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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON SUKKOS- 5786

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subject: Tidbits - Succos 5786 in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZTL
Erev Sukkos

One should do his part to ensure that all of Klal Yisrael have their Yom Tov needs. Otherwise, one's own Mitzvas Simchas Yom Tov is considered severely deficient • Constructing the Succah is a mitzvah and one should involve himself in the process. Some say that the s'chach must be placed on the succah by a Jew who is over bar mitzvah. • One should not hang light fixtures or ornaments four tefachim (approximately 14 inches) beneath the s'chach or lower, if people will be sitting and eating beneath that area • Yom Tov candles should preferably be lit in the succah, or in a place visible from the succah. As a new fire may not be lit on Yom Tov, a two-day candle is commonly lit before Yom Tov to provide for Hadlakas Neiros on the second night • Although lechatchilah it should be said prior to Yom Tov, the final opportunity for Kiddush Levana is the first night of Succos, late Monday night, October 7th at 12:11AM EST • There is a mitzvah to be b'simchah and to ensure the simchah of one's family throughout the days of Yom Tov. Be sure to show appreciation for all those who helped prepare for your Yom Tov. Also, one should take the opportunity on Erev Yom Tov to call one's parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a Chag Sameach. Daf Yomi - First Day Y"Y: Bavli: Zevachim 22 • Yerushalmi: Shekalim 44 • Mishnah Yomis: Menachos 11:9-12:1 • Oraysa (this week): Chagiga 8b-10b • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 98:1-7

Sukkos
One may not prepare on the first day of Succos for the second night of Yom Tov. As such, preparations for the second night of Yom Tov may not begin until nightfall (tzeis hakoachavim) • For all days and nights of Succos, Yaaleh Veyavo is added in Shemoneh Esrei and Bircas Hamazon. One who omits Yaaleh Veyavo during Shemoneh Esrei (even the Shemoneh Esreis of Maariv) must repeat Shemoneh Esrei. A man who omits Yaaleh Veyavo in Bircas Hamazon on Yom Tov must repeat Bircas Hamazon; a woman does not repeat. During Chol HaMoed however, neither repeat Bircas Hamazon. Shabbos Chol Hamoed

Following a Yom Tov when carrying is allowed, one should check the pockets of his Shabbos clothing to avoid carrying inadvertently. An abridged Kabbalas Shabbos is recited on Friday evening • The regular Maariv, Shacharis and Minchah of Shabbos are said with Yaaleh Veyavo added. Megillas Koheles is leined immediately after Shacharis • The final

berachah of the berachos ha'haftarah is Mekadeish HaShabbos V'Yisrael V'HaZmanim • The Mussaf of Yom Tov is said with the additions for Shabbos. The Lulav is not taken on Shabbos. The Aron Kodesh is opened and Hoshanos are said, however, there is no Hakafah and a Sefer Torah is not taken out.

Leishev Basuccah

There is an obligation on the first two nights of Yom Tov (after tzeis hakoachavim) to eat a kezayis of bread (preferably a k'beitza) within k'dei achilas pras (within 2-4 minutes) in a succah. One should have in mind that he is sitting in the succah as a remembrance for both Yitziyas Mitzrayim - our redemption from Egypt - as well as the Ananei HaKavod - the clouds of glory that protected the Jewish nation in the desert. In the event of rain on the first night, one should delay the meal as long as possible; a Rav should be consulted if waiting extensively will negatively affect the Simchas Yom Tov of his family members and guests. If the rain does not abate, one should go out to his uncovered succah - despite the rain - and recite Kiddush. In this case Shehecheyanu is recited, but not the berachah of Leishev. He should then wash and eat the required amount of bread, after that he may continue the meal inside the house. On the second night, many Poskim are more lenient and allow one to eat his meal inside without waiting, and then eat the required amount in the succah if the rain lets up. On both nights, if after fulfilling the obligation in the rain, the rain stops, one must return outside again to eat another halachic shiur. However, if one already retired for the night, he is exempt from this. Aside from the obligatory mitzvah of the first two nights, generally, one who was forced to eat his meal indoors may continue the meal indoors even if the rain stops.

On the first two nights, one should have in mind that the berachah of Shehecheyanu should apply to the Chag as well as to the mitzvah of Succah. When reciting Shehecheyanu, Rabbi Zlotowitz z"l would look at his family and guests gathered around the table and 'count his blessings,' utilizing the opportunity to sincerely express gratitude to Hashem for His endless kindness. During Kiddush on the first night of Yom Tov, the berachah of Leishev BaSuccah is recited prior to Shehecheyanu. Many reverse this order on the second night. Ashkenazim have the practice of making a berachah of Leishev when eating a minimum of a k'beitzah of mezonos; Sephardim require a larger amount. One who forgets to make the berachah before eating may still do so until he leaves the succah. One who made the berachah while the succah was pasul (e.g., the s'chach was covered) must repeat the berachah. It is questionable whether to make a berachah of Leishev BaSuccah during Havdalah. One may avoid the uncertainty by partaking in some mezonos along with the Havdalah wine, as the berachah of Leishev is then surely required.

One should establish the succah as a comfortable place to eat, learn Torah and spend time over Yom Tov. One must be careful with the holiness of the Succah and treat it with respect. Dirty plates, trash, etc., should be removed soon after use. Additionally, one should also take care that his speech and conversation are appropriate for the place of 'Hashem's shade'.

If the wind blows off a section of s'chach on Yom Tov in a way that some of the succah is still Kosher, one may fix it with a shinui. Alternatively, one may ask assistance from a non-Jew. Decorations that fall down on Shabbos or Yom Tov are muktzah (machmas mitzvah) and should only be handled indirectly.

Daled Minim

When taking the Daled Minim, one positions the Lulav with the shedra (the spine of lulav where the middle leaves rise from) facing him, the Hadassim on the right and the Aravos on the left. These species must be bound together; many use a keishekel (woven holder made of Lulav leaves). Rings made of Lulav leaves are tied around the Lulav. The highest ring on the Lulav should be a tefach (3.54 inches) lower than the top of the shedrah. The top of the branches (not the top of the leaves) of the Hadassim should reach a tefach below the shedrah of the lulav, and the branch tops of the Aravos should reach slightly below the Hadassim branches • One should be careful to avoid the melachah of tying on Yom Tov when assembling or adjusting his Daled Minim • On the first two days of Yom Tov, one must

(halachically) possess the Daled Minim he will be using. Therefore, if one doesn't own a set, his friend may transfer ownership to him, transferring back ownership once he has performed the mitzvah. One should not transfer ownership to a minor, as a minor is unable (halachically) to transfer it back to the original owner • Common practice is to recite the berachos while the Esrog is upside down (pitum side down); the Esrog is then turned upright and the four species are shaken in six directions • The Daled Minim are not taken on Shabbos and are considered muktzah.

Chol Hamoed

On Chol Hamoed, the weekday Shacharis includes the addition of Yaaleh Veyavo to the weekday Shemoneh Esrei, Full Hallel, Kerias Hatorah, Mussaf and Hoshanos. Lamenatzei'ach is omitted.

One should wear nice clothing and celebrate with meals of meat and wine. Some have the custom to wear tefillin on Chol Hamoed while others have the custom not to do so. The restrictions against melachah and work on Chol Hamoed are beyond the scope of this work.

Keriyas Hatorah

On the first two days of Yom Tov, two Sifrei Torah are taken out. The first leining (Vayikra 22:26-23:44) discusses the Yomim Tovim and is divided into five aliyos. Maftir (Bamidbar 29:12-16) is leined from the second sefer Torah and describes the korbanos mussaf brought on Succos.

The haftarah of the first day of Yom Tov (Zecharyah 14:1-21) discusses Milchemes Gog u'Magog, the war that will take place in the End of Days. The Tur (O.C. 490) writes that this victory will occur in the month of Tishrei. The haftarah for the second day of Yom Tov (Melachim Alef 8:2-21) discusses the Chanukas Habayis of the Beis Hamikdash which took place on Erev Succos.

On Chol Hamoed one sefer Torah is taken out. The four aliyos (Bamidbar 29) pertain to the korbanos brought on each day of Succos. The pesukim included are determined by the day of Yom Tov (they therefore differ from Eretz Yisrael to Chutz L'Aretz).

On Shabbos Chol Hamoed, Megillas Koheles is read. Succos is the Festival of the Harvest; Koheles describes the futility of materialism, unless it is converted to a spiritual purpose. Two Sifrei Torah are taken out. Seven aliyos (Shemos 33:12-34:26) reference the laws of Yom Tov and Shabbos. Maftir (Bamidbar 29) teaches the day's mussaf offering (this year, "U'vayom haChamishi"). The haftarah (Yechezkel 38:18-39:16) discusses Milchemes Gog u'Magog, detailing the defeat which those nations will suffer.

For the Yom Tov Table

The Pele Yoeitz, quoting from the Arizal, says that one who is joyous throughout the days of Succos and makes the tremendous effort to avoid any anger and unhappiness will merit a year full of simchah.

Rav Yerucham Olshin shlit"a explains that by leaving our homes and entering the fragile edifice of our Succah, we demonstrate that it is not the brick and mortar of our homes that protect us; it is Hashem who provides all our needs. The Sefer Orchos Tzaddikim, despite its many chapters, does not include a chapter on bitachon. Rather, in the chapter Shaar HaSimchah, the Orchos Tzadikim writes extensively about bitachon and how reliance on Hashem brings a person true happiness. When a person recognizes that he is the child of a most loving and powerful Father in heaven, Who only seeks his ultimate success, he is filled with immense tranquility and happiness. Thus, one who celebrates this Yom Tov and develops genuine bitachon will surely merit simchah for the year ahead.

<https://aish.com/dwelling-in-the-divine-embrace-the-essence-of-sukkot/>

Dwelling in the Sukkah

by Rabbi Avraham Kovel

September 29, 2025

Sukkot reminds us that true security lies not in brick and stone, but in the sheltering presence of the Divine.

Each autumn, as harvest time arrives and the world prepares for winter, something remarkable happens in Jewish communities worldwide: families leave their secure homes and move into temporary shelters made of branches

and leaves. It seems like the worst possible timing - trading solid roofs for open sky just as weather turns harsh. What wisdom drives this seemingly odd practice?

The answer transforms our understanding of protection, abundance, and our relationship with the Divine.

Let's unravel this intriguing tradition and prepare ourselves for Sukkot, the holiday referred to as "the time of our joy."

False Sense of Security For millennia, human survival depended on agriculture. The harvest season, coinciding with Sukkot, brought a tangible sense of abundance. Imagine the satisfaction and comfort of a farmer gathering in mountains of wheat and bushels of fruits and vegetables. Today we lack such direct connection to earth's cycles, yet we feel even more protected in our climate-controlled homes with on-demand luxuries. We fortify our houses, pad our bank accounts, and tell ourselves we're prepared for anything.

But this comfort carries a hidden danger: the illusion that we control our fate—that our walls and wealth can shield us from life's unpredictability. However, take a glance at world history, particularly Jewish history, and you'll encounter an uncomfortable yet undeniable truth: no physical shelter truly guarantees our protection. Time and again, Jewish communities rose to prominence, only to face sudden expulsion and total loss of their material wealth. Study the history of nearly every European country and you'll see the same story: Jewish prosperity followed by exile, a cycle repeating itself over the past two millennia.

The Shade of Faith If we can't find lasting protection and joy in our homes and possessions, where can we find it?

In the sukkah.

What? In a shack made of discarded plant material?

Yes. According to the Talmud¹, our sukkahs commemorate the Clouds of Glory that enveloped the Jewish Nation during their 40-year desert journey. You might be wondering, "Clouds... as protection? Is that the best God could do?" But that's exactly the point. Protection doesn't come from the cloud; it comes from God. These ethereal clouds served as a daily reminder that the Nation's survival depended not on physical fortifications, but on divine providence. And so too our sukkahs.

Shadow of Faith The Zohar calls the shade of the sukkah "The Shadow of Faith." In Judaism, faith doesn't mean blind acceptance. Emunah translates as "trust" or "reliance"—taking the leap to live according to truth you've verified through reason and experience.² By dwelling in a completely vulnerable sukkah for seven days, we internalize the truth that nothing in this world can really ensure our protection, well-being, and happiness. Not our home, not our alarm system, not our government, nothing. Our security comes from one source alone: God. As King David writes in Psalms, "If God doesn't guard the city, its watchmen stand in vain" (Psalms 127:1).

We abandon comfort to dwell in a leafy hut, completely exposed to the elements, living the reality of complete trust in the One Above.

Like all mitzvot, dwelling in a sukkah transforms intellectual understanding into a lived experience through tangible actions. We abandon comfort to dwell in a leafy hut, completely exposed to the elements, living the reality of complete trust in the One Above.

The Divine Embrace One last idea to bring us home: The Torah commands us to spend all seven days of Sukkot in a constant state of joy. What does joy have to do with sitting in a sukkah?

The answer is that there's no greater joy than living with true emunah. If you meet one of the rare few people who live with sincere trust in God, you'll witness remarkable serenity. Crisis doesn't devastate them; uncertainty doesn't paralyze them. They've discovered life's ultimate secret: resting in hands infinitely more capable than their own.

That's the reality we try to connect to by dwelling in a sukkah for seven days. For those seven days, we live under the "Shadow of our Faith," and to whatever extent we trust in God and feel His loving embrace, we experience a commensurate sense of joy and inner peace.³

And I mean embrace quite literally.

A kosher sukkah requires, at minimum, two full walls and a handbreadth-sized third wall. Take your arm and extend it out, then wrap it as if embracing a friend. What do you see? Upper arm, forearm, hand = two full sides, and one handbreadth. That's why the Arizal teaches that a sukkah is literally a hug from God!

This Sukkot, write down the three biggest stresses in your life—financial pressures, health concerns, relationship conflicts, whatever keeps you up at night. Then, as you sit under the fragile roof of your sukkah, consciously give each concern over to God, saying "I place this in Your hands." Then spend a few minutes simply feeling what it's like to trust on His divine protection rather than relying on your efforts alone. When you inevitably find yourself reverting back to stressing about these issues throughout the week, practice turning them over to God once again.

May this Sukkot bring you the courage to rely on your faith—to leave your home's false security and discover the profound serenity that comes from dwelling in the Divine embrace.

Chag Sameach! Avraham

1. Succah 11B. 2. Faith can't mean blind acceptance because our Torah commands us to "know" G-d, which means we are obligated to question and probe for truth until we prove to ourselves the reality of God beyond a reasonable doubt. Blind faith is a tool used by other religions to push participants away from questioning their beliefs. Judaism has nothing to hide - we welcome questioning. Our entire system of learning is based on intense questioning - looking for the sources and reasons for why we do what we do and why we believe what we believe. Any respectable Rabbi will welcome all sincere questions with open arms. Just look at the Passover Seder - questions are the most celebrated part of the whole experience!

<https://www.ynetnews.com/jewish-world/article/bkuvz7n9ll>

Everything you need to know for Sukkot 2025

How to build a kosher sukkah, is it allowed to travel during Sukkot and should a combat soldier sleep in the sukkah?

Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon answers key halachic questions ahead of the holiday

Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon 09.17.25

The first day of Sukkot is a Yom Tov, during which Jewish law prohibits work. In Israel, it will be followed by Chol HaMoed Sukkot, the intermediate days of the festival, lasting until Hoshana Rabbah on Oct. 13.

Where not to install a sukkah

A sukkah under a tree

The Mishnah (Sukkah 9) teaches: "One who builds a sukkah beneath a tree, it is as though he built it inside a house." Therefore, one should not make a sukkah under a tree, and the s'chach (cover of the sukkah) under a tree is considered invalid (Shulchan Aruch, 626:1).

If the tree branches cover an area of four-by-four tefachim (32 cm or 12.59 inches), that place is invalid and one should not sit under it. If the branches are four tefachim wide and extend over the entire sukkah, then the sukkah as a whole may be invalid for use.

A sukkah under a roof

If an entire sukkah is built beneath a roof, it is unquestionably invalid. If only part of the sukkah is under a roof, but three walls enclose the uncovered section and meet the minimum halachic size for a sukkah (seven by seven tefachim - ideally about 70 cm, or 27 inches), then that section is valid.

However, one should not sit in the portion located under the roof.

How to make the walls of the sukkah?

The walls can be made of any material, provided they can withstand a normal wind (Shulchan Aruch, 630:1).

Ideally, it's good to have four walls (except for the entrance), but the sukkah is also kosher with only three walls. The third wall doesn't need to be complete, just slightly more than half is sufficient. The minimum length of a wall is seven tefachim (70 cm according to the Chazon Ish), so a wall of four tefachim is sufficient (and extend the form of the doorway (tzurat ha-petach) for another three or four tefachim (Shulchan Aruch 630:2 and Mishnah Berurah ad loc., note 9).

The walls do not need to reach the s'chach. It's enough if they are 10 tefachim high (1 meter according to the Chazon Ish; 80 cm according to Rabbi Chaim Na'eh), and we consider them as if they continue up to the sky. This is a halacha given to Moses at Mount Sinai called "gud asik mechitzata" (Shulchan Aruch, 630:9).

Supports (Ma'amid) for the sukkah

The ma'amid is the structure that directly supports the s'chach (the plant material used for the roof of a sukkah). Without it, the s'chach would collapse.

Ideally, the s'chach should not rest on something that can contract tumah (ritual impurity) or on any material invalid for s'chach (such as something not grown from the ground). However, if no alternative exists, one may rely on such a support, and the sukkah would be considered valid (Mishnah Berurah 629:22; Sha'ar HaTziyun 630:60).

Secondary sukkah supports (ma'amid de-ma'amid)

The Shulchan Aruch (629:8) rules that it is permissible to fasten the beams supporting the s'chach with nails, even though nails themselves cannot be used as s'chach.

According to the Magen Avraham (629:9) and most later authorities, even someone strict about using invalid supports may be lenient here, because the nails are only a "ma'amid de-ma'amid," a secondary support. The nails hold the beams, and the beams in turn hold the s'chach.

The Chazon Ish (143:2), however, disagreed, arguing that since the beams form part of the s'chach structure, nails fastening them are effectively supporting the s'chach directly.

In practice, the lenient view is accepted, as ruled by the Mishnah Berurah (629:26), Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Minchat Shlomo, vol. 2, no. 55), Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (in his notes to Sukkah 21b), and many others. Thus, one should not fasten the s'chach itself with nails, but it is permitted to fasten the beams beneath it with nails. This is considered "ma'amid de-ma'amid": the nails support the beams, and the beams support the s'chach.

Eating in the sukkah

The Mishnah (Sukkah 25) states: "One may eat and drink casually outside the sukkah." Let's detail briefly:

1. Bread or mezonot (made with grain, including dishes like pasta and couscous) in an amount more than that of an egg - "k'beitzah" (56 cc, about the volume of two matchboxes) - must be eaten in the sukkah.
2. Meat and fish may be eaten casually, but it's proper to be stringent and not eat them as part of a meal (like lunch) outside the sukkah.
3. Fruits and vegetables may be eaten even in large quantities outside the sukkah.

4. Drinking is permitted in any quantity, but one should be strict and not drink wine in a fixed manner outside the sukkah.

These laws relate to the core law and define the boundary between a fixed meal and a casual meal, but one who wishes to be stringent and careful to eat even a casual meal in the sukkah is praiseworthy.

This stringency also applies to drinking water. However, according to the view of the Maharil, it is sufficient to observe this stricter practice in all matters except for water.

Blessing of 'Leishev BaSukkah'

The Talmud (Sukkah 46) says: "When one enters to sit in it (the sukkah), he says: '...asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu leishev basukkah.'" The Rishonim disagreed on when to make the blessing. In practice, the Shulchan Aruch (639:8), the Rema (ibid.) and the Mishnah Berurah (ibid., 46) ruled that one blesses only when eating in the sukkah.

In light of this, one should say the blessing before eating.

Who should one say the blessing? One who eats bread the size of an egg or mezonot in the amount of a fixed meal certainly blesses, as these things require a sukkah by the strict meaning of the law.

The Mishnah Berurah (639:16) writes that the common custom is to bless even on eating a "k'beitzah of mezonot" (56 cc), but added that in order to avoid a concern of saying a blessing in vain, one should stay in the sukkah a bit after eating and intend in the blessing both for the eating and for the stay.

The common custom among Sephardic Jews is not to recite the blessing "leishev ba-sukkah" when eating the volume of an egg (k'beitza) of grain-based foods (mezonot). The blessing is recited only when eating bread or when eating mezonot in a quantity that constitutes a full meal. At kiddush, however, some have the custom to recite the blessing even when eating only a k'beitza.

One who said the blessing "leishev basukkah" and ate, and then remained in the sukkah until the next meal, or went out for a short time with the intention of returning immediately and did so – does not bless again (Mishnah Berurah, 639:47). However, if one went out for business or to the synagogue or other errands, when he returns and eats in the sukkah, he blesses "leishev basukkah" again (ibid.).

Trips during Sukkot

The Gemara (Sukkah 26) says that "travelers" are exempt from the sukkah. That is, an individual who is traveling (during the day or night or both) is exempt from the sukkah.

Responsa Yechaveh Da'at (Vol. 3, 47) and Igrot Moshe (Orach Chaim, Vol. 3, 93) ruled in accordance with Rashi's words, that one who goes on a trip for pleasure is not allowed to eat outside the sukkah, while our teacher Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l (Alon Shvut 90) ruled that from a halachic perspective one can be lenient in this matter, since the law of travelers is based on "teshvu k'ein taduru" (dwell as if you live), and a person usually travels all year round, as per the Rashba's reasoning.

However, although he was lenient from a halachic perspective, Rabbi Lichtenstein strongly opposed this from a value and educational perspective, because "a person from Israel should be full of aspiration and longing for mitzvot, and not, G-d forbid, see them as a burden... from which he frees himself at the first opportunity," especially in a mitzvah that is available to him only one week a year.

Indeed, often there is importance in going on trips during Chol HaMoed, as children are on vacation, and many parents also take time off (and it's good that they do!), and the joint trip is important for family bonding.

It seems that in this situation, there is room to travel, but it is proper not to rely on the exemption of "travelers" but to conduct oneself in a way that does not require this exemption. In this way, we will both fulfill the mitzvah properly and allow for a family trip. Thus, one may eat breakfast and dinner in the sukkah (before and after the trip), while during the trip itself, to eat only casual meals (as explained above, 1. bread the size of an egg, 2. fruits or vegetables and snacks whose blessing is "borei nefashot," 3. meat and fish not as a meal, and 4. free drinking).

Soldiers in Gaza or other operations

Soldiers stationed in Gaza, Lebanon or in combat operations in the West Bank and similar areas are exempt from the mitzvah of dwelling in a sukkah. They are not only considered "travelers on the road" but are also engaged in a mitzvah. On this, the Talmud (Sukkah 25a) teaches that "one who is occupied with a commandment is exempt from another commandment," all the more so when involved in a defensive war (milchemet mitzvah). Soldiers stationed on a base and not in active combat should make an effort to have a sukkah, except for those under high alert or operational pressure. In all such cases, it is advisable to consult the army rabbi.

Arba'at Ha'minim - The Four Species

"And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your G-d seven days," (Leviticus 23:40).

The sages explained that these are the Four Species: the etrog (citron, "fruit of goodly trees"), the lulav (palm branch), the hadas (myrtle, "thick trees") and the aravah (willow of the brook).

The Mishnah (Sukkah 34b) records a debate over how many of each species must be taken. In practice, the Shulchan Aruch (651:1) rules that one takes a single etrog, one lulav, three hadasim (myrtles) and two aravot (willows). In a case of necessity, when only one valid myrtle or one willow is available, a person may rely on the opinion of earlier authorities who follow Rabbi Akiva and use only one (Rama ad loc. regarding the myrtle; Aruch HaShulchan 651:1 and others regarding the willow).

In such a case, however, halachic authorities disagree whether a blessing may be recited (Mishnah Berurah 651:6). In practice, the blessing should not be recited.

What if there is only one set of the Four Species?

On the first day of Sukkot, the Four Species must belong personally to the one performing the commandment, as it says: "You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a goodly tree..." (Leviticus 23:40). The sages explained this to mean "for yourselves" as they must be your own. However, the sages also taught that the Four Species may be acquired through a legal mechanism called "matana al menat le'hachzir" that is, a "gift on condition of return."

In this arrangement, each person who takes the Four Species intends to acquire them as a temporary gift, with the understanding that they will later be returned to the owner. In this way, many people can fulfill the mitzvah using a single set.

What is the minimum size of a sukkah?

A sukkah must be at least ten tefachim high (about 80 cm or 31 inches) according to Rabbi Chaim Naeh, or 96 cm / 38 inches according to the Chazon Ish, and seven by seven tefachim wide (about 56 cm / 22 inches or 70 cm / 27 inches respectively). A sukkah smaller than this does not qualify even as a temporary dwelling (Sukkah 2a) and is therefore invalid. Based on this, it is sometimes possible to make a sukkah using the doors of a car, when both doors are opened (used as two walls), and a s'chach is placed on top.

Care must be taken, however, that the gap below the doors does not exceed 24 cm (9 inches). This can be fixed by placing stones or another sturdy barrier beneath the doors, or by parking the car in a way that the doors are placed on a sidewalk, so the gap is reduced.

The third wall may be created by placing a partition nearby, or by positioning the car close to a wall or another car. In some cases, the inner side of the car itself may serve as a wall, even if distant from the s'chach, provided the distance is less than 1.93 meters (76 inches). In that case, the halachic principle of dofen akumah ("bent wall") applies, treating the wall as though it extends upward toward the roof.

A reserve soldier returning from combat after weeks of service: should he sleep in the Sukkah or with his wife?

The Talmud (Sukkah 26a) rules that one should not sleep outside the sukkah. The Rama (Orach Chaim 639:2; also in Darkei Moshe) offered justification for those who are lenient. He explained that the mitzvah of sukkah requires a person to live in it as they would at home. Since a wife generally does not sleep in the sukkah, the husband is likewise exempt from doing so.

These arguments were considered "limud zechut," justifications for those lenient in practice.

In the diaspora, many refrained from sleeping in the sukkah, but in Israel, there is a greater emphasis on building an appropriate and comfortable sukkah and striving to sleep in it whenever possible.

However, all of this applies under normal circumstances. When refraining from sleeping together causes significant distress, such discomfort is itself grounds for exemption from the sukkah (Rama ad loc.; Shulchan Aruch HaRav).

Therefore, in the case of reserve soldiers returning home after weeks of service, it is clearly proper and appropriate that they sleep with their wives, whether in the sukkah or in the home.

Shemini Atzeret

The final day of the Sukkot is called in the Torah Shemini Atzeret (the eighth day of the assembly). Unlike other holidays, it carries no specific ritual act (aside from offerings in the Temple). Every other festival has a distinctive commandment: the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, fasting on Yom Kippur, the sukkah and Four Species on Sukkot, and matzah on Passover.

Shemini Atzeret, by contrast, has no external symbols. It is understood as an intimate encounter with G-d. (The sages explained that this is why the day features a single bull offering, representing one nation, unlike the 70 bulls during Sukkot).

It is a day of reflection and culmination. On this day, we rejoice in the spiritual strength gained over the previous month and consider how to carry it into daily life after the holiday. The essence is not symbolic action, but the encounter itself and the thought it inspires.

Simchat Torah

The celebration of Simchat Torah takes place within Shemini Atzeret, a custom that began in the period of the Geonim (early medieval Jewish authorities).

Shemini Atzeret is marked by the absence of outward ritual. The Geonim introduced the joyous celebration of Simchat Torah, incorporating it within Shmini Atzeret, which gradually came to define the day, causing Shmini Atzeret to almost disappear (in Israel).

This innovation of the Geonim revealed the essence of this day. Having reached the spiritual peak of the High Holy Days, the time has come to dance and rejoice directly. On this day, we complete the annual Torah reading cycle, and Simchat Torah is the time to be specifically joyous.

<https://download.yutorah.org/2025/60931/1149920/sukkot-finding-peace-in-a-fragile-sukkah.pdf>

SUKKOT

Finding Peace in a Fragile Sukkah

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

President and Rosh HaYeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone 5786 / 2025

This Sukkot, like every year, we once again step away from our homes and eat our meals, sleep and spend time dwelling in our temporary sukkahs. These huts, often tucked away on the tiniest balconies, squeezed along sidewalks and parking lots, and covering many public squares, are a visible reminder of our prayer, recited every night, in which we ask God to “spread Your sukkah of peace over us.”

But after two years of war, leaving the safety of our homes to spend time in these fragile huts – much less find peace in them – is no simple task. Forty-eight hostages remain in Gaza, tens of thousands of Israelis are far from home serving in military duty, and many Israelis are still displaced from their homes in the north and south following October 7. Each day or night we are never certain if our routine and plans will be shattered by an air raid siren, or if news of another fallen soldier or terror attack will arrive. Our sense of peace and safety is shaken – a feeling not limited to Israel. In the United States, shootings in schools and other public places continue to claim lives. Rising antisemitism and religious-based hate crimes throughout the Diaspora also understandably make many nervous to sit outside in a sukkah, an obvious Jewish symbol.

So how, especially at a time like this, can we possibly find safety in huts that don’t even fully protect us from rain or intense heat? We probably won’t – at least not consistently and not in a physical sense. In fact, Sukkot teaches us that this type of safety is often elusive and temporary. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, of blessed memory, explained, “Sukkot is a festival of insecurity.” It reminds us that we are vulnerable and there is indeed a randomness in life. A missile from Iran could land anywhere; a shooter could target one school while sparing another.

Ultimately, God is in control. It is by embracing both our vulnerability and God’s guidance that we can find spiritual safety and perhaps even a state of increased mental or emotional peace. This is not an easy quest; it often takes a lifetime of faith to develop. Yet simply becoming aware of this concept and reflecting on it while sitting in our sukkot is meaningful progress.

Crucially, even though Sukkot reminds us that God is in control, we are far from passive. This is clearly expressed in the fact that we humans must build our sukkot, and build them according to very particular specifications – even though, by nature, the structures are so basic and temporary.

The numerous requirements for sukkot – maximum height, minimum size, materials used and myriad other aspects that our sages debate over dozens of pages of Talmud – underscore our active involvement in their construction. The structures may be temporary, but creating them with attention to these minute details allows God’s presence to dwell among us. Divine protection requires human partnership.

This spirit of Divine and human partnership should guide every aspect of our lives, especially during the ongoing war. Israel’s soldiers and national service volunteers embody this ideal: their courage and commitment protect the country and secure its future. Without their service, civilian casualties and devastation would be far greater, placing the survival of Am Yisrael in jeopardy.

Yet joining in this shared responsibility comes with great challenges and personal sacrifice. Soldiers risk their lives and disrupt their families’ routines. At the same time, our partnership with God – acknowledging both our vulnerability and His ultimate control – is what ultimately nurtures the peace we seek in our sukkot.

Sukkot reminds us that true security lies in both our shared responsibility and our faith that we are never alone. Even amid the complexities and hardships we face, we can find courage, hope, and the ability to create a “zman simchatenu” – a time of quintessential happiness

<http://www.rabbis.org/resources/>

Sukkah of Hope by Rabbi Kossowsky

- **Rabbi Michael Kossowsky**, zt”l, written in 1946 during the Nuremberg trials. Apparently, Streicher was executed during the season of Sukkot. Goering committed suicide before he could be hanged.

Sukkot: War Criminals

By Rabbi Dr. Yechiel Michel Kossowski, zt”l

סוכות לראשי ביום נשק (תהלים ק”מ) אמר יעקב עשית לי סוכה ביום שנשק לאבן לבנוי שאמרת לו השמר לך מדבר עם יעקב משום עד רע. the first letters of each word of the phrase “השומר לך מדבר עם יעקב משום עד רע” are the letters of “לראשי ביום” (Midrash, cited in Damesek Eliezer at the end of חומש דברים, title heading (סוכה)).

We also have the statement in the Hagadah לא זאלמ שפרעה לא ארמי אבד אבי ב’. צא ולמד שפרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים ולבן ביקש לעקור את הכל. Lavan was rebuffed, returned home ashamed. Yaakov saw the סוכה as the symbol of hope for all time. For the סוכה represents our total reliance on the Almighty, and beyond weapons, arms, ammunition, there is that total reliance symbolized by the Sukkah. We will be particularly joyous as we sit in the סוכה on this holiday, for those who sought to destroy Yaakov are themselves destroyed on this Sukkot. So perished Streicher, Goring, and murderers like them on Sukkot.

[Julius Streicher, a Nazi propagandist, was executed by hanging on October 16, 1946, during the Nuremberg Trials. Jewish sources note that this date corresponded to Hoshana Rabbah, the seventh day of the Sukkot festival, on the Hebrew calendar. Streicher was a virulent antisemite known for publishing the notorious newspaper Der Stürmer. Before his execution, he had made references to the Jewish holiday of Purim, which commemorates the foiling of a plot to destroy the Jewish people in ancient Persia. As he went to the gallows, he reportedly screamed “Purim Fest 1946!”. While Streicher made the connection to Purim, some commentators have pointed out the timing of his execution coincided with Sukkot and specifically Hoshana Rabbah, which is considered a time when divine judgment is finalized. This is the connection between the execution of Streicher and the Jewish festivals. The event is a known historical moment that highlights the poetic justice some observers found in the downfall of the Nazis.]

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiiy@theyeshiva.net>

date: Oct 5, 2025, 11:45 PM

subject: My Love Will Be Stronger than Your Defiance - Sukkos Essay by Rabbi YY

My Love Will Be Stronger than Your Defiance

The Energy of the Sukkah: Lean In to the Divine Embrace

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

A Gift to a Mother

Dedicated by Esty and Shmilly as a z’chus for nachas from their children. Three sons left home, went out on their own, and prospered. Getting back together, they discussed the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother. The first said, “I built a big house for our mother.”

The second said, “I sent her a Mercedes with a driver.”

The third smiled and said, "I've got you both beat. You know how Mom enjoys the Bible, and you know she can't see very well. I sent her a brown parrot that can recite the entire Bible. It took 12 years to teach him. I had to spend \$100,000 a year for 10 years, but it was worth it. Mom just has to name the chapter and verse, and the parrot will recite it."

Soon thereafter, Mom sent out her letters of thanks:

"Milton," she wrote, to her first son, "The house you built is so huge. I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house."

"Marvin," she wrote to another, "I am too old to travel. I stay home all the time, so I never use the Mercedes. And the driver is so boring!"

"Dearest Melvin," she wrote to her third son, "You were the only son to have the good sense to know what your mother likes. That chicken was delicious."

Anatomy of a Sukkah

For the past three millennia, during the seven days of the joyous festival of Sukkos, we eat, drink, feast, schmuez, relax, read, and sleep in a temporary structure, or hut, known as a Sukkah. This structure consists of walls and a roof composed of material that grew from the ground, like bamboo, straw, or branches.

How many walls does the Sukkah require? Jewish law states that a Sukkah must have two complete walls plus a third wall that may even be one handbreadth long (1). If your Sukkah has three or four complete walls, that's wonderful; but the minimum requirement is two walls and a tiny piece of a third wall.

Why does the law dictate this exact requirement for the Sukkah walls (2)?

And what really is the spiritual and psychological significance of spending seven days in a hut on your porch or backyard?

Anatomy of an Embrace

Two extraordinary Jewish thinkers, the Arizal, Rabbi Isaac Luria (3) and Rabbi Schnuer Zalman of Liadi (4) turn our attention to the affectionate words uttered by the Bride in the Song of Songs (5), "His left arm lay under my head and His right arm embraces me." These words address (6), in metaphorical prose, two distinct moments in the relationship between G-d the Groom and His people, the bride. During the "days of awe," Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, G-d's "left arm," as it were, lay under the head of the Jewish people. The left side represents in Kabbalah introspection, awe, discipline, and discernment, and this is the primary theme of the days of awe. Sukkos, on the other hand, described in the Torah as "the time of our joy," constitutes the point during the year when "G-d's right arm embraces me." The right arm represents, in Kabbalah, love, and kindness.

Take a look at any of your arms, says Rabbi Isaac Luria, and you will notice its division into three distinct sections, each one usually extending in a different direction. The first is the arm itself, from the shoulder to the elbow; the second is the forearm, from the elbow to the wrist; and the third section is from the wrist to the edge of the fingers.

Now, take a good look at your Sukkah and you will notice a "right arm's embrace." The first complete wall represents a Divine embrace from the "shoulder" to the "elbow"; the second wall reflects the embrace of the "forearm" and the third tiny wall symbolizes the palm embrace.

Rabbi Isaac Luria takes this a step further. He explains that these three dimensions of an arm's embrace encompass three distinct parts of the body being embraced. When you embrace another person, explains Rabbi Chaim Vital (7) quoting his teacher Rabbi Isaac Luria, the highest part of the arm (between the shoulder and the elbow) encompasses the entire left waist of the one being embraced. The middle part of the person's arm, the forearm, expands over the entire width of the embraced person's back. Finally, the palm and the fingers extend even further and cover only a small part of the face of the embraced one, a handbreadth of the face.

The same is true concerning the Sukkah "embrace." The first two walls represent G-d's light embracing the left waist and the back of the human being dwelling in the Sukkah. The third wall of the Sukkah symbolizes the Divine energy embracing a small part of the Jew's face. (If you have a Sukkah of three or four complete walls, the hug is, of course, an all-embracing one, encircling your back and your face.)

This is the language of Kabbalah, written in codes and metaphors. But how can we apply these anthropomorphic descriptions in a visceral and practical way?

I will present the explanation presented by Chabad Chassidus into this insight by the Arizal.

How Do You Express Love?

There are different ways we express love (8). The first is through words of affection. The three simple words "I love you," when uttered sincerely, may have a transforming impact on another life. Words of affection express our inner emotive experience.

A second, more powerful expression of love is a kiss. A genuine kiss captures an intense feeling that may not be grasped in words. Words can state, "I love you," while a kiss declares, "I love you more than I will ever be able to tell you how much I love you."

A third, perhaps even more powerful expression of love comes in the form of a gaze. Two people in love can gaze at each other for long periods of time without uttering a sound. The sound of a silent gaze is sometimes louder than a thundering outpouring of love. There is something of your soul that you can communicate to another human being exclusively through your eyes (9).

A fourth universally accepted method of expressing love is by means of an embrace. A genuine hug embodies a profound bond existing between the two people embracing each other.

Dissecting the Hug

In Jewish mysticism, the diverse methods of communicating love represent different qualities of love. In the former three methods, the love is toward the face of the beloved one. You speak to one's face, you kiss one's cheeks or lips, and you gaze at one's eyes. In contrast, the target of an embrace is the nape and back of the one being embraced.

That is not a coincidence. There are two forms of love, reciprocal and unconditional. The first is directed to the face of the beloved one; the second is directed to the back of the beloved.

I may love you because of what I receive in return for my relationship with you. Your wisdom, passion, depth, empathy, sensitivity, candidness, humor, beauty, talents, humor, values, etc. -- qualities expressed in and through your face, your eyes, ears, mouth, and general look -- enrich me. I love you because of these or other tremendous qualities that you bring to my life.

This is the type of love primarily communicated in words of affection, in a kiss, or in a silent, romantic gaze, all of them directed toward the face of the beloved one, the primary location of reciprocity. When I express my attachment to you in these three or other forms, I am essentially stating that I cherish you because of your face, because of your qualities and virtues that enrich the caliber of my life. Without you, life for me is that much more empty, boring, and directionless.

This love is deep and powerful, but it is conditional. As long as you are here for me, I am here for you. In essence, I love you because I love myself, and you make my "self" so much deeper and happier.

Yet there is a love demonstrated in an embrace, in which my arms encircle your back. You may turn your back on me, but I won't stop hugging you.

You may not give me anything in return for my love; you may even want me out of your life, but I still love you with all my heart, because my soul loves your soul. My core is one with your core.

We see it with parents and children. All healthy parents love their children but sometimes the love (at least on a conscious level) is dependent upon "nachas," the delight and pleasure my child gives me in return for my nurture. What happens in those situations when your child turns his or her back on you (usually because of trauma and emotional neglect)? It becomes very difficult for many parents to maintain the same level of intense love and connection. "He's spitting in the face of all my values, how can I show love? She is showing such disdain for her upbringing, how can I accept her?" That's the secret of the hug. It is the freedom and the courage to transcend the need for reciprocity. I can show my child, or another child, that affection knows no limits. I love not only your face but also your back. Even as you

turn your back on me, I will hold you tightly in my grip and not let go. You may not be interested in me, but I am forever connected to you.

That is why the hug is the only form of love that does not allow the beloved one to escape your embrace. When I utter words of love to you, when I gaze at you, even when I kiss you, I am not holding on to you; if you want to move away from me, it's your choice. But when I embrace you, even if you wish to escape my embrace, you remain "gripped" in my embrace; I won't let you tear yourself away from me.

This is not a coincidence. According to the Chassidic masters, this is the essence of a hug: You may want to run away from me, but I will never run away from you. My love will prove stronger than your defiance.

In a way, it is only when my child defies me that I can prove to him or her that my love is more powerful than his or her defiance and it is then that I can heal his or her attachment wounds. When your loved one turns his back on you, you are being given a gift: the opportunity to embrace them with their defiance and their emotional wounds. This can become the greatest source of healing for both of you.

Hugging Your Child

That is why children appreciate so profoundly the embrace of their primary caregivers.

Children enjoy being spoken to. They certainly take pleasure from being kissed (at least sometimes) and being looked upon with tender affection.

Children need to be seen and noticed. Yet, more than anything, most children, especially infants, cherish being hugged. When our children hurt themselves or break out in tears, they come running to their parents for a big and long hug to calm them down and restore their confidence.

When children contract a "booboo" of any form, they need to be soothed and made to feel safe, and secure. The hug, when done genuinely, makes a statement: "Your value is not dependent upon being perfect and impeccable. I love you unconditionally because of who you are and not because of what you achieve."

The Holiday of Talking, Kissing, Gazing, and Hugging

All of the Jewish holidays are about the expression of love.

Pesach is the holiday focused on speech (Peh Sach, means a speaking mouth. The mitzvah of Passover is to tell the story to your child verbally). G-d shows His love through words. Shavuot is the Divine kiss, communicated through the Torah, his inner breath. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur represent the Divine gaze (they are known as the time of "Yirah," awe, the same letters as the word "Reiyah," gazing). That is why they are days of awe and introspection: When the Kings of Kings gazes right at your soul, your soul feels it, and it is stirred.

But on Sukkos, G-d embraces us. It is time for the infinite hug.

What exactly is the Mitzvah of Sukkah? What do you do in the Sukkah? Whatever you do at home, you do in the Sukkah for seven days, and it becomes a Mitzvah. So you eat, drink, chat, relax, hang out, read, meet people, nap, and sleep in your Sukkah -- all mundane endeavors. The core of the mitzvah is that whenever you do at home, when you do the same thing on Sukkos inside the Sukkah it is a Mitzvah, a holy act, a Divine connection. I'm reading the paper, chatting with a friend, taking a stroll, or drinking orange juice in the Sukkah, and it is a Mitzvah. It's not about what you are doing, but where you are doing it. The most physically mundane act performed inside the walls of the Sukkah is defined in Judaism as a medium through which we craft a relationship with the Creator.

G-d is whispering this message via the walls of the Sukkah: I love you in the totality of your being. I am crazy about every part and aspect of your life. Like a mom who kvels as she watches her infant eating or taking a nap, just because this is her beloved child, so too does G-d cherish us eating, relaxing, or resting in the Sukkah. The walls of the Sukkah capture the love that has no conditions, no qualifications, and no boundaries. As you enter the walls of G-d's embrace, your back is as cherished as your face. G-d says: I love you the way you are and in every facet of your being.

This is the Divine whisper shared by the walls of the Sukkah: My child, you are in my grip of love. Never ever will I let go of you. Even if you do not

believe in Me, and even if you do not believe in yourself, I will never stop believing in you.

Sustaining the Embrace

The purpose of each Jewish holiday is to create an awareness that endures throughout the entire year. The "hug" displayed to us by G-d on Sukkos is meant to carry us through the entire year, to recall how meaningful and powerful every moment and experience of our lives is.

"In all your ways know Him," says King Solomon in Proverbs (10). Because really, there is no mundane aspect in your life. G-d takes it all in. He loves it all. (11)

1) Sukkah 6b; Rambam Hilchos Sukkah 4:2; Tur and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim section 630.

2) The Talmud *ibid.* derives this law from a biblical source. Here we will present the spiritual and psychological dimension of the law, based on the ancient axiom that each law and Mitzvah in the Torah and in the Talmud contains many layers of understanding. Not only are these multitude of interpretations not contradictory to each other, they actually evolve from each other and enrich each other.

3) Known as the Arizal. He is considered one of the greatest mystics in Jewish history, he lived in Jerusalem, Egypt, and finally passed away in Safed in 1572, after teaching kabbalah for two years and revolutionizing the landscape of Jewish mysticism.

4) Known as the "Elder Rebbe," The Rav, or the Baal Hatanya. The founder of Chabad Chassidus, he was considered one of the greatest Jewish leaders and personalities of his day. He passed away on 24 Teves, 1812 while escaping Napoleon's army.

5) 2:6.

6) Pri Eitz Chaim Shaar Chag Hasukkos chapter 4. Likkutei Torah Derushim LeSukkos pp. 78-79; 82d; 84a-b; 87a. Cf. Or Hatorah Derushim LeSukkos pp. 1762-3.

7) Pri Eitz Chaim *ibid.*

8) See Likkutei Diburim (from Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch) vol. 1, opening discourse.

9) See Midrash Rabah Song of Song 1:15, explaining the words "Your eyes are like those of a dove."

10) Proverbs 3:6

11) This essay is based on the works of Rabbi Schnuer Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe (Likkutei Torah and Or Hatorah *ibid.* Likkutei Sichos vol. 2 p. 418 and other sources). Cf. essay by Rabbi Yoel Kahn in Beor Hachasidus (published by Heichal Menachem, Brooklyn, NY) issue of Tishrei 5755.

from: **Ben Olam Haba** <ben@halachafortoday.com>

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subject: Halacha For Today: Monday, 14 Tishrei 5786, October 6, 2025
14 Tishrei, 5786; Erev Chag HaSukkos
October 6, 2025

Halachos for Monday, Erev Chag Hasukkos

1) If it rains on the first night of Sukkos [as well as the second night in Chutz L'aretz, L'chatchilah], before going and eating indoors it is proper to wait a little while in the hopes that the rain will subside and the Mitzvah of eating in the Sukkah will be able to be fulfilled.

Some say to wait half an hour, others say an hour or two, while some even say the obligation is to wait until Chatzos, midnight.

If it does not stop raining the Sukkah should be entered anyhow, Kiddush should be made in the Sukkah including the Bracha of Shehechyanu, the hands should be washed and a kezayis of bread should be eaten, without reciting the Bracha of "Leishev BaSukkah", and the rest of the meal should be finished indoors.

If the rain stops during the meal, a brief return to the Sukkah should be made, a "Leishev B'sukkah" recited and a little more than a K'Beitzah of bread eaten.

Afterwards, assuming the Sukkah is all wet and water is dripping from the Schach, the meal may be finished indoors.

Birchas Hamazon is recited indoors.

2) If the rain stops after the meal was finished and Birchas hamazon was already recited, it is still proper to go out at some point during the night to recite a Leishev B'sukah on a little more than a K'beitaza of bread. If one already went to sleep, they do not need to wake up to do this.

(See Shulchan Aruch Siman 639 and Mishna Berura S"K 35 and 36)

Halachos for Tuesday, 1st Day of Chag Hasukkos

1) The Lulav (branch of a palm tree) has three Hadasim (myrtle) and two Aravos (willow) tied onto it, and is held upright in the right hand and the Esrog (citron) is held in the left hand each day of Sukkos. (Shulchan Aruch Siman 651:2)

According to the Mechaber (Rav Yosef Cairo, author of the Shulchan Aruch) a left handed person follows the same procedure and holds the Lulav in the right hand and the Esrog in the left hand, as since the Lulav has in it three Mitzvos (i.e. 3 of the 4 species) and the Esrog is only one Mitzvah, the item with more Mitzvos is held in the more highly regarded hand. Most Sephardic Jews follow this ruling. (See Shulchan Aruch Siman 651:3 and Mishna Berura S"K 18)

However, the Rama (ibid.) rules that left handed people should switch the order and hold the Lulav in their strong hand (left) and the Esrog in their weaker hand (right). Most Ashkenazic Jews follow this ruling.

An ambidextrous person should take the Lulav in his right hand and the Esrog in the left hand. (ibid.)

If the Lulav was held in the wrong hand, the obligation has been satisfied, however, it is best to be stringent and take the Lulav and Esrog again in the correct hands without reciting a new Bracha. (Rama ibid. and Mishna Berura S"K 19)

Many left handed people are stringent after taking the Lulav in their left and the Esrog in their right (or vice versa) to repeat the process the other way around (without a new Bracha) to satisfy the rulings of both the Shulchan Aruch and the Rama. (See Kaf HaChaim 651:38. See also Orchos Rabbeinu Vol. 2 page 288 that the Steipler Zatzal, who was a lefty and an Ashkenazi, followed the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch regarding this Halacha and not the Rama's ruling)

2) When setting up and holding the Arba Minim, the three Hadasim (myrtle) should be tied onto the right side of the Lulav and the two Aravos (willow) should be tied onto the left side of the Lulav. (Mishna Berura Siman 651:12) For kabalistic reasons, the Hadasim should be tied slightly higher than the Aravos. (Rama 651:1 and Mishna Berura ibid.)

Left handed people should also set up their Lulav with the Hadasim on the right side and the Aravos on the left. (This is how the Pri Megadim, quoted in Mishna Berura ibid. rules)

Halachos for Wednesday, 2nd Day of Chag Hasukkos (Chol Hamoed in Eretz Yisroel)

1) After reciting the Bracha on the Arba Minim, and then again during the recitation of Halel, the Lulav and Esrog are shaken three times per direction to and fro in all four directions and up and down. (See Shulchan Aruch Siman 651:8 and 9)

There are various different customs as to the order of which direction to follow.

The Shulchan Aruch rules to shake to the east, south, west, north, upward then downward. (Siman 251:10. This is also the ruling of the Derech HaChaim and the Chayei Adam. See Mishna Berura S"K 47)

The reason for this order is based on the principle of "B'chol Pinos SheAta Poneh, Tifneh L'Yemin, whenever you have a choice to go to the right or to the left, always choose to go to the right". (See Maseches Midos Perek 2 Mishna 2 and Talmud Yoma 15b and Sotah 15b)

Thus, since we are standing facing east, the direction to follow is a circle to the right. (Mishna Berura ibid. quoting the Mogen Avraham 651:21)

The Arizal had a different order to shake the Lulav, as follows: South, north, east, upward, downward then west. (See Be'er Heitev 651:20. See also Sha'arei Teshuva 651:10 for additional variations in the order of directions that other Poskim followed. Of course, every individual should follow their own accepted custom.)

2) Regardless which minhag any one individual follows in regard to the directions to shake the lulav, there is no difference between a left handed person and a right handed person regarding the order to be followed. (Mogen Avraham ibid.)

The person shaking the Lulav does not need to actually turn around in all the directions, as long as the Lulav is shaken in the proper directions it suffices. (Mishna Berura ibid.)

When circling the Bimah during the recitation of Hoshanos each day of Sukkos (and seven rounds on Hoshana Rabbah) the circle should begin from

the right side of the Bimah. (Shulchan Aruch Siman 660:1 and Mishna Berura S"K 3)

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The History and Halacha of Grafted Esrogim

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Micha Moka, who is fairly new to observant Judaism, presents the following question:

"This is the first time that I am purchasing my own esrog. I have been told that many esrogim may not be kosher because they, or their antecedents, were grafted onto other citrus trees. But, I don't understand

what the problem is. When you graft a branch of one species onto another tree, the fruit that grows should be identical to any other fruit of the branch species."

Answer:

In Parshas Emor, the Torah teaches, And on the first day you shall take for yourselves the fruit of a beautiful tree... and you shall rejoice with it before Hashem your G-d seven days.[1] The Hebrew term used to describe the fruit is pri eitz hadar. The word hadar is used many times in Tanach to refer to the glory of Hashem Himself.[2] The Ramban[3] explains the word esrog to be the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew word hadar, both words meaning desired or beautiful. (The Modern Hebrew use of the word hadar to mean citrus has no basis in traditional Hebrew, but was borrowed from the pasuk. Unfortunately, as a result of this modern convention, Israelis often misunderstand the pasuk.)

How do we know that it is an esrog?

The Written Torah does not provide any more details with which to identify this fruit, but the Oral Torah's mesorah from Sinai is that the Torah means the species that we call an esrog,[4] which is called Citrus medica in scientific jargon, based on its extensive medical value. Certainly, the oral mesorah itself provides sufficient basis for us to know which species is pri eitz hadar, but in addition, Chazal infer hermeneutically from the pasuk three features that are unique to the esrog.[5]

Feature #1: Its Bark is as Good as its Bite

(1) The bark tastes like the fruit. This means that the natural oils, flavinoids, and other chemical components that impart the unique fragrance and flavor of an esrog exist in sufficient quantity in the bark such that it bears the smell and "taste" of the fruit. Some early authorities note that this factor seems common to all citrus and not unique to the esrog.[6] Other citrus fruits also bear their unique components in their leaves, peels, and bark such that one can identify the leaf or bark of a lemon or orange tree by its aroma.

However, the Kapos Temarim[7] explains that an esrog is unique in that the taste of "its fruit and bark are equal." The esrog is unique in that it has little or no pulp, unlike other edible citrus fruits. Therefore, the main part of the esrog is its "rind," which bears a much closer flavor to its bark than does the pulp of any other fruit.[8]

Feature #2: The Fruit Remains on the Tree

(2) Much of this year's unpicked crop of esrogim will remain on the tree until the next year's crop is growing, and sometimes, this fruit remains on the tree for as long as two or more years. As a general rule, non-citrus trees drop their fruit at the end of the season. Most other citrus also drop their fruit when overripe, although some individual fruits still remain on the tree. Esrog does indeed remain longer on the tree than any other citrus, and although some fruit falls off, an impressive percentage remains on the tree, sometimes for as long as two years.[9]

Feature #3: Water, Water Everywhere

(3) An esrog requires year-round irrigation to produce sizable fruit. At the time I am writing this article, I have been unable to discover any unique feature of esrogim differentiating them from other types of citrus, all of which require year-round irrigation to produce large fruit.

Notwithstanding this description, a fruit still may have all these three features and still not be considered an esrog according to most authorities. We will soon see why.

Grafting

Common production of citrus is to graft the branches of the desired variety of fruit onto rootstocks that allow a greater yield, are more resistant to disease, and provide other commercial value. It is prohibited for a Jew to graft one species onto another stock, and it is a dispute among halachic authorities whether a gentile may or may not. (A number of years ago, I wrote an article on the subject of whether a gentile may graft and/or own grafted fruit trees.[10]) Most authorities understand that different varieties of citrus are halachically considered different species concerning the prohibition of grafting fruits (however, see Chazon Ish[11] who conjectures whether the similar characteristics of citrus might allow them to be considered one species, in regard to the prohibition of grafting.)

May one use a Grafted Esrog?

When one grafts the fruit of one species onto the rootstock of another, the fruit will grow according to the species of the scion branch, an observable phenomenon noted

already by Rashi.[12] Our question: is the fruit of an esrog branch grafted onto a lemon stock halachically an esrog? Are there any other halachic concerns because it grew on a non-esrog stock?

Graft in Sixteenth Century Poland

The earliest responsum on the subject that I discovered is authored by the Rama, who probably never saw an esrog tree in his life. Citrus trees are not generally frost-hardy, and therefore grow in warmer areas than Poland, where the Rama lived his entire life. When reading his responsum on the matter, we should bear in mind the difficulty of obtaining esrogim for Sukkos in his place and era.

Rama writes very tersely that the fruit of a graft is not called an esrog, nor is it called the fruit of a hadar tree.

The Rama notes that although there were earlier scholars who recited a beracha on grafted esrogim when they had no others available, we should not rely on this when we have access to non-grafted esrogim.[13] (For the balance of this chapter, when I refer to "grafted esrogim," I mean esrogim grafted onto a rootstock of a non-esrog species. All authorities allow use of a fruit grown on an esrog branch grafted onto another esrog tree.[14])

A Ransomed Esrog

A contemporary and second cousin of the Rama, Rav Shmuel Yehuda

Katzenellenbogen, the rav of Venice from 5326- 5357 (1566-1597), was asked whether one may use an esrog grafted onto a lemon tree, and responded that every child knows that these esrogim may not be used. Rav Katzenellenbogen writes that he heard from his father, Rav Meir Katzenellenbogen, the famed Maharam Padua (named for the city he served as rav for many decades), a fascinating anecdote:

One year, the entire community of Padua was able to acquire only one non-grafted esrog for Sukkos, which had to service all the different congregations of the city, although grafted esrog trees were apparently very popular decorative trees there and were readily available in the houses of the gentry. When the esrog was sent from one congregation to another, it was stolen by rowdy gentile students, who held the esrog for ransom. The community needed to redeem the kidnapped esrog for a considerable amount of money, which they did in order to fulfill the mitzvah, notwithstanding the fact that they had ready access to a large supply of very inexpensive, locally grown, grafted esrogim. Thus, the community purchased a non-grafted esrog twice in order to fulfill the mitzvah!

(Two curious side points about Rav Shmuel Yehuda Katzenellenbogen: the first is that we do not have an extant edition of his responsa. This particular undated responsum is published in the Shu't Rama.[15] The second is that he is often called the Mahari Padua, meaning Rav Yehudah, who had been born in Padua, to distinguish him from his father.)

Graft in the Holy Land!

A third responsum from the same era deals with the identical issue in Eretz Yisrael.

Prior to Sukkos of 5346 (1585), in Tzfas, the Alshich was asked about using a grafted esrog. He relates that one local rav wanted to permit use of this esrog, notwithstanding the fact that all the other authorities prohibited use of grafted esrogim for Sukkos. The rabbonim of Tzfas were concerned that the lenient opinion of this individual rabbi would be accepted against the consensus. This rav contended that the nourishment drawn from the lemon stock was already nullified in the esrog branch, and the fruit is therefore considered to be completely esrog.

In his discussion on the subject, the Alshich demonstrates, from the laws of orlah, that we consider the branch to be nullified to the stock and not the other way around, since a young branch grafted onto a stock more than three years old is not subject to the laws of orlah, whereas an older branch grafted onto a young stock is.

Furthermore, the Alshich contends that even if the esrog was not nullified to the lemon as the laws of orlah imply, the resultant fruit should be considered a blend of both species and not purely esrog. Therefore, even if the fruit is considered an esrog, it is an incomplete esrog, and therefore invalid, because it has some lemon content.[16]

A Different Graft Problem

A disciple of the Rama, Rav Mordechai Yaffe, often called the Levush because of the titles of his published works, contended that a grafted esrog may not be used for Sukkos for a different reason: since the Torah disapproves of grafting, one may not fulfill mitzvos with grafted products, just as a crossbred animal may not be used for a korban.[17] (By the way, both a fruit grafted from two kosher species and an animal crossbred from two kosher species are kosher – for eating purposes.)

Not all authorities agreed with the Levush in this argument. The Taz questions whether this principle of the Levush is accurate, rallying sources that the fact that something sinful had previously been performed with an item does not automatically invalidate it for mitzvah use.

The Taz still concludes that one should not use a grafted esrog because of a different reason, one of those that the Alshich had mentioned: that a grafted esrog should be considered incomplete because of the admixture of other species. However, the Taz notes that a halachic difference results between his reason and that of the Levush, since the halacha is that a damaged or incomplete esrog (called an esrog chaseir) may be used to fulfill the mitzvah after the first day of Sukkos. Since, in his opinion, the

shortcoming of a grafted esrog is its incompleteness as an esrog, one could use it after the first day of Sukkos. The Taz then notes that perhaps an esrog from a grafted branch or tree is worse than an incomplete esrog, in that it is considered qualitatively to be only partly esrog, and that one should avoid using it under any circumstances, so that people not err and think that it is a kosher esrog.

Can one identify a Grafted Esrog?

The vast majority of halachic authorities concluded that one does not fulfill the mitzvah with a grafted esrog.[18] A later debate focused on whether the fruit of a tree planted from the seed of a grafted esrog is also invalid, with the Beis Efrayim[19] contending that these esrogim are kosher, and other authorities disputing its kashrus. This led to a new debate. If the tree grown from a grafted esrog is no longer considered an esrog tree (for the purposes of fulfilling the mitzvah), how can one ever know that the esrog he wants to use is kosher?

This led to a dispute in the early nineteenth century, which I will refer to as the machlokes between those accepting esrogim on the basis of simanim, versus those accepting them on the basis of mesorah.

The Beis Efrayim ruled that one may use an esrog if it has the physical characteristics, the simanim, of a non-grafted esrog. His contemporary, the Chasam Sofer, disputed this, and ruled that just as we no longer rely on simanim to decide which birds we treat as kosher, but rely exclusively on a mesorah to determine the kashrus of a bird, so too, we can use esrogim only from places where we have a mesorah that they are kosher.

What are the characteristics that distinguish between a grafted and non-grafted esrog?

In the above quoted responsum of the Mahari Padua, he writes that one can identify whether an esrog was grown on a branch grafted onto another tree by three characteristics:

(1) Smooth Skinned

The skin of a grafted esrog is smooth, more like a lemon, whereas a pure esrog has a bumpy surface.

(2) Outward Stemmed

The stem (the ukatz) of a grafted esrog looks like a lemon's stem, which sticks up from the bottom of the lemon, instead of being imbedded inward like that of an esrog.

(3) Fruity and Thin Skinned

A grafted esrog has a lot of edible fruit and juice in it and a thin peel, whereas a pure esrog has a thick peel and little juicy flesh.

(4) Disoriented Seeds

Some later authorities noted another distinction between a regular esrog and a grafted one. In a regular esrog, the seeds grow in the same direction as the length of the fruit, whereas grafted esrogim often have their seeds growing like a lemon's, in the same direction as the width of the fruit. Other authorities disputed whether this demonstrates that the esrog has been grafted.[20]

Does Grafting Affect the Fruit?

Micha had noted correctly that when you graft a branch of one species onto the stock of another, the fruit that grows is from the scion branch and not from the species of the stock. However, for reasons not fully understood by contemporary scientists, there are significant modifications to the fruit that develop when it does not grow on its own natural stock. From a commercial perspective, these modifications are desirable, for they make the fruit more disease resistant and provide other qualities. However, in the case of an esrog, this creates halachic concerns.

Let us note that today there are several different types of esrog that have mesorah that they are not grafted. Aside from the conventional European or Israeli esrog that most of us are used to, there are also the Moroccan esrog and the Yemenite esrog, notwithstanding the fact that on both the inside and outside these esrogim are definitely distinguishable from the European or Israeli esrogim that Ashkenazim are accustomed to.

Research teams from the University of Catania, Italy, and Hebrew University jointly studied twelve varieties of esrog, including the standard Moroccan, Yemenite, Italian, Chazon Ish, and other varieties, to see whether they were indeed consistently one species, or whether the DNA indicated that they were of different species and origins. The study concluded that all twelve varieties are in fact esrogim, and indeed are genetically separable from other citrus fruits, including the lemon, which appears most similar to the esrog.

To quote the study: "The results obtained are very clear and might be regarded as somewhat surprising. Notwithstanding diverse geographical origin and the considerable morphological variation, especially in fruit size and shape, presence of pulp and persistence of style, all the citron types examined revealed a high degree of similarity. There was no sign of introgression of lemon or other citrus genomes into any of the citrons examined".[21]

We should note, that even though genetically all the varieties tested are indeed esrogim, we cannot rely on genetic testing to prove the authenticity of a particular esrog, since, if it was grafted onto non-esrog stock, it would be invalid for use for Sukkos, according to most authorities. In addition, the decision as to whether one may plant his fruit or stock and use future generations of this esrog is dependent on the

above-quoted dispute between those who follow mesorah and those who follow simanim.

Contemporary Esrogim

Two generations ago, many, if not most, esrog trees in Eretz Yisrael were grafted onto the stock of a variety of orange tree called the chushchash, which bears a fruit that is non-edible raw. The farmers of the era claim to being told that since the chushchash is not edible, using it as a stock for the esrog is permitted and would not invalidate the fruit, a position that is difficult to sustain and has been rejected by subsequent authorities. A result of this is that the Chazon Ish, and many other authorities had difficulty finding esrogim in Eretz Yisrael, and the Chazon Ish chose the tree for his esrog very carefully. One year he entrusted a seed from that esrog to Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz zt"l to plant. Rav Michel Yehudah protested that he had no experience in horticulture and esrogim require considerable knowledge to grow properly. The Chazon Ish told him, "Just plant this seed and make sure to water it regularly, and you will have plenty of esrogim to sell." Rav Michel Yehudah did as he was told, surprised at the instructions, notwithstanding his lack of experience. His tree grew, and for over seventy years produced gorgeous esrogim without any efforts on his part. This itself can be considered a miracle, for two different reasons: (1) Esrogim do not usually grow nicely on the tree without considerable work. (2) Esrog trees do not live this long.

Many of the "Chazon Ish" padesim now so popular were begun with trimmings of branches taken from Rav Michel Yehudah's tree.

This past Nissan, this esrog tree was indeed still covered with beautiful blossoms, indicative of another beautiful crop. The tree was in excellent shape, notwithstanding that the Chazon Ish is gone almost sixty years and the tree is over seventy years old. Its regular customers were looking forward to selecting esrogim from this ancient tree. As our readers know, Rav Michel Yehudah passed away a few months ago at the age of 97. Although the same people are still watering the tree, the tree began to wither and completely stopped producing fruit in midseason, and is suddenly showing signs of severe aging.

Certainly a miraculous sign, but the phenomenon can be readily explained. When Rav Michel Yehudah protested that he knew nothing of esrog horticulture, the Chazon Ish promised him that he need only water the tree and it would produce fruit. As long as Rav Michel Yehudah was alive, the beracha of the Chazon Ish was fulfilled, and we have a rule, tzadik gozeir, Hakadosh Baruch Hu mekayeim, If a righteous person decrees something, Hashem fulfills it.[22] As long as Rav Michel Yehudah was alive, the beracha of the Chazon Ish had to be fulfilled, despite the long odds against it. Once Rav Michel Yehudah passed on, the decree of the Chazon Ish no longer had to be fulfilled, and the tree no longer lived.

The author acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Joshua Klein, senior scientist at the Volcani Center, Israel Ministry of Agriculture for technical information in this article.

[1] Vayikra 23:40 [2] See, for example, Tehillim 96:6; 104:1 [3] Vayikra 23:40 [4] Rambam, introduction to Peirush Hamishnayot [5] Sukkah 35a [6] Shu't Rama #117 [7] Sukkah 35a [8] Quoted by Shu't Chasam Sofer, Orach Chayim #207 [9] Note that the Kappos Temarim, Sukkah 35a, explains the difference between esrog and other citrus slightly differently. [10] This article may be located at rabbikaganoff.com [11] Kelayim 2:15; 3:7 [12] Sotah 43b [13] Shu't Rama #117 [14] Shu't Bach #135; Mishnah Berurah 648:65 [15] #126:2 [16] Shu't Maharam Alshich #110 [17] Orach Chayim 649:4 [18] One authority that permitted its use is the Shu't Panim Meiros, Volume II #173. [19] Shu't Orach Chayim #56 [20] Bikkurei Yaakov 648:53 [21] Proceedings of the International Society of Citriculture, December, '00 [22] See Moed Katan 16b

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<http://nachmankahana.com/category/divrei-torah/>

Sucot

by Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Torah – The Voice of Hashem

Pirkei Avot 5:1:

בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם

By ten divine utterances [ma'amarot] was the world created.

The expression "utterances/ma'amarot" implies that HaShem made His voice heard. How does HaShem's voice sound?

The Prophet Eliyahu heard a "still, small voice" (I Melachim 19:11-12):

(יא) ויאמר צא ועמדת בהר לפני ה' והנה ה' עבר ורוח גדולה וחזק מפרק הרים ומשבר סלעים 'לפני ה' לא ברוח ה' ואחר הרוח רעש לא ברעש ה'

(יב) ואחר הרעש אש לא באש ה' ואחר האש קול דממה דקה

Come out," HaShem called, "and stand on the mountain before the Lord."

And lo, the Lord passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks by the power of the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the

earthquake. After the earthquake, fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still, small voice.

Likewise, Rabbi Amnon wrote in his Unetane Tokef prayer:

...Then there is a blast on the great Shofar and a still, small voice is heard.

The angels hasten to and fro and are seized with trembling and dread so that they say: "Behold! It is the day of judgment and the Host on high is to be considered in judgment," for they have no merit in Your eyes in judgment. By contrast, Moshe in the Mishkan (Tabernacle tent) and King David in Yerushalayim heard HaShem's voice with an enormous intensity that sent shock waves through the seven heavens, as King David wrote:

קול ה' בכח קול ה' בהדר

"The voice of HaShem is power! The voice of HaShem is majesty!"

(Tehillim 29:4).

I submit: The magnitude of HaShem's voice is perceived in accordance with the spiritual intensity of the respective place and situation.

Moshe and David heard HaShem's voice with enormous intensity due to the holy surroundings of the Mishkan and Yerushalayim. Eliyahu heard it as a still, small voice because such was the level of holiness of Mount Sinai after the Revelation. Rabbi Amnon, living outside the Land of Israel, likewise heard HaShem's voice as small and still.

Each year, in the month of Tishrei, the Jewish People complete a prolonged period of prayers, requests and entreaties, starting with the "Selichot" of Elul, continuing with the Days of Awe and the seven days of Succot and the eighth day of Shemini Atzeret. Countless words uttered! Countless voices heard!

The prayers of the nation dwelling in Zion soar up to the Throne of Glory, in accordance with where we are.

By contrast, for the Jewish communities in the exile, the total of all their prayers amounts to a small still voice, because the source of the calls is the galut lands. There is no prophecy outside the Land of Yisrael, only in the Holy Land can the Word of the Living God find expression.

An allegory for Succot

Reb Yisrael and his sons erected their sukkah adjacent to the kitchen door of their palatial home in one of the Five Towns, as they had done for many years in the past.

But this year was different. Reb Yisrael had just learned from his rabbi that one of the reasons for residing temporarily in a sukkah is in case one's destiny was decided on Rosh HaShana to be expulsion into galut, the departure from the comforts of home into the sukkah could be considered to be that galut.

Reb Yisrael, his wife and children left the warm comforts of their beautiful home and entered the sukkah with the knowledge that by taking up temporary residence therein, they would be absolved of any galut-related sins.

As the family continued to reside in the sukkah, they got so used to the pleasant smell of the schach (branches used to roof the sukkah) and the pretty pictures on the walls and the overhanging decorations, that they decided to remain there even after the chag! Even though they were able to peer into their permanent home with its luxurious amenities, electrical gadgets, and state-of-the-art under-floor heating units, thick hanging drapes, lush carpets and much more, they showed no interest in returning there.

As odd as it may seem, the family became accustomed to the crowded, cold interior of the sukkah. Their relatives and neighbors tried to point out the irrationality of what they were doing, but the very idea that this was galut did little to encourage the family to return home.

When their rabbi came to visit, it was surprising that he encouraged them to remain in the sukkah rather than to return home; because it was in the sukkah that the family felt comfortable and closely knit.

In the meantime, several strangers noticed that the previously brightly lit home was vacant, and they decided to move in as if it was indeed their own! Reb Yisrael and his wife and children saw the strangers living in the house; but in veneration for the sukkah, they stubbornly bonded with the thin walls and dried-out schach and refused to leave.

The whole thing was so absurd. To leave such a beautiful home for the feeble, fallible construction of the sukkah, despite the fact that their beautiful home was beckoning them to return, was beyond the understanding of any rational person.

Then came the stones thrown by the local anti-Semites who wanted to rid the neighborhood of this sukkah eyesore. Reb Yisrael and his family dodged them one by one and steadfastly remained in their fragile dwelling, rationalizing these acts as irrelevant nuisances.

Then came the terrible night when one-third of the sukkah was torched by the local bullies. Reb Yisrael and his family were aware of what was happening, but their minds had become so warped that no amount of reasoning could move them.

To them the sukkah was home and their home was galut.

Eventually the sukkah came crashing down, killing Reb Yisrael and his entire family – in their beloved galut!

Remember the three Bs: B careful B healthy B here
and

JLMM – Jewish Lives Matter More

Chag Samayach,

Nachman Kahana

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subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Shabbat Shalom: Chol Hamoed Sukkot

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – This magnificent three-week festival period – Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot – may be viewed and experienced in two dimensions simultaneously; the universalist, nationalist dimension, and the particularistic, individual/family dimension. Rosh Hashanah is the day on which the world was born, when the sigh-sob t'ruah sound of the shofar cries out against the tragedies and injustices of an imperfect world and the sharp, joyous t'kiyah sound reminds us of our responsibility – and ability – to help perfect the world in the Kingship of God by conveying the moral message of ethical monotheism; a God who demands justice, compassion and peace.

On Yom Kippur, the Almighty declares His readiness to forgive the nation Israel of its great sins – the idolatrous golden calf, the faithless cowardice of the scouts with the vision of our Holy Temple reaching out to all of humanity, “For My house is a House of Prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7). Sukkot is the climax of the season, taking us out of our egocentric, partisan lives and ordaining that we surround ourselves with fruits of the Land of Israel living beneath a roof of vegetation through whose spaces we look up at the stars. Seventy bullocks were sacrificed in the Holy Temple during the Sukkot Festival, symbolizing the seventy nations of the world.

And finally, Shemini Atzeret announces the onset of the rainy season: rain is, after all, a gift of God to the world.

Shemini Atzeret moves into the uninhibited joy of Simkhat Torah – the Rejoicing of the Torah, when all Torah Scrolls are taken out of the Holy Ark and become the focus of frenzied dancing not only in the synagogues but also outside in the streets – the public domain – in order to imbue the world with its message of “Thou shalt not murder” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

However, Judaism understands only too well that one dare not focus on humanity without concentrating on individuals. One cannot be a concerned universalist without hearing the cries of one's next door neighbor. Yes, it is the Jewish mission to convey the message of ethical monotheism to a world. The people of the covenant must perfect the world in the Kingship of our God of justice, compassion and peace. But first we must perfect ourselves: not only our nation, but our community; not only our community but our family; and not only our family but ourselves.

A disciple once approached Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (1800-1870), founder of the Ethicist (Mussar) Movement in Judaism, seeking permission to spread the ethical and moral message of the Master to Germany and Austria. The rabbi responded: “And is the City of Salant so imbued with my teachings

that you can afford to leave Lithuania? And is the street on which you live so morally inspired that you can teach in another community? And is your own family so careful in their conduct that you can preach to other families? And what about you, my beloved disciple? Are you on such a high level of ethical integrity that no one could criticize you?”

And so, Rosh Hashanah ushers in a ten-day period of repentance and introspection when we must be mindful of the need to perfect the world, but we must first attempt to perfect ourselves. Rosh Hashanah is the day on which the world was born, but it is also the “Day of Judgment,” when everyone passes before the Almighty to be evaluated and judged, when each of us must evaluate and judge ourselves from the perspective of Divine standards.

Yom Kippur may be a historic and national day of forgiveness, a day on which we invoke our Holy Temple as a “House of Prayer for all nations,” but it is first and foremost a day in which the individual stands in isolation from the world in the presence of the Divine. No food, no drink, no sexual relationship – with almost the entire day to be spent in God's house. Each of us rids ourselves of all materialistic encumbrances, separates ourselves from physical needs and blandishments, enters a no-man's land between heaven and earth, between life and death, dons the non-leather shoes worn by the mourner, and in effect feels what it's like to mourn for oneself by asking what legacy would I leave, were I to be taken from the world today?

And then comes Sukkot. Leave your fancy surroundings for a week; go back to basics. Spend seven days with your family in a simple hut. Remember that “when familial love is strong, a couple can sleep on the edge of a sword; but when familial love has gone sour, a bed of sixty miles does not provide sufficient room” (B.T. Sanhedrin 7a). Forget Netflix and Facebook; bring the special guests of the Bible into your simple but significant space, commune with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Lea, Miriam, Deborah and Ruth. Introduce them to your children – rather than today's pop stars and Instagram influencers – and sing and speak and share together. Remember – and communicate – that what is important is values not venues, content not coverings, inner emotions and not external appearances. And let the sukkah lead you to Simkhat Torah, to the love and joy of Torah, which will help form the kind of individuals and families who can build communities and, ultimately, change the world. Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach!