

“Create Something Lasting”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Koheleth opens with the theme that threads throughout the Sukkot holiday: "All is vanity." Since we will all die, of what use is our life in this world? Everything passes away, so all our efforts can seem ultimately futile, vain. Sukkot is the holiday of temporality — what we build, all that we create, is only for a day, and then is gone.

Yet finding meaning in this life is the paradoxical mission of Judaism. We will not last forever in this world but, rather than driving us to despair, it must drive us to meaning, to purpose, to accomplishment.

The Torah teaches us that we create meaning by connecting ourselves to something greater — to God, to the Jewish tradition, to the community. Moreover, we create meaning by doing something with our lives that will not end with our death. "The great use of life," wrote the philosopher William James, "is to spend it on something that will outlast it."

What will you do this year that will outlast you? What will you build, whom will you teach, where will you plant? Yom Kippur and Sukkot together remind us that we possess only the moment. See the stars, hold someone's hand, share something deep, and create something lasting.