



# Four Trips for Chol HaMoed

The growing crescendo – mourning and grappling with reality on 17 Tammuz and Tisha B'Av, the closeness of Elul, the stark truth of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and then this national explosion of joy – Sukkot in Israel. A nation celebrating countrywide, with families out in their thousands at mountains, valleys and water sites.

While this year we may not be able to explore beautiful Israel landscapes, I would like to share with you my four favorite Sukkot spots, in the hope we will all be able to visit them again soon.

**1. Neot Kedumim Biblical Nature Reserve.** The main attraction here are the live displays of the Mishna's range of kosher and non-kosher *sukkot* – e.g., super-high, low, on a boat, etc. The reserve also teaches visitors about the Four Species, the Seven Species, and how nature, Tanach and Chazal are all intertwined.

**2. Ancient Shomron.** This is the site of the last capital of the Israelite kingdom, where Elyahu and Elisha faced off with kings like Achav and Omri and the remnants of Achav's palace are clearly visible. The Maccabees beat the Greek army here, and Herod later developed Sebastia. The army safeguards the roads and site so the public can visit.

**3. Ancient Shiloh.** The site of the Mishkan (before it was moved to

Yerushalayim) offers many craft activities, rides and nearby springs. The amazing archaeological section boasts several multimedia presentations and new discoveries. The visitors center stocks refreshments, local crafts including musical instruments and jewelry, wines, olive oil and books. Ancient Shiloh is an enchanting and engaging experience for the whole family.

The Benjamin region, with many springs, open nature parks and Biblical and historical landmarks, is studded with ancient craft installations, shepherds and their cheese products and amazing hilltop views.

**4. Susiya** (pictured). This ancient city comes to life with crafts above and underground, and street actors. The remarkable shul on top of the hill, olive and grape presses, the streets and town built to Mishnaic specifications – because they're from that time! And that's not all. Go walk in the secret... In the visitors center ask to see the "old" movie, and pick up local food, cosmetic and artistic products. They also serve excellent coffee!



For those who want to explore even further, I suggest checking out Yatir and Mateh Yehuda.

While lesser-known to English-speakers, the Yatir region hosts expansive forests and ancient sites such as Tel

Arad, many smaller sites, and a world of fruits, wines and other local products. Last Sukkot they had hot-air ballooning and rappelling from a crane-lifted aerial porch.

The Mateh Yehuda region features the Adulam, Britania, Begin and Rabin parks, historical sites such as Tel Azekah and Elah Fortress-Khirbet Qeiyafa, and is chock full of wineries – nearly 40 – and breweries.



Before setting out, check online for the tourism departments of regional councils and cities, Facebook, etc (and for those of you staying in, this is a great opportunity to virtually explore the wonders of *Eretz Yisrael*).

Those of us fortunate enough to be in Israel now will never forget 5780. As in ancient times, we pray that Diaspora Jews will join us here, thus we delay the request for rain – ותן טל ומטור – until 7 Cheshvan, so you can make it home before the mighty Euphrates swells from the rain.

May we merit a healthy, sweet joyous holiday and share that joy with those who sorely need it at this time.

**Barnea Levi Selavan** offers live and recorded tours and lectures for communities and families.

