

# Sukkos

## Lessons from the Sukkah

### Allowing the Shechinah to Rest in Our Sukkah<sup>327</sup>

שְׁבַע־יָמִים תַּחַג לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה'.

*Seven days shall you celebrate to Hashem, your God, in the place that Hashem will choose (Devarim 16:15).*

In *Parshas Re'ei*, the Torah describes the celebration of each Yom Tov in the Beis Hamikdash, in similar but not identical terms. Pesach: בַּמָּקוֹם — *in the place where Hashem will choose to rest His Name* (Devarim 16:2). Shavuot: אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם — *in the place that Hashem, your G-d, will choose to rest His Name* (16:11). Sukkos: בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' — *in the place that Hashem will choose* (16:15). The *mefarshim*<sup>328</sup> find it noteworthy that for Sukkos only, *in the place that Hashem will choose* is not followed by *to rest His Name*.

The Gemara (*Sukkah* 9a) states that Hashem's Name is upon a sukkah: wherever a Yid builds a sukkah, the *Shechinah* rests there. When the pasuk tells us to celebrate Sukkos *in the place Hashem will choose*, it is not limited

327. B'naos Deshe, Sukkos 5784.

328. See *Ta'amei Mesores V'hamikra* of Rav Yehudah HaChassid; *Sodei Chumash V'hashe'ar*, by a student of Rav Yehudah HaChassid; *Meshech Chochmah*.

to the Beis Hamikdash—the ultimate place of Hashem’s choosing. Hashem rests His *Shechinah* in the sukkah of every Yid.

שִׂמְחָתִי בְּאֶמְרֵיהֶם לִי בֵּית ה' נִלְךְ — *I rejoiced when they said to me, “Let us go to the House of Hashem”* (Tehillim 122:1). The Sfas Emes<sup>329</sup> applies this pasuk to Sukkos: a sukkah, too, is a house of Hashem, a spark of the Beis Hamikdash upon which the *Shechinah* rests. Dovid Hamelech rejoiced at going to Hashem’s House; and when we enter our *Beis Hashem*, our sukkah, it is *Zman Simchaseinu*, our time of joy.

The Sfas Emes quotes the pasuk as שִׂמְחָתִי בְּאֶמְרֵיהֶם כִּי בֵּית ה' נִלְךְ, omitting the word לִי. Perhaps this suggests that while Dovid Hamelech could truly say he was filled with joy at the prospect of going to the *beis Hashem*, at the closeness with Hashem he could attain there, we may be far from this. Instead of joy over the *beis Hashem* that will welcome us this Yom Tov, our excitement might be at the thought of good food and good times. The Sfas Emes leaves out לִי; Dovid Hamelech said it about himself, but we cannot say this confidently about ourselves.

Yet in truth, the joy of the *beis Hashem* of Sukkos applies to every Yid, to varying degrees.

Sukkos comes several days after Yom Kippur. *Sefarim* connect the extraordinary *simchah* of Sukkos to the atonement of Yom Kippur.<sup>330</sup> As Rashi says, “One whose sin was atoned is happy.”<sup>331</sup> And as Chassidim put it: “After cleaning the house, you enjoy the spacious feeling.”<sup>332</sup>

Every Yid, no matter his standing, attains some measure of atonement on Yom Kippur. Freshly cleansed, we all feel the presence of the *Shechinah* in our sukkah, and we all have some connection to the spiritual joy of Sukkos.

The missing words לְשִׂכּוֹן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם teach us another valuable lesson. Rejoicing can easily lead to frivolity, and because *yamim tovim* are times of joy, special care is needed to avoid improper conduct.<sup>333</sup> In fact, *beis*

329. Sukkos 5660.

330. See Sfas Emes, 5638 s.v. *zman*.

331. Menachos 20a s.v. *aderaba*.

332. In Yiddish: איז מען אויפגערוימט אויף, איז מ'רוימט אויף.

333. See Kiddushin 81a with Rashi s.v. *sakva*.

*din* is required to put guards in place to prevent any impropriety.<sup>334</sup> This is especially pertinent to Sukkos, with the joyous *Simchas Beis Hasho'eivah* taking place in the Beis Hamikdash. The Gemara (*Sukkah* 51b) relates that each Sukkos, a balcony was erected in the Beis Hamikdash for women, so that no mingling would occur at the *Simchas Beis Hasho'eivah*.

Laxity in *kedushah* causes the *Shechinah* to remove itself from Klal Yisrael, *chas v'shalom*. As the pasuk says (Devarim 23:15), וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה בְּךָ עֲרוּת, דְּבַר וְשֵׁב מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ — *so that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you*.

The Navi rebukes Klal Yisrael for their conduct within the Beis Hamikdash: הַמְעֵרַת פְּרָצִים הָיָה הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עָלָיו בְּעֵינֶיכֶם — *Has this House, upon which My Name is proclaimed, become a cave of criminals in your eyes?* (Yirmiyahu 7:11).

The Torah leaves out the words לְשִׁכּוֹן שְׁמוֹ in regard to Sukkos, to drive home this point. It cannot be taken for granted that Hashem will *rest His Name* in the Beis Hamikdash at times of great joy, such as Sukkos. It is up to us to ensure that our conduct is worthy of it.

Even now, when there is no Beis Hamikdash, each Yid's heart is an abode for the *Shechinah*.<sup>335</sup> It is our task to ensure that our heart is a place where Hashem's Presence can rest—and we must also ensure that our sukkah remains a place fit for the *Shechinah*. With this, we can truly exult in the joy of *Zman Simchaseinu*.

### Wearing Boots in the Sukkah<sup>336</sup>

*Tzaddikim* said that sukkah is the only mitzvah a person enters into with his whole body.<sup>337</sup> It has been pointed out that the mitzvah of *re'iyah*, presenting oneself in the Beis Hamikdash on Yom Tov, also has this

334. *Tur*, O.C. 529.

335. See *Chareidim, Shirei Kodesh*, chap. 34: "בתוך לבי, משכן אבנה לזיוו" – Within my heart I will build a sanctuary for His glory."

336. *B'naos Deshe*, Sukkos and Simchas Torah 5782, 5783.

337. See *Ramasayim Tzofim, Ma'areches Harav Hakadosh R' Simchah Bunim MiParshischa zya"u*, 77; *Sifsei Tzaddik*, 1 and 13, citing the Chiddushei HaRim.

attribute; we enter the Beis Hamikdash with our entire body. Yet we have been taught that there is a difference: while one may not enter the Beis Hamikdash wearing shoes,<sup>338</sup> we may enter the sukkah even wearing boots.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 77a) teaches:

מְנַעֵי רַגְלֶיךָ מִיַּחַף וּגְרוֹנֶה מִצְמָאָה, מְנַעֵי עֲצָמְךָ מִן הַחֲטָא כְּדִי שֶׁלֹא יָבֹא רַגְלֶךָ לִידֵי יַחֲוֶה.  
 “Withhold your foot from being barefoot” (*Yirmiyahu* 2:25), meaning: Keep yourself from sin, so that your feet will not come to be barefoot.

The Arizal taught that shoes, which separate one from the earth, are necessary to avert sin. They represent the lowliness of humanity.

When a person enters the holy space of the Har HaBayis, he must shed his *gashmiyus* so that he no longer needs the spiritual protection of shoes. The uniqueness of sukkah is that one may enter as is, without stepping out of his mundaneness. He may wear his boots.

### Focus on a Mitzvah<sup>339</sup>

In *Maseches Sukkah* (25b), we are taught that הַעוֹסֵק בַּמִּצְוָה פָּטוּר מִן — *One engaged in a mitzvah is exempt from another mitzvah*. Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin taught that the placement of every statement of Gemara has deep significance... In what way is the principle of עוֹסֵק בַּמִּצְוָה connected to the mitzvah of sukkah?

According to some Rishonim,<sup>340</sup> the exemption of *oseik b'mitzvah* applies even when it is possible to perform both *mitzvos* simultaneously. The Chiddushei HaRim explains<sup>341</sup> that a Yid must pour his entire life energy into the performance of each mitzvah—it is impossible to be completely invested in two things at the same time. The Chiddushei HaRim adds that because a person's whole life force must be injected into each mitzvah, naturally he could not remain alive afterward. He survives only because the mitzvah infuses fresh life into him.

338. See *Berachos* 54a.

339. *B'naos Deshe*, Sukkos and Simchas Torah 5782, 5783.

340. Rabbeinu Tam, Ran, and others.

341. See *Sifsei Tzaddik*, *Shemini* 13.

The mitzvah of sukkah is unique because one enters it entirely. The *halachah* of *oseik b'mitzvah* is taught in *Maseches Sukkah* to teach us that each mitzvah must be performed, like sukkah, with one's entire being.

### Cleansing Ourselves Before Entering the Sukkah<sup>342</sup>

My father<sup>343</sup> pointed to the *halachah* that repulsive utensils may not be brought into the sukkah;<sup>344</sup> and some even maintain that they invalidate the sukkah.<sup>345</sup> Although one may enter the Sukkah wearing boots, those boots must first be cleansed of mud. We are permitted to enter the sukkah without first shedding our physicality, but we must first cleanse ourselves of spiritual filth.

This is apparent from the placement of Sukkos in the calendar. On Yom Kippur, we were cleansed of our *aveiros*. But as soon as Yom Kippur ended, we were no longer detached from *gashmiyus*. In Hashem's kindness, He allows us to enter the sukkah even in this manner. But we still must prepare ourselves by rinsing the mud off our boots.<sup>346</sup>

### A Holy Sukkah<sup>347</sup>

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן בְּתֵירָה אָמַר, כָּשֶׁם שֶׁחֵל שָׁמַיִם עַל הַחֲגִיגָה, כֵּן חֵל שָׁמַיִם עַל הַסּוּכָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, חָג הַסּוּכּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לָהּ, מָה חָג לָהּ, אֵף סוּכָה לָהּ.

Rabbi Yehuda ben Beseirah says: Just as the name of Heaven takes effect upon the Korban Chagigah, so too, the name of Heaven takes effect upon the sukkah, as it is stated: חָג הַסּוּכּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לָהּ (Vayikra 23:34); just as the Chagigah ("חג") is consecrated to Hashem, so too, the sukkah ("הַסּוּכּוֹת") is consecrated to Hashem (Sukkah 9a).

342. B'naos Deshe, Sukkos and Simchas Torah 5782, 5783.

343. See Otzar Derashos Pnei Menachem, vol. 1 p. 231.

344. O.C. 639:1.

345. See Sha'ar Hatziyun 639:13.

346. See Pnei Menachem, Ha'azinu p. 226.

347. B'naos Deshe, Sukkos and Simchas Torah 5782, 5783.