

Mesilah



AN INITIATIVE OF KOLLEL RABBONIM RABBEINU TZVI ASHKENAZI, AMSTERDAM

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The Joy of Being Alone

Rabbi Ya'akov Ball, Rosh Hakollel

The festival of *Sukkos* is associated with *simcha* (joy). The *Torah* says (*Vayikra* 23:39): “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you’ve gathered the produce of the land you will celebrate the feast of the Lord seven days, and you will rejoice before Hashem seven days.”

In the days when the *Beis Hamikdash* still stood, during *Chol Hamoed* there was the celebration of the *Simchas Beis Hashoeva* in which men would dance in the courtyard of the *Beis Hamikdash* and it was an indescribably joyous event. Indeed, the *Mishnah* says, “Anyone who hasn’t witnessed the *Simchas Beis Hashoeva* (of the *Beis Hamikdash*) doesn’t know what *Simcha* is.”

The *Torah* also requires us to live in a *Sukkah* for seven days, which means eating and sleeping in it as if it’s our home. The *Sukkah* doesn’t have a real roof, it’s exposed to the cold and sometimes during meals bees may buzz around the honey and wine, or a spider may come down from the roof to visit the *Sukkah*. In short, it’s a real temporary dwelling. This can be an uncomfortable experience, contrary to the nature of *Sukkos* which the *Torah* prescribes. So the question comes to mind: why is *simcha* so associated with *Sukkos*?

We can explain this difficulty by understanding the purpose of the *Sukkah*. Our Sages teach us that the *Sukkah* symbolizes *Galus* (Exile). The

temporariness of the *Sukkah* represents our temporary status in society, our feeling of not belonging, the knowledge that we haven’t got a real home. The Jewish nation are strangers in this world. For many Jews this feeling of “alone” causes the opposite and they attempt to assimilate. By adopting the customs of their neighbors they think that they will finally become one with them.

Unfortunately, this has never worked historically, as any glance at the pages of our nations’ history book will tell.

In fact, this feeling of being a stranger is a positive thing and is part of our purpose in *Galus*. In order for us to reach the final redemption we are required to remain distinctive in dress and behavior as part of the chosen nation. And so, in fact, when we go out of our comfortable home to the

Sukkah we are coming face to face with our real status in this world – *Galus*.

This feeling is part of the great *simcha* of *Sukkos*, that we are still a nation with a higher mission set apart from the rest of the world. This past year we have tragically seen constant and strong reminders from Hashem to remain a nation of authentic Jews, and so the message of the *Sukkah* is perhaps more profound than it has been for some time.

May our rejoicing this year in the *Sukkah* and over the *Yom Tov* be a source of satisfaction to Hashem Who will speedily bring about the full redemption.



לעילוי נשמת ליטל ימימה בת לאה לילי עליה השלום

Sukkos – A New Lifestyle

Rabbi Alex Wolf

The piyyut of the second day of *Sukkot* states: “בל תהי מצות סוכה בעיניך קלה, כי כנגד כל מצות דת חוקותיה שקולה” —do not belittle the mitzvah of *Sukkah* in your eyes, for it is equal to all *mitzvot*. The question is, why is this so?

The גמרא in סוכה discusses a disagreement regarding the reason for the *mitzvah* of *Sukkah*. Is the phrase “בסוכות הושבת” a remembrance of the הכבוד ענני הבור, or does it recall our days living in tents in the מדבר? The first reason is understandable, as it shows our desire to live with the *Shechinah*, but why should it matter that our ancestors lived in tents in the wilderness?

Why does the *Torah*, when speaking about the commandment of *Sukkot*, refer to it as “שבעת ימים בשנה”, “seven days of the year”? We don’t find this phrase by the *mitzvah* of eating *matzah* on *Pesach*.

R’ Moshe Feinstein offers a beautiful explanation. The principle of keeping מצות is understanding that our lives in this world are temporary. If we had this clear, our actions and lifestyle would reflect it. If we lived with the certainty that today was our last, indulgence in earthly things would seem pointless and depressing — “What for? I won’t be here soon to enjoy it.” Instead, our mindset should be that we are here temporarily, aiming for “the World to come.” Our actions contribute to that goal, so we can one day live a spiritual and eternal existence.

This explains the *mitzvah* of *Sukkah*. We sit in a *sukkah*—a “דירת עראי”, a temporary dwelling just as our ancestors did —for “שבעת ימים בשנה” – which alludes to its significance as something which affects our whole year, but for what purpose?! To remind ourselves that our whole existence is temporary, with one ultimate goal, to bring us closer to הקב"ה. This is why sitting in the סוכה is equal to all מצות.

Dear Friends,
The month of Elul and the run up to the Yamim Noraim has been busy in the Kollel, with many learning engagements, shiurim, a pre-Rosh Hashana learning event, a pre Yom Kippur Neshei evening, and a number of Hasjalsjelet events too. Take a look at our events noticeboard!
Wishing you all a wonderful Chag!



This issue of Mesilah has been dedicated to all of our brothers and sisters who were murdered on שמיני עצרת תשפ"ד and in the days and months following.

הי"ד