



KOLOT HAMIZRACH

The עלון חגים of Mizrachi Canada

Sukkot 5777 ▪ October 2016



Sukkot – How to make Yom Kippur last

Rabbi Elan Mazer
National Director, Mizrachi Canada

Sukkot is definitely the hardest Jewish holiday to explain. Firstly, the customs of the holiday are stranger than those of the other holidays: sitting in huts and waving produce seem like actions that are difficult to be made into a meaningful religious experience. Furthermore, a look at the reasons given for these customs does not clear things up. The Torah (Vayikra 23) tells us that the reason that we must sit in a sukkah for seven days is to remember the fact that Hashem sat us in sukkahs when we were in the desert on our way out of Egypt. This seems like a strange thing to celebrate, and oddly mundane compared to our other holidays. On Pesach we celebrate redemption from Egypt, our freedom and birth as a nation; on Shavuot we celebrate the revelation at Sinai and the receiving of our Torah, the constitution and life-blood of our nation. And Sukkot is to commemorate us sitting in booths in the desert?! That doesn't sound so inspiring.

Secondly, the timing of this holiday needs to be understood. Why does Sukkot come right after the High

Holidays? According to the Torah (ibid.), Sukkot is the holiday of happiness, with an emphasis on joyous celebration. Why then, does it immediately follow the solemn days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur? Moreover, the stated reason for this holiday happened after the Exodus, so why not have Sukkot follow Pesach?

To answer these questions, we will explore the other places where the Tanach mentions "sukkah", not in the context of the holiday. The sukkah appears for the first time in Bereishit (33), where we learn that after Yaakov met Eisav and his four hundred men and came out unharmed, he went and built sukkot. This seems very random—why do we need to know what type of structure Yaakov used? Next, we find that Sukkot is the name of the first place where the Jews stopped after the exile from Egypt (Shemot 12).

Then, much later in history, during the return to Zion after the Babylonian exile, we learn (Nechemia 8) that the Jewish people built sukkahs, which they

had not done since the first time that they entered the land of Israel, in the time of Yehoshua Bin Nun. The Gemara in Eirichin (32b) asks the obvious question: how could it be that this was the first time that sukkahs were built since the time of Yehoshua? Did King David not sit in a sukkah? The Gemara answers that, here, the sukkahs are symbolic, and represent the fact that upon their return from the Babylonian exile, the leaders of the Jewish community asked God to remove the drive to worship idols. Their prayers were answered, and this event protected them like sukkahs.

This recollection shines new light onto how we understand the concept of "sukkah". One could imagine that the Jews who were redeemed from the Babylonian exile might have been a little bit skeptical: what will stop this redemption from ending in another exile due to rejecting God and worshipping idols? Therefore, the leaders asked God to remove the root of the problem – the drive to worship idols. They felt that it ►

► was not enough to be saved from exile. They wanted it to last.

In the Tanach, this protection from future problems is called building sukkahs. This explains why Yaakov built sukkahs after being saved from Eisav – he took measures to ensure that his redemption would last. And when the Jews were redeemed from Egypt, the first place they went to was Sukkot.

This gives us enough background to answer our second question, why does Sukkot fall right after Yom Kippur? On Yom Kippur we are absolved from all our sins, and freed from all the mistakes that we made throughout the year. We are given a second chance. But this is not enough – we don't want to just be forgiven, we want it to last. We want the second chance to be a successful one, and therefore we need to build sukkahs.

This answer is good, but does not entirely suffice. First of all, it doesn't seem to fit with the Torah's reason for Sukkot which is to remember our time in the desert. Secondly, how does sitting in a hut help Yom Kippur last?

In his commentary on the Torah (Parshat Vayishlach), Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch expresses a very profound idea. He says that there are two parts to our redemption from Egypt. The first is the redemption itself; there we realized that Hashem is our Savior, that when we are in trouble Hashem will be there for us. The second part is the time we spent wandering in the desert; there Hashem took care of us, He gave us mann to eat, water to drink, and clothes to wear, and there we realized the fact that God is not just our Savior but also our Provider. Hashem is a part



of our everyday life; he is the source of our life, our health, our livelihood. This is why on Sukkot, we celebrate the fact that God sat us in sukkahs – he provided for us then, and continues to provide for us every day. Sukkot is celebrating the mundane, the day to day relationship that we have with Hashem.

The Gemara in Masechet Sukkah (28b) tells us that there is a need to make the sukkah our dwelling place for the holiday. Therefore we must bring in a table, a bed, chairs and dishes, and we should eat, drink, sleep, and even “hang out” in the sukkah. On Sukkot, all the things that we do every day – the mundane parts of life – become a mitzvah. When done in the sukkah, eating, sleeping, drinking, talking with friends and family, is a mitzvah. The best way to celebrate the fact that Hashem is our provider is by doing Mitzvot with the everyday part of life, by relating to God through the ordinary.

This is also the perfect way to concretize what we achieve on Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur we remove ourselves from material life – we don't eat, drink,

or wear leather shoes. We aim to create an angelic atmosphere in order to cleanse ourselves and stand before God. But Yom Kippur ends, we break the fast as soon as the shofar is blown, and we go back to regular life. How can we take Yom Kippur with us? Sukkot is the perfect solution, where regular life becomes a religious experience. The same eating and drinking from which we needed to withhold from now becomes the way in which we connect to Hashem. The goal of Sukkot is to take the spiritual experience of Yom Kippur and bring it down to the reality in which we live. The holiday commemorating God's hand in providing for our everyday needs is the perfect time to take the religious experience of Yom Kippur and make it part of our everyday routine.

Sukkot demonstrates the fact that we don't need to live in two separate worlds: our religious experience and everyday life can be harmonized to the point where we see God in everything we do. This synthesis of worlds is the pinnacle of our happiness, a new perspective on life that we will carry with us for the rest of the year. 🌿

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Q & A with Rav Yaakov Ariel

President of the Institute for Torah and the Land of Israel



- **An Israeli in the Diaspora for Shmini Atzeret**

Question: *I will be spending Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah outside of Israel. Will I need to sit in the Sukkah (without a bracha) for meals on Shmini Atzeret like people do in the Diaspora, or is there a fear of בל תוסיף (not adding to the Torah), as an Israeli?*

Answer: You should sit in the Sukkah and have in mind not to be יוצא - not to fulfill the obligation. The reason is that it is something of a public nature and therefore you must do as those who live outside of Israel do [so as to not create Machloket] (see Mishna Berurah 396:13).

- **Sitting in a Sukkah Without Permission**

Question: *Is one allowed to sit, eat and sleep in a someone else's sukkah without permission? (They can't be asked since they are out of town).*

Answer: If you think your friend will see it as a z'chut (a merit) that their sukkah is being used for a mitzvah, then it would be permissible. Even though in general we consider someone who borrows something without permission a thief, when it comes to Mitzvot we say that generally a person is comfortable with the idea that someone else will do a Mitzvah with their things, unless there is reason to believe that it is likely that they would object. And

when it comes to fulfilling the Mitzvah of Sukkot, a borrowed Sukkah is Kosher (unlike a borrowed lulav on the first day, with which one does not fulfill their obligation).

- **Going up to Jerusalem on Sukkot**

Question: *Do we need to fulfill the Mitzvah Aliya Laregel - of going to Jerusalem on Sukkot, and what other mitzvot do we need keep aside for Sukkah and the Arba Minim?*

Answer: The Mitzvah of coming to Jerusalem on the 3 major festivals does not exist today as an obligation but it is appropriate to remember the time of the Beit Hamikdash and go up to Jerusalem on one of the days of Sukkot. We find that during the time of Chazal there was a custom to go up to the location of the Great Court, instead of going to the Beit Hamikdash. It is said of Rav Hai Gaon that he would go up to Jerusalem on Sukkot and do Hakafot in a place overlooking the location of Beit Hamikdash.

The Rambam writes: "The Jewish people have been commanded to observe three positive commandments on each of the three pilgrimage festivals. They are:

- a) To appear before Hashem, as it states: "All of your males shall appear";
- b) To bring a festive offering, as it states: "You shall bring a festive

offering to Hashem your Lord";

c) To celebrate, as it states: "And you shall rejoice in festivals."

All three of these Mitzvot we cannot observe today when we don't have the Beit Hamikdash, but the Mitzvah of rejoicing (simcha) can be applicable even without the sacrifices. Today we rejoice with food and drink, by buying things for family members, and by supporting the poor in a manner that will make them happy, each according to their ability.

Furthermore, today we are not obligated in the water libation celebration, Simchat Beit Hasho'eva, which is a special Mitzvah of the Beit Hamikdash. It is, however, customary to hold celebrations in remembrance of that celebration.

- **Tying s'chach with zip-ties**

Question: *Is one allowed to tie s'chach to the beams of the Sukkah with plastic zip-ties?*

Answer: Zip-ties are not products of plants and therefore other rope should be used. If there is no other option and the zip-ties are just holding the beams down (and not the s'chach itself to the beams), it is permissible. Bedi'eved, even if the zip-ties are holding down the s'chach, it is Kosher. 🌟

Spotlight on The Institute for Torah and the Land of Israel



The Institute for Torah and the Land of Israel deals in researching and applying the land-related mitzvot (מצוות), as well as educating and informing the public about these topics. All this is accomplished thanks to the productive and enhancing cooperation and accompaniment of Rabbis, scientists and agronomists. All of the Institute's activities comply with the halachic rulings of Israel's Chief Rabbinate throughout the years.



Sukkot and the Secret to Happiness

Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Director, World Mizrachi

Society today seems to be preoccupied more than ever with the pursuit of happiness. Indeed, how does one achieve this often elusive sentiment?

Sukkot is the simcha festival. The Torah mentions the word simcha, or happiness, more times regarding the celebration of this chag than any other.

As the famous pesukim state: “ושמחת... בחגך... והיית אך שמח” – “You shall rejoice on your festival... and be completely joyous” (Devarim 16:14-15).

Sukkot, therefore, is the time to clarify what happiness is all about. In order to do this, I'd like to focus our attention on a fascinating law regarding the blessings of the Kohanim which reveals a riveting insight into the nature of happiness. The great Ashkenazi posek (codifier of Jewish law), the Rema rules [Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 128:44] that the blessings of the Kohanim are to be recited in the Diaspora only on the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. The reason he cites is that only then is there a heightened sense of happiness. Since the Kohanim need to be in a state of happiness in order to give these heartfelt blessings, the Chagim are the only times that they may be recited.

I always found this puzzling. After all, in Israel, Birkat Kohanim are performed every single day! Does this Halacha imply that only in Israel are people in a general state of happiness, and not in the Diaspora? We have all met many happy people living outside of Israel, and other not-so-happy people living in Israel? What therefore is the reason for this great discrepancy?

I believe that the answer lies in what the essence of happiness is all about.

Happiness is not a passing emotion or a feeling, but rather a state of being – a mindset. It is inextricably linked to a sense of destiny. The happiest people are those who live with a deep sense of mission and purpose, a frame of mind that their lives are dedicated to contributing to a greater good. To the extent that a person feels that their life is a fulfillment of their destiny both personally and collectively, they have a greater potential to experience sustained happiness.

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In Israel, the Jewish people have the greatest potential to fulfill their collective mission. This ultimately is the location chosen by Hashem to build their ideal society. It is inherently linked to both the ultimate destination and future destiny of Jewish existence. It follows therefore, that life in Israel, in and of itself is profoundly connected to achieving happiness. It is quite remarkable that Israel consistently ranks amongst the happiest countries in the world, as analyzed in the Happiness Index, a part of the World Happiness Report, in which 156 countries are analyzed by Columbia

University researchers. What is rather extraordinary about these findings is that Israel is situated in one of the toughest neighborhoods in the world, with almost daily terror attacks, missile and terror tunnels posing a threat on her borders, a potentially nuclear Iran in the years ahead – the types of security challenges that most Western countries do not face. Yet somehow, Israel is ranked ahead of countries such as the United States, the UK, Italy and Germany.

Living in Israel is the fulfillment of a historic dream of **היינו כחולמים**, and provides a sense of living out the grand scheme of Jewish destiny. It is for this reason that the Kohanim may bless the Jewish people every day in Israel, because fundamentally, life in the Holy Land is profoundly a fulfillment of prophetic and historic destiny. The deeper our connection to Israel, the more in sync we are with our collective mission.

I would like to invite each and every one of you to join our Mizrachi World Movement initiative of 'This Year in Jerusalem,' aiming to bring thousands from around the world to Yerushalayim over Yom Yerushalayim (set to take place in May/Iyar 2017), to celebrate as one the Jubilee of the city's reunification. Let us all come to Jerusalem and experience front and center our destiny, together.

A big Yishar Koach to all those involved at Mizrachi Canada and Mizrachi UK for this wonderful joint initiative of collaboration of our branches, and for putting together this publication for Sukkot.

Chag sameach, and I look forward to seeing you hopefully this year in Jerusalem. 🇮🇱

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Rav Kook: The Unifying Sukkah

From Ma'amarei HaReaya – מאמרי הראי"ה – "הסוכה האחת"

"For seven days...all citizens of Israel will live in sukkot" (Vayikra 23:42). This teaches that it is fitting for all of Israel to sit in one Sukkah." (Sukkah 27b)

It is impossible for people to achieve true unity, in terms of their differences of opinions and emotional essence, as long as [people's outlooks] are based on a petty imaginative outlook, focusing only on the most material of matters. This affects all aspects of individual and collective life. As long as sin chains [the perceptions that govern] our lives, there is no chance to reconcile differences and create unity and peace.

However after the light of Teshuva brightens the world on the holy day of Yom Kippur, and all of Israel is purified from sin, the purity of our soul intensifies and replaces the petty imaginative outlook with a pure understanding from within the soul; and it illuminates our perspective on life...When the holiday of Sukkot comes around we are ready, by means of our pure intellect, to have a clear essential outlook on life.

By means of this [new perspective], differences of opinion, which are divided by the opacity of our imagination, can now come together in unity. Instead of being covered by a fog of division and hatred, of quarrels between factions and disputes between individuals, which tends to destroy even the positive aspects of our physical a spiritual lives, the grand light of the sukkah will banish the petty imaginative outlook that misleads us... Then "all of Israel will be ready to sit in a single [united] Sukkah."

Unity is a common theme in Judaism. It is a beautiful concept to discuss, and towards which to strive, however practical guidance to actually achieving unity is seldom offered. Rav Kook attempts to understand the root cause of division and lack of unity. He comes to the conclusion that division is not caused by the difference of opinions that exist between us, but rather our perception of these differences.

Rav Kook differentiates between people whose focus in life is only on material, trivial, or individual matters, and people whose focus is on more spiritual, truthful, or collective con-

cerns. When one's life is only about personal gains, differences of opinions really get in the way. However, if life's focus is a pure pursuit of truth, then diversity is not an obstacle but rather an advantage.

אי אפשר כלל, שיבאו אנשים לידי אחדות מוחלטת בדיעותיהם, ורגשות חייהם העצמיים, כל זמן שכח הדמיון הבא מתוך ההשפעה הרוחנית הירודה, הזולפת על הרוח מצד הכח החמרי שבאדם, הוא השולט על המערכת של החיים, היחידים והצבוריים, ועל כן כל זמן, שהעונות מקשרים את החיים בכבליהם, אי אפשר לקוות לשיווי בדעות, ולאחדות של שלום.

אבל אחרי אשר אור התשובה הופיע בעולמנו, על ידי קדושת יום הקדוש, יום הכפורים, וכל ישראל נטהרו מחלאת החטא, אז הטהור הנשמתי מתגבר בקרבנו, ובמקום הדמיון המתעה יבא השכל הטהור הגנוז במעמקי נשמתנו להאיר את אופק חיינו...אז, כאשר בא אחר כך החג הקדוש חג הסוכות ההולך ובא עלינו לטובה, הננו כבר מתכשרים לבא, על ידי טהרת השכל המאיר עלינו, לידי תפיסת החיים העצמיים השופעים ממקור האמת המוחלטת עלינו.

ועל ידי זה יכולות הן הדיעות המופרדות על ידי צללי המחשכים של הדמיון להיות הולכות ומתאחדות, ותחת המאפל של הפרודים והמשטמות, ריבי המפלגות והסכסוכים האישיים, המשחיתים בנו כל חלקה טובה, ברוח ובחומר, יבא האור הטהור הנאצל על קדושתה של הסוכה ומגרש מאתנו את צללי הבלהות של הדמיונות המתעים...וכל ישראל נעשים ראויים לישב בסוכה אחת.

If we are able to raise ourselves up above pettiness, above personal bias, then unity is achievable. The goal of the Teshuva process – from Rosh Hashana, through the Aseret Yemai Teshuva, and culminating with Yom Kippur – is to elevate our perspectives. From this new vantage point we no longer see diversity as an obstacle to our personal gain, rather as the beautiful tapestry that it creates among the entire nation.

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Sukkot and its Pagan-like Customs

Rabbi Yair Spitz
Menahel, Yeshivat Or Chaim

I've grown accustomed to hearing, year after year, that "Sukkot is the hardest holiday to explain to outsiders", or the oh-so-popular, "If a non-Jew saw us shaking our lulavim he'd think we were all pagans." A popular answer is the standard default of "we do it because Hashem commanded us, even if it looks strange," or better yet, "even more so because it is strange."

I cannot accept these kinds of answers for the following reasons:

1. I refuse to accept that Torah and Mitzvot are some sort of test, which is the foundation of these types of answers. I don't observe Mitzvot in order to prove anything to anyone – to other nations, to other Jews, to myself or even to God.

2. I completely disagree that there is anything odd or strange in the observances of Sukkot. Only a Judaism that has lost touch with its own origins could say such a thing. Torah is rooted in the life of a nation in its land. The three major holidays revolve around agriculture. They may have a historical element to them as well, but their celebrations are primarily agricultural. Throughout the exile, these elements were downplayed or forgotten altogether, to the point where we are uncertain how engaging with nature on the most fundamental level could possibly fit with Torah.

And I say – few things make more sense than connecting to Hashem through the embracement of nature. We leave our artificial, man-made houses and lives and surround ourselves with those of Hashem's. We touch, smell, and surround ourselves with nature—and it is all a Mitzvah. Doing nothing at all in the Sukkah is a Mitzvah not just because "Hashem said we should do it," but rather because if you view nature as a place where Hashem dwells and reveals Himself, then by embracing it (fulfilling the Mitzvah) you are embracing Him. Sukkot reveals that, sometimes, you can connect to Hashem even by just being yourself.

Maybe this can only be done after the purging of [sins during] Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur but, nonetheless, it reveals the possibility of engaging the Divine by simply getting in touch with the most fundamental aspects of existence – (our) nature itself. 🌿



A Critical Component

Yoetzet Halacha Lauren Levin, Dean of the
Midrasha UK, a project of Mizrachi UK

One of the most intriguing rituals of all Jewish festivals is the 'taking' of the four species. Of the four species themselves, it is the fourth of them, the willow branches, which are the most mysterious. Having no taste and no smell, they are completely lacking in aesthetic pleasantries. Why were they chosen to be part of the bundle? Furthermore, they are singled out to be used independently of the others on the seventh day of Sukkot, Hoshana Raba.

The Talmud (Sukkah 45a) describes how on the seventh day of Sukkot, long branches of arava (willow) were laid all around the altar. Celebrants in the Temple turned to the altar which they had been circling and said as they were leaving: "Yofi lecha mizbeach!" – "Beauty unto you, altar!" How could plain and indistinctive willow branches look so beautiful?

The Hebrew name for the willow, arava, derives from the linguistic root meaning mixture. The willow itself is the one branch that would never have been chosen for its inherent beauty. By itself it is not eye-catching in the least; its entire significance is in its association with the other three minim. Together with the others, the willow creates a harmonious whole, to which it adds its own contribution.

The simple green leaves create their aesthetic effect in combination with the lulav and hadasim. Likewise, when decorating the altar, the aim is not to adorn it with a beautiful object, but to create an overall pleasing appearance. The arava will not detract by drawing undue attention to itself, but will fulfill the function of beautifying the altar through its refreshing greenery. The willow's natural properties are also significant. Of all the species, it is the most water-dependent, and thus is called a 'willow of the brook' (arvei nachal) in the Torah. Its constant need of water in order to grow once again underscores its dependence on others. On Sukkot, a festival when we welcome one and all to a united sukkah, the message of the willow is paramount. It reminds us to celebrate the things in our lives that seem far more ordinary, but in fact may well be the 'bread and butter' of our existence. The mundane routines that sustain us are often the ingredient that allows the special elements of our lives to shine and remain viable. In addition, the willow branch reminds us to celebrate the understated individuals in our community who we may sometimes take for granted. Not only are they a critical component of our communities, but they may well be the silent heartbeat of so much of our growth. 🌿



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