkah in the rain of our time continued

It is a time to remember all the wanderings of the Jewish people, from Israel to Babylonia, from Babylonia to Italy, to Germany, to North Africa, to France, to Spain, to Poland, to America...

We know what it means to be driven from one place to the next, to be refugees forgotten wandering on the dusty roads of this world, to sit in "homes" that provide no real shelter.

It is a time to remember and a time to act —
Hosha Na — Let us act to save them.

But there is nothing new under the heavens. Suffering was and will be. The situation is too complicated. What can I do?

It is a time for miracles. A time to act despite all the questions.

Hosha Na — Let us act to save them.

Into the sukkah I invite as my *ushpizin*, these seven honored guests:

Abraham and Sarah who welcomed all travelers on the way into their tent.

Hope to remind us that "it doesn't make sense" does not make sense.

President Bush to take leadership on the issue of Darfur.

Determination and Commitment to do what needs to be done.

The United Nations to provide the forces to protect the people of Darfur.

The People of Darfur to know that they are not forgotten.

My Heart and my Soul to remind me of who I am and who I can be.

It is a time for miracles. The miracles of the work of our hands.

Hosha Na — Please save them.

Hosha Na — Save us by saving them.

Hosha Na — Please save us, all of us.

Hosha Na — **Save Darfur.**



Michael Strassfeld is the rabbi of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in Manhattan. His most recent book, *A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice* was recently published by Jewish Lights.