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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Israelis Protest Against “Medical Dictatorship”

Thousands take to the streets of Tel Aviv to oppose new vaccine drive and renewal of social restrictions

By Israel Today Staff



The sign reads: "We say no to dictatorship and vaccination by coercion"

Photo: Miriam Alster/FLASH90

What appeared to be thousands of Israelis marched through the streets of Tel Aviv on Saturday to protest against renewed government restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic.

Israel's daily COVID-19 infection rate is again in the thousands and the number of hospitalized patients is rising fast enough to have officials worried. In response, masks are again required indoors, travel to all but a handful of countries is banned and the “Green Passport” policy is back in effect.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has launched what some see as an overly-aggressive public relations campaign to changed the minds of the one million Israelis who have chosen not to be vaccinated. Bennett was accused last month of shaming these “vaccine-refusers,” and has since hinted that if Israel faces a nationwide lockdown over the upcoming Jewish holidays, it will be because of them.

At Saturday's demonstration in Tel Aviv, some Israelis continued to insist either that the whole thing is a hoax, or that the government is exploiting what is a relatively mild, albeit highly contagious virus to exert greater control over the public.

They carried signs reading “There’s no pandemic, it’s a hoax” and “Dictatorship via the excuse of Corona”.

The demonstration received very little media coverage. And where it did, reports suggested there were only several hundred participants. But those involved claimed some 3,000 Israelis had come out, and a video posted to Facebook seemed to back up that larger estimate.

Sukkot: What you need to know about the week-long holiday

A rundown on the holiday's history and meaning, differing customs, and rules and times for when Yom Tov begins and ends.

By AARON REICH

SEPTEMBER 20, 2021



EXALTING IN Sukkot at the Western Wall

(photo credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM)

The holiday of Sukkot is upon us, when Jews around the world will take part in very visibly iconic rituals such as eating in outdoor structures called sukkahs, shaking the four species and more.

Spanning over a week, the holiday has a long history with many aspects that hold a significant place in Jewish culture.

Also known as *Zman Simhatenu*, or the time of celebration, the holiday of Sukkot is biblical in origin and is described in the Book of Numbers.

The holiday is marked as one of the three pilgrimage festivals (*shalosh regalim*), along with Passover and Shavuot, where in ancient times, Jews would travel to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices at the Temple.

The festival is thought by some to be meant to remember how after the Exodus from Egypt, the Jews traveled through the desert.

While the traditional sacrifices offered on the holiday have stopped with the destruction of the Temple, many other rituals live on to this day.

Chief among them is the practice of sitting and eating in the sukkah, an outdoor temporary structure, and the practice of shaking the lulav (palm frond) along with three other botanical species.

Both are quintessential aspects of the holiday, and are done worldwide. Famously, the spiritual significance of the sukkah and lulav were on display in the Israeli film *Ushpizin*, named after a common Sukkot custom, where a financially struggling Hassid in Jerusalem tries to celebrate the holiday.

The act of eating in the sukkah is also something of a communal rite, with it being traditional in many Jewish communities around the world to go on "sukkah hops" where families visit other sukkahs in the community.

Another significant part of the holiday is *Birkat Kohanim* (the priests' blessing). This is something done every festival in the Diaspora and done regularly in Israel, where the Kohanim will go to the front of the synagogue for the priestly blessing after removing their shoes and hiding their faces and hands under their tallit (prayer shawl). However, it is customary for massive crowds to flock to the Western Wall during Hol HaMoed (the intermediate days of the festival) for mass prayer services, with *Birkat Kohanim* being a key moment.

But there is more to the holiday than just that. The seventh day of Sukkot is known as *Hoshanah Rabah* (great salvation). This day is seen by many as a kind of continuation of the repentance of the High Holy Days, and is marked by the famous smacking of the willow branches during prayer services.

The final day of Sukkot is known as Shmini Atzeret (eight day of gathering), also known as Simhat Torah (Torah rejoicing), though some consider it a separate holiday. Here, the focus is not on the lulav and sukkah, but rather on the Torah itself, marking the completion of another year of reading all five books of the Torah and the beginning of a new cycle.

Rules

The most obvious rules to keep in mind regarding Sukkot are the sukkah itself and the lulav.

Regarding the sukkah, the structure is built outdoors, often on the night after Yom Kippur. The rules are extensively discussed in the Talmud and rabbinic literature, but in brief summation, the structure must have at least two-and-a-half walls around three feet in height, with the "half" part needing to be at minimum 3.2 inches in width. The walls themselves can be constructed of any material in theory, though some halachic authorities such as Rabbi Ovadia Yosef have said that materials like canvas should not be used as the sukkah should not sway in the breeze.



Ultra orthodox jews walk by a "Sukkah" (temporary dwelling), in the ultra orthodox jewish neighborhood of Mea Shearim in Jerusalem on September 09, 2021. (credit: OLIVIER FITOUSSI/FLASH90)

Its roof, however, must be made of organic material. This roofing, known as *s'chach*, is specifically required to be organic material no longer connected to the ground, such as palm fronds or bamboo. Though it covers the sukkah, there must be space between it so as to ensure one can see the sky; a sukkah constructed under another roof or tree is not considered kosher.

Traditionally, many Jews decorate the interior of the sukkah extensively, though some, like Chabad, do not.

During the holiday, people must eat their meals inside the sukkah and say the blessing of "*leshev ba'sukkah*," (to sit in the sukkah) although only meals with bread or products on which one would say the *mezonot* (sustenance) blessing are actually required to be eaten there. However, if it rains, one is allowed to eat at home instead.

Additionally, as a time-bound commandment, women are not required to eat in the sukkah at all.

It is also customary for many Jews to even sleep inside the sukkah, though this is not done everywhere, particularly in places where it is too cold.

It is also customary every night to say a blessing welcoming the *Ushpizin* "guests." This is mystical in nature, and the blessing sees different biblical figures symbolically being welcomed in every night. These figures are, in one popular order: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David.

In Israel, sukkahs are a common sight for the holiday, but not just in homes. Restaurants, hotels or just public events and venues will frequently have them set up for guests or patrons to use during the holiday.

The next iconic practice is lulav. Worshipers combine what are known as the Four Species (*arba minim*) for this ritual. These are as follows:

- *Lulav*: A branch of a palm tree
- *Etrog*: A single citron fruit
- *Hadasim*: Three myrtle branches with their leaves still intact
- *Aravot*: Two willow branches with their leaves still intact

These are bound together and are shaken during the holiday, except on Shabbat, in a specific order of directions. This is first done in the *Hallel* prayer, and later on in the *Hoshanot*, where the congregation marches around the synagogue chanting after the chazzan.

The holiday itself lasts seven days, not including the eight additional day of Shmini Atzeret, with only the first day being *Yom Tov* (festival) with restrictions on working and using electronics similar to Shabbat. The rest of the days are called *Chol HaMoed* where one can work, though people must still wave the four species and eat in the sukkah.

However, this is only the case in Israel. Outside of Israel, the dates are slightly different. As is the case with most Jewish festivals, most Jewish communities in the Diaspora observe two days of Yom Tov followed by making the final but separate Shmini Atzeret festival into two days as well, with the second day being referred to as Simhat Torah (in Israel these two are combined into one day as mentioned above.) The High Holy Days are different: Rosh Hashanah is two days even in Israel, and Yom Kippur is one day even in the Diaspora.

As such, Hol HaMoed is observed on the second-seventh days of the festival in Israel, and the third-seventh days in the Diaspora.

In terms of prayer, Sukkot follows a similar pattern to the other pilgrimage festivals. On Yom Tov, the prayer is treated the same way as Shabbat, up until the *Shmona Esrei* (18-part prayer) during the *Shacharit*, *Mincha* and *Ma'ariv* prayer services (morning, afternoon and evening), when the special version for the three pilgrimage festival is recited instead, with certain phrases being swapped in or out depending on the festival in question. During Torah readings, specific portions are read depending on the holiday.

As a festival, the *Mussaf* additional prayer is also included, with the pilgrimage festival version of the *Mussaf* prayer being recited following Torah reading.

The *Hallel* prayer is also included, with a special focus on incorporating waving of the lulav and the inclusion of the *Hoshanot*.

During Hol HaMoed, the prayer service follows the weekday formula, though additions are made due to the festival such as the adding of the *Ya'aleh Ve'Yavo* (let us go up and come) prayer in Shmona

Esrei, the use of Hallel and Hoshanot, and the inclusion of Mussaf and Torah reading. Many Jews also have a custom not to wear tefilin (phylacteries) during Hol HaMoed.

The End Of Financial Privacy - Biden Wants To Monitor You Bank Account

BY PETER JACOBSON/ACTIVIST POST

In May, the Treasury Department released the Biden administration's revenue proposals for fiscal year 2022. One aspect of this document that has gone under-reported is the administration's new plan for reporting requirements for financial institutions.

The document is unequivocal about the administration's goal for financial reporting, stating, "this proposal would create a comprehensive financial account information reporting regime."

The Biden administration's goal here is to increase tax revenue by making sure no income avoids detection. How will the administration do this? It plans to leverage financial institutions like banks.

"This requirement would apply to all business and personal accounts from financial institutions," the proposal reads, "including bank, loan, and investment accounts, with the exception of accounts below a low de minimis gross flow threshold of \$600 or fair market value of \$600."

In other words, financial institutions will report any flows in and out of business and personal accounts of more than \$600.

This reporting requirement is far above any current requirements on financial institutions. As the document itself states, currently only information for certain types of revenue (including 1099 forms MISC, NEC, and K) require reporting.

Some may view this proposal by the Biden administration positively. After all, this isn't an attempt at raising taxes. The goal of this policy is to ensure individuals pay what is legally required, isn't it?

There are two issues with this way of thinking.

Cutting off Air to the Market

The first issue is highlighted by economist Ludwig von Mises's insight that "capitalism breathes through the loopholes." The great innovations and improvements in well-being made available through capitalism were not generated in a loophole-free system. Oftentimes, the most important innovations begin as small start-ups with razor thin margins. As loopholes close, the chance of these risky start-ups succeeding declines.

Entrepreneurs are not ignorant to the barriers of regulations and taxation. When something is taxed, you get less of it. If any entrepreneurs are right on the fence of whether a new business venture is likely to be worth it, increasing costs even a little bit may be enough to persuade them otherwise. Economists call this "being on the margin."

Avoiding taxes and reporting on small dollar transactions (either intentionally or unintentionally) is another form of loophole. De jure businesses are required to follow strict tax reporting rules, but, much

To understand the danger of making businesses comply with tax law to the letter, consider how difficult it would be for businesses to do so. The tax code is now so long that nobody, including government officials, are sure of its length. How can business-owners be sure they're complying with a document of unknown length? Put simply, they can't.

Therefore, not only will these increased financial reporting requirements raise taxes on entrepreneurs on the margin, they will also force businesses to expend more time and resources ensuring they pay the proper amount of taxes. Any tax audit with access to every account transfer over \$600 will crush businesses without a team of accountants or lawyers able to justify every transfer.

The burden of this policy, then, will fall primarily on small businesses without access to a massive internal legal team. A policy that punishes small businesses like this may be good for large corporations, but it's bad for market competition.

As Mises noted, capitalism suffocates without loopholes.

The End of Financial Privacy

The second issue associated with Biden's proposal is its effect on financial privacy. The administration's focus on increasing financial reporting is becoming a consistent theme. For example, the "information reporting regime" document also includes proposals for cryptocurrency reporting which can be seen as a precursor to the crypto reporting requirements shoehorned into the "infrastructure" bill.

The increase in financial scrutiny provided by access to every transaction greater than \$600 associated with personal accounts would provide an unprecedented look into the finances of many Americans. Even the powerful political will behind the 2002 "Patriot Act" only led to requirements that banks report suspicious transactions of \$5,000 or more.

Much like small businesses, most individuals don't have access to a team of lawyers and accountants the same way DC politicians and bureaucrats do. As such, these new requirements are likely to hurt poor and middle income Americans whose primary source of income is non-traditional. This is unsurprising given the Biden administration's record of threatening gig work, for instance.

Some may argue that privacy is unnecessary because you have nothing to fear if you have nothing to hide. But, again, individuals cannot be expected to perfectly comply with a document of unspecified length. Unfortunately, as the government approaches perfect information, perfect compliance becomes the standard.

At one time, perhaps community banks or other small financial institutions interested in keeping customers around could've provided resistance to this by generating political pushback or work-arounds for customers.

However, government policies have effectively destroyed a more decentralized network of financial institutions. Since the early 1990s the number of small banks has fallen from over 10,000 to below 5,000. Now politicians are proposing to leverage their relationships with the few big players who are "too big to fail" to examine every aspect of Americans' finances.

Especially with the lockdowns, the federal government already has small businesses, independent contractors, and the economy in general in a stranglehold. This new "Information Reporting Regime" will only tighten its economically lethal grip.