

VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

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In English



בס"ד

After One Purifies Himself From His Sins, He Can See the Ultimate Truth and Receive The Inspiration of The Sukkah!

» Why Do We Begin Building Our Sukkah Right After Yom Kippur?

The Rama (end of Siman 624, and again in 625) states: "Those who are stringent in mitzvos begin building their sukkah immediately after Yom Kippur in order to go from one mitzvah to another mitzvah."

We may ask: If the reason for this is to go from mitzvah to another, why should this be done specifically with the mitzvah of erecting a sukkah? Why can't someone simply do any mitzvah on Motzoei Yom Kippur?

It would seem from here that there is some deeper connection between the mitzvah of sukkah and Yom Kippur. It is not a "coincidence" that they fall out near each other on the calendar.

The Tur (Orech Chaim 417) states: "I heard from my brother, Rav Yehuda...that the three holidays are symbolic of the three Avos. Pesach is symbolic of Avrohom Avinu, as it is stated (Bereishis 18:6): "Knead dough and make cakes" – it was Pesach. Shavuot is symbolic of Yitzchok because the shofar blown at the giving of the Torah was from the ram of the akeidas Yitzchok. Sukkos is symbolic of Yaakov, as is stated (Bereishis 33:17): 'And for his cattle he made sukkos. Therefore, he named the place Sukkos.'"

We may wonder why Yaakov called the place "Sukkos" after the booths he made for his cattle. Why wouldn't he rather name it "Bayis" after the houses he made for himself and his family, which would seem to be more appropriate? Furthermore, why does the verse need to tell us about the booths he made for his cattle at all? Why is this of interest?

The Zohar Hakadosh (Raya Mehemnusa 101A) speaks about the connection the story of Yaakov and Esav has to the holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos. To paraphrase the Zohar's holy words, it states that after Esav constantly sought to harm Yaakov, Yaakov fled during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. He did teshuva and observed fast days until after

Yom Kippur, when he learned that Esav was approaching with 400 men, all of whom sought to harm him and rile up the evil forces against him. He then increased his prayers and supplications.

Esav then changed tactics and acted as if he wanted to help Yaakov. Yaakov did not want "neither his sting nor his honey." He, therefore, told Esav to travel ahead of him and be separate from him. This occurred at the time of Neilah, when Hashem annuls the debt of the nation and forgives them.

Since these evil forces separated from Yaakov, and separated from Above as well, Hashem desired to hear Klal Yisroel. The place was, therefore, named Sukkos because it was there that Yaakov created sukkos to separate himself from Esav, and Hashem rejoiced with him there.

From the words of the Zohar, we see that the "sukkos" Yaakov made represent the battle between forces of good and forces of evil. The sukkos are where Klal Yisroel runs to, in order to escape from impure influences.

Sefer Chemdas Yamim uses this Zohar to explain the custom to begin building one's sukkah right after Yom Kippur, before one does any other work. He says that Esav left Yaakov right after Yom Kippur, which is when Yaakov entered the sukkah of purity. Thus, the two are intimately connected, and it is very appropriate to place the two right next to each other.

» Why is One Especially Joyful on Sukkos?

We can further understand the connection between Sukkos and the Yomim Noraim by noting the reason for the mitzvah of sukkah.

The pasuk states (Vayikroh 23:42-43): "You shall dwell in sukkos for seven days, every citizen of Yisroel shall dwell in them, so that your generations will know that I had the children of Yisroel live in sukkos when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am Hashem your G-d."

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There are some mitzvot in the Torah that have a specific intention that one must have in mind in order to fulfill the mitzvah, while others can be fulfilled even without having the reason for the mitzvah in mind. The Bach (Orech Chaim 525) writes that everyone agrees that in order to fulfill the mitzvah of sitting in a sukkah, one must have in mind the reason for the mitzvah, as the *pasuk* clearly says that future generations should know its reason. Accordingly, it is very important for us to clearly understand what the reason for this mitzvah is.

The root and main focus of this mitzvah is to bring a person to have strong emunah in Hashem and to know that He is the creator and sustainer of the world. It was His will that we be enslaved in Egypt, and it was His will that we be freed. In this way, He has led and guided us until today, and everything He has done and continues to do at all times is for our benefit.

The Rashbam writes: “So that your generations will know that I had the children of Yisroel live in sukkos for 40 years, with no set homes and no encampment. From this recognition, we will come to give thanks to the One who provides us with a place to live and houses full of goodness, and we will not think that we acquired what we own through our own strengths and talents.”

The Gemara says a rule that a sukkah may not be taller than 20 *amos*. The Gemara explains that the reason for this is that if the walls are too tall, a person will not be sitting in the shade of the *schach*; rather, he will be sitting in the shade of the sukkah’s walls.

The Aruch Laner explains that the walls of a sukkah represent earthly entities that surround us on all sides. The *schach*, however, is symbolic of Hashem. When one lifts his eyes and recognizes that the *schach*, i.e., what is above him, is the main thing, he will realize that Hashem is constantly guiding him and will know that He is providing for him at all times.

Thus, the purpose of the mitzvah of sukkah is to remember that Hashem is in control of every aspect of our lives. For this reason, one must dwell in the shade of the *schach*, and not in the shade of the walls.

For this reason, we are commanded to leave our permanent dwelling and live in a temporary dwelling (Sukkah 2A). The Sefas Emes זצ”א (5645) writes that the mitzvah of sukkah is meant to teach us to have *bitachon* in Hashem. Therefore, we leave our homes and

possessions and place our trust fully in Him. This is also why Sukkos is called “*Zeman Simchaseinu*”, the time of happiness, because there is no greater joy than trusting in Hashem (as is explained in Sefer Chovos Halevavos).

This is also why we recite special *tefillot* and Hoshanos on this yomtov in which we daven for goodness for the entire year. This is meant to instill within us the knowledge that all the blessings of the year are dependent on Hashem’s will and to encourage us to rely on Him alone, rather than on our own efforts.

This concept is also hinted at in the *avodah* of *nisuch hamayim*, the water pouring ceremony in the Bais Hamikdash, which was performed on Sukkos. This ceremony symbolizes that one should pour out his heart to Hashem like water whenever he needs His help. And this is why Hashem covers us with his “*schach*” on this yomtov, as we place our trust in Him.

This explains why we are commanded to sit in a sukkah specifically during the season when we gather in our crops (Shemos 34:22). At the time when we gather our crops, there is room to suspect that one may come to think that he earned his living on his own and that he can put his faith in his own abilities. He may come to forget that Hashem is the One who sustains him. Therefore, we are commanded at this time to enter the sukkah and improve our *bitachon*.

The Kli Yakar ((Vayikroh 23:42) dwells on this point and explains that when one harvests the crops of his field, it is common for people to wish to return home from the fields to their “permanent homes”. The Torah was concerned that people would forget that even their houses are merely temporary homes. Therefore, the verse (*ibid*) states: “Every citizen in Yisroel shall dwell in sukkos.” This indicates that everyone who sees himself as a “citizen”, a permanent resident of the land, is commanded to leave his home and dwell

in a temporary abode, as a reminder that no home in this world is permanent.

When one recognizes this, he will no longer rely on his own abilities. Rather, he will trust fully in Hashem, just like the Jewish people when they left Egypt and were surrounded by His clouds of glory and provided for directly by Him.

The Michtav M’Eliyahu (Chelek Daled) quotes the Sefas Emes who explains the verse (*ibid* 23:41): “The holiday of

“...The Jewish soul yearns to connect to Hashem, but the vanities of this world block the love of the heart. After Yom Kippur, when our souls are purified, and we afflict ourselves by avoiding physical desires, love of Hashem is awakened and we merit the mitzvah of sukkah...”

Sukkos... seven days in the year” as follows:

Why does it say “of the year”? What is added with these seemingly superfluous words? This teaches us that these seven days should influence our entire year so that we internalize the fact that our homes are merely temporary. The same idea is seen in the verse (ibid 34:22): “The holiday of the harvest, a time period of the year.” This also shows that sukkos is meant to influence the entire year.

The Sefas Emes on the Torah adds: “The main light of the year is from these seven days. The vessel to hold it in is to accept it with joy.” It seems that the joy he refers to from these days is the feeling that we are in this world only temporarily and, therefore, we lack nothing that we need. All we need to do is rejoice that we are the Chosen Nation.

The Sefas Emes states further that “the mitzvah of sukkah provides blessing and holy light to a person’s dwelling place.” He seems to be saying that the mitzvah of sukkah brings a person to realize this life is temporary, and his entire life is simply a means to rise spiritually. Once one recognizes this, his home will be blessed and holy all year long

The Shulchan Aruch (Orech Chaim 629:13) states the rule that one may not use anything connected to the ground as *schach*. Early sources explain that this is because the purpose of the mitzvah of sukkah is to feel that we are only in this world temporarily. For this reason, we may not use *schach* that is attached to the ground, as the entire purpose of the mitzvah is to detach ourselves from the earth of this world and remove ourselves from the ground.

On the aforementioned verse (Bereishis 33:18) that says that Yaakov named the city Sukkos after the booths that he made for his cattle, Targum Yonason writes: “He built a bais medrash for himself and for his cattle he made booths.” This can be understood to mean that for his spiritual needs, he made a bais medrash, and for “his cattle”, i.e., for his physical needs, he made temporary booths. He made a strong, permanent structure for his *ruchnius*, while only making a temporary structure for his *gashmius*.

This represents the purpose of the *yomtov* of Sukkos. It teaches us that our physical lives are temporary, while our *neshamos* are eternal. We leave our physical homes to dwell in Hashem’s permanent shade for seven days and to draw closer to Him.

In this vein, it is said in the name of the Admor of Kotzk zt”l that the reason why a “*mitz’taer*”, one who is in pain, is exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah is that if one feels physical pain from sitting in a sukkah, it is a sign that he is not fully connected to the point of the mitzvah. The entire point of the mitzvah of sukkah is to detach oneself from the physical aspects of this temporary world and to

realize that it is only temporary. If one is busy with his physical feelings while in a sukkah, it is a sign that he has not reached that level.

Similarly, the Kotzker explains the Gemara that says that rainfall on sukkos is a bad sign because rain is a symbol of the physical world. If we are forced to deal with the physical aspects of this world on sukkos, it is a bad sign.

>> *How Can One Feel His Impermanence in This World?*

It is certain that in order to reach the level of recognizing that our entire existence in this world is only temporary, one must first remove the impurities of the heart that are caused by sins. As long as one is connected to sin, and his heart remains impure, he most definitely will be unable to accept these feelings.

After Yom Kippur, when we are cleansed of sin and our hearts are made pure, we can recognize the concept of our temporary status in this world, which is the foundation of the mitzvah of sukkah.

In this manner, the Sefas Emes writes (Sukkos 5651): “During these days of Sukkos, *bnei Yisroel* strive to cover themselves in the shade of Hashem Yisborach. The truth is that the Jewish soul always yearns to connect to Hashem, but the vanities of this world block the love of the heart. After Yom Kippur, when our souls are purified, and we afflict ourselves by avoiding physical desires, the love of Hashem is awakened, and we merit the mitzvah of sukkah.”

Having said all this, we can understand why the sukkah should be built immediately after Yom Kippur, before we do any other work.

The way to ingrain enduring and lasting *emunah* within our hearts is explained by the Ramban, who says as follows:

The verse in Shir Hashirim (2:7) states: “You either awaken or arouse the love while it is desirous.” The Ramban (in his sefer Ha’Emunah Veha’Bitachon, Perek 19) explains that this verse hints at a lesson that when one receives inspiration from Heaven, he must actualize this spiritual arousal by doing a physical action to bring it to practicality and ensure that this inspiration does not merely fade away.

Therefore, in order to ensure that we do not lose the level of inspiration that we reached on the day of Yom Kippur – the level of recognizing that this world is only temporary and is a mere hallway to the World to Come – one must immediately do a practical action of building a sukkah. This physical action will then serve as the vessel to hold the inspiration that will continue to be with us and instill within us the lesson of living in this world in a temporary way.