

# “Inhabitants of Many Worlds”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Why do we celebrate the new year as autumn arrives? Everything is declared new and then the leaves drop and die. Sukkot, too, is out of place. Since it celebrates living in desert huts after the Exodus, Sukkot should be after Passover in the spring, not following the autumnal Yom Kippur.

There is a powerful lesson in the cycle of seasons and celebrations: We are both *of* nature and independent of it. The ground yields our food and the sun warms our days. Our bodies share the vulnerabilities of the material world.

Yet human beings also exist above the natural world. Our instincts are powerful but, unlike animals, we can countermand them with will. Our rational and imaginative minds travel beyond the bounds of earth, even of time, to conjure other worlds. In fall we can imagine spring; the leaves may be dying, but in their rust and flame we envision renewal.

Judaism teaches that the material world is real, but it is not all. Although we are custodians of earth, and responsible for its care, we are not limited by our corporeal selves.

On Simchat Torah we dance with the Torah, but the real Torah is not made of parchment. Like a human being, it is both of this world and beyond it. Autumn brings the color of last chances as we thank the Source of all worlds for the wonder of existing in this one.