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maskil Le'David

Sukkah – an Easy Mitzvah with Great Reward

The Haftarah of the first day of Sukkot talks about the war of Gog and Magog that will take place at the end of days. We are told how Hashem will fight against the nations who oppressed Am Yisrael and then subdue them in front of Yisrael's own eyes. It also says (*Yechezkel* 39: 12) that Hashem commanded us to bury Gog and his warriors in the ground. What is the connection between the subject of this Haftarah and the festival of Sukkot?

One could explain that Gog is a descendant of Yefet son of Noach, and Rashi writes (*Bereishit* 9:23) that in the merit of Yefet covering his drunken father's nakedness, his children merited burial. The reward was measure for measure, for just as Yefet covered the nakedness of his father, so Hashem rewarded Gog and Magog, descendants of Yefet, that they will merit burial and their souls will be covered by the earth and not roll in the streets.

One who delves deeper will see that the word "סוכה" (Sukkah) has the same root letters as "כיסה" (to cover). From here we can derive a *kal v'chomer*: If for the small mitzvah of covering his father Yefet's descendants merited burial, all the more so if a Jew fulfills the important and precious mitzvah of Sukkah where his entire body enters the Sukkah and is enveloped in the Holiness of Hashem's Names, this will certainly serve as a merit for this Jew to be showered with an abundance of immense radiance and he will grow in Torah and fear of G-d.

Chazal tell us (*Avodah Zara* 2b) that in the future when the nations of the world will see Hashem give reward to the righteous, they too will come and demand their reward. They will say to Hashem, we built bridges and paved roads and we did all this to enable Bnei Yisrael to fulfill the mitzvot, therefore we too are worthy of receiving reward that is reserved for those who do Your Will. In answer to this claim and demand of reward Hashem will tell them, "I have a small mitzvah called Sukkah. Go now and fulfill it and I will see if you are truly deserving of reward."

This requires explanation. Why did Hashem choose particularly this mitzvah of Sukkah, and not challenge

the nations with a more difficult mitzvah such as observing Shabbat or laying Tefillin?

The answer could be that Sukkah seems to be an easy mitzvah, but in fact all the foundations of the Torah and the existence of the Jewish people are dependent on this mitzvah. With this mitzvah we show our love for Hashem and our complete trust in Him, to the extent that we leave our homes in exchange for a temporary dwelling. The nations will have to understand on their own that if in the merit of their ancestor Yefet covering Noach his children merited burial, all the more so must a person glorify the mitzvah of Sukkah. The mitzvah of Sukkah should serve as a lesson that just as one's body is right inside the Sukkah – which symbolizes the Seven Clouds of Glory with which Hashem surrounded Bnei Yisrael in the desert – so one must surround one's body with mitzvot and thereby draw on oneself immeasurable radiance.

Furthermore, *Chazal* say (*Avodah Zara* 2b) that in the future when the nations will enter their Sukkot Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath; this will cause them to kick at the Sukkah and quickly return to their homes. The explanation is that the nations will assume that they are burning due to the heat of the sun which was removed from its sheath but in fact, the heat they feel is the heat of the mitzvah of Sukkah that they "kicked." Every single mitzvah has its own warmth, a heat that is formed from the value we attach to the mitzvah and from the love and self-sacrifice with which we fulfill it. Since the nations are unable to fathom this concept of fulfilling a mitzvah with love and self-sacrifice, they cannot bear the heat formed through fulfilling the mitzvah. The result will be that they will hurry to escape from the Sukkah and return to their homes.

Hashem will try the nations of the world particularly with the mitzvah of Sukkah so that they should be aroused to remember the reward that was given to Yefet their ancestor for covering his father. Even though Yefet did not put effort into covering his father as his brother Shem did, nevertheless his descendants merited being covered by the earth and being brought to burial. However, instead of Yefet's descendants learning a lesson from the deeds of their ancestor and being stirred by the mitzvah of Sukkah which contains messages of faith and trust in Hashem, as well as a connection to the Names "י-ה-ו-ה" and "י-ה-ו-ה", and instead of being inspired by the heat of the mitzvah and fulfilling it with great love, they will hurry to kick at it. Therefore they lose their reward in the Next World.

cont. p. 3.>>>

19 Tishrei 5786
11 October 2025

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Shabbat Chol Hamo'ed



Hilula

19 Tishrei
Rabbi Yosef Moshe
Adass, one of the
Rabbanim of the Porat
Yosef Yeshiva

20 Tishrei
Rabbi Eliezer Papo,
author of *Pele Yo'etz*

21 Tishrei
Rabbi Shimon Montilia,
of the Teveria Sages

22 Tishrei
Rabbi Aharon Halevi

23 Tishrei
Rabbi David Halevi
Jungreis, Rosh Beit Din
Yerushalayim

24 Tishrei
Rabbi Avraham
Ben Shimol

25 Tishrei
Rabbi Levi Yitzchak
of Berditchev





WORDS OF THE SAGES

Do You See, Little One?

Our great leaders, *Ge'onim*, and holy people throughout the generations prepared themselves extensively for the mitzvah of sitting in the Sukkah in order to maximize their ability to absorb its holiness and sublime influence.

Out of their great love for the holy Sukkah, the *tzaddikim* almost never left the Sukkah throughout the festival. Rabbi Eliyahu David Rabinowitz Teumim *zt"l*, author of *Aderet*, stated that if one prays alone in one's Sukkah without a minyan it is not held against him, for sometimes a person longs so much for the Sukkah that he does not wish to leave it. He prefers to pray in his Sukkah by himself than leave and go to the *beit midrash* to pray with a minyan. But he did not allow these words to be printed in his *sefer*; he did not want Jews who are too lazy to go to the *beit midrash* to use this as an excuse and pretend they are doing something lofty.

The Gaon Rabbi Simcha Rabinowitz *shlit"a*, author of *Piskei Teshuvot*, related: "One year we had a baby boy on the Holy day of Yom Kippur. The brit took place eight days later on Chol Hamo'ed Sukkot. The actual brit milah did not take place in a Sukkah but in a *beit midrash* in accordance with the ruling that one should be careful not to make a brit in a Sukkah out of fear that splinters and leaves from the *s'chach* might fall onto the baby and endanger him.

"During the *seudah* which took place later in the Sukkah, my grandfather the Chelkat Yehoshua, the holy Rebbe of Biala *zt"l*, took the baby in his hands, held him lovingly, and in front of all the astonished participants turned to the baby and began speaking to him as if he could understand: 'Do you see, little one? This is the *s'chach*, this is the Sukkah, and these are the decorations with which we beautify the Sukkah.' He also showed him the Four Species which were lying on the table.

"All the participants were taken aback by the sight of my grandfather talking to the baby, until my esteemed father *zt"l*, plucked up the courage and turned to my grandfather: 'Father, he is a tiny baby, what does he understand of all these things?'

"You are correct, he does not understand,' my grandfather replied, his face radiating a holy light, 'but his *neschama* comprehends. I am speaking to his *neschama* so that already now these things should be engraved in his heart.'"

The rav added that this incident reminded him of the opinion of Beit Shammai on the Mishna (*Sukkah* 2:8), where it says that Shammai Hazaken opened the roof and put *s'chach* over the bed of a day-old baby. Even though the *Shulchan Aruch* rules that a baby who needs a mother is exempt from the mitzvah of Sukkah, this Mishna shows us that the mitzvah of sitting in the Sukkah is also relevant to a day-old baby.



PEARLS OF THE CHAG

Inspiring Reflections

Horses Are Decorated When Parading in the Streets

The mitzvah of Sukkah is described in the Torah as follows: "You shall make the festival of Sukkot for a seven-day period, when you gather in from your threshing floor and from your wine cellar" (*Devarim* 16:13). It is a lesson in how to conduct oneself after receiving the gift of abundant blessings from Heaven and stocking one's storage for the year with the abundance of crops that flourished during the summer.

Chazal tell us (*Chagiga* 9a) that poverty is fitting for Am Yisrael. The *tzaddik* of Parmishlan *zy"a*, says the custom of decorating horses is only when they are displayed in the streets; inside the stables they are not adorned with red decoration. "Poverty is fitting for Am Yisrael" refers to an outward show only; other people should think that we are poor, but inside the homes there should be abundance of good.

The mitzvah of Sukkah alludes to this idea. Externally it looks as though *s'chach* is made from threshing floor and wine cellar refuse (see *Rosh Hashana* 13a) and the walls are constructed from simple boards. However the inside of the Sukkah is adorned with all kinds of decorations. This is an important ideal for Am Yisrael. It says in *Mishlei*, "It is the blessing of Hashem that enriches": one's abundance should only be displayed within the home and not to the outside world; such a display could result in a negative outcome, G-d forbid.

Perfection in Faith, Repentance, Health and Redemption

Why are we so particular that the Etrog should be of exclusive quality, more than with the other species?

The word "אתרוג" (*etrog*) is an acronym for "אמונה, תשובה, רפואה, גאולה" (faith, repentance, healing and redemption). With these four matters there must be perfection, just as we ask and say "I believe with *complete* faith," "return us to You in *perfect* repentance," "bring *complete* recovery for all our ailments," "redeem us with a *complete* redemption speedily for Your Name's sake." Partial faith, repentance, healing and redemption is also a possibility, but we pray to reach the summit (*Belahavat Eish*).

Unity and Joy Symbolize the Essence of the Chag

What is the source of the extra joy that is present particularly on Sukkot?

Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky explains that *Chazal* say the mitzvah of *arba minim*, where we bind together four different species, symbolizes unity among Am Yisrael.

Furthermore, the foundation of unity exists particularly on Sukkot when we leave our permanent homes and thereby annul the significance of materialism and establish our belief in the temporariness of This World. Unity is an automatic outcome of annulling materialistic desires, as Rabbeinu Yonah explains on the verse, "One who removes himself to court lust will be exposed" (*Mishlei* 18:1). Whoever wishes to pursue his desires automatically separates himself from friends and acquaintances because people have different desires and passions. He will cause his loved ones and friends to grow distant. Joy cannot exist in the absence of unity among Am Yisrael. Therefore the festival of Sukkot deserves this additional joy because of the unity that represents the core and essence of the holiday.



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi
David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

The Mitzvah of Building the Sukkah

The *poskim* rule that it is commendable to begin building the Sukkah immediately after Yom Kippur.

This seems puzzling. Why must we occupy ourselves with this mitzvah in particular as soon as this holy day ends? After Yom Kippur we pray the evening prayer as well as recite the prayer for the Sanctification of the Moon with *Shem U'Malchut*, which is compared to welcoming the *Shechina*. Are these mitzvot not enough? Why must we engage ourselves in building the Sukkah?

One can answer according to the Gaon of Vilna who expounds on the verse, "Then His Tabernacle was in Yerushalayim, and His Dwelling in Tzion" (*Tehillim* 76:3). He points out that the only mitzvah one fulfills with one's entire body, including all limbs and sinews, is the mitzvah of Sukkah. Therefore, there is nothing more suitable than engaging in this mitzvah on Motza'ei Yom Kippur which is a pure and holy time, so our entire body and soul will absorb the spirit of the holy mitzvah. In this way we will begin the year following this holy and awesome day with the sanctity of this mitzvah.

When a Jew fulfills a mitzvah that is connected to eating or other physical pleasures, it may be hard to discern whether he is fulfilling the mitzvah for the sake of Heaven or not. Maybe his intention is more for the physical pleasure than to give pleasure to Hashem. Therefore, particularly as this Holy Day leaves us, when we sanctified our body through abstaining from eating and drinking and in this way rectified all that went in and came out of our mouth throughout the year, we immediately busy ourselves with the mitzvah of building the Sukkah where our entire body participates with the absence of any physical pleasure. Our sole intention is to give pleasure to our Creator. Similarly, this mitzvah of building the Sukkah is performed with immense joy — we wait in anticipation to welcome the holy *Ushpizin* who will come and spread the shelter of their peace over our Sukkah, and we also look forward to Hashem sheltering us under His protective Shade.

Since Sukkah is a mitzvah that we fulfill only for the sake of Heaven while dedicating and purifying our entire body including all our limbs and sinews, Hashem connects our good intentions to all our deeds that will follow, so they too will be fulfilled only for Hashem's sake and not G-d forbid for personal pleasure. The mitzvah of Sukkah has the power to shower an abundance of holiness and purity on us; and so should all our deeds from now on throughout the year also be carried out in holiness and purity, with the intention of giving spiritual pleasure to our Creator.

This is why the mitzvah of building the Sukkah is regarded with such great importance: it is done with all of one's 248 limbs and 365 sinews, with one's entire body being consecrated for Hashem.

We pray that just as we subdued the *yetzer hara* now, so may we be successful in subduing it throughout the year, strengthening ourselves in Torah and mitzvot and fulfilling them with untainted intentions for the sake of Heaven. May we see the fulfillment of "One who wishes to purify himself is blessed with Heavenly assistance."

cont. from p. 1 >>>

According to this we can understand why we read the Haftarah which describes Gog and Magog on the Festival of Sukkot. We wish to remember that because of Yefet's small mitzvah of covering his father Noach, measure for measure his descendants merited being covered by the earth and being brought to burial.

Although the mitzvah of Sukkah does not require much toil and effort, it contains many *segulot* since many matters of holiness are intertwined in it and it has the power of showering immeasurable light on those who enter the Sukkah. From this "small" mitzvah that Bnei Yisrael observe with joy on Sukkot, they merit a revelation of Hashem through His Holy Names, and He showers them with the love of a Merciful Father, delivering them and blessing them with a good life and peace.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust
penned by Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David
Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

A Prophetic Vision

One year, after Yom Kippur a pitiful woman came to see me. She had lost her entire family and suffered from additional problems. But materially she lacked nothing.

This woman had mystical leanings and dabbled in the hidden areas of the Torah such as Kabbalah and other spiritual matters. But instead of channeling her spiritual tendencies to Torah and mitzvah observance, she was drawn to Buddhism. She had never had a proper Jewish education to set her on the right path.

This woman went to India to satisfy her religious yearnings. According to protocol she removed her shoes before their chief, immersed herself, and requested to be accepted to their religion.

That night she had a dream. A *tzaddik* appeared to her and said, "Look at me. Have you ever heard of Elijah the Prophet? I am he, standing before you. Leave this defiled place immediately and return to your home and your heritage!"

The woman awoke in a cold sweat. The very next day, she left India and returned home, physically and spiritually.

She told me that in the merit of her dream she returned to Judaism. This year, she merited observing her first Yom Kippur as a true Jew. She further desired to become more observant and asked how to complete her *teshuvah*.

Of course I guided her on the path of *teshuvah*. How fortunate she was to have a dream that was a clear message from Above. Hashem was, so to speak, telling her, "My daughter, you are making a fatal mistake. I am the only G-d. Why do you bow to stone? Come, pray to Me. Learn about your rich heritage and return to your Heavenly Father."

This will be the goal of Eliyahu Hanavi in the future, as the verse says (*Malachi* 3:24), "And he will return [to Hashem] the hearts of fathers with [their] sons." The hearts of the wayward sons will be returned to their Heavenly Father. Hashem will draw closer to us and we will draw closer to Him.



Constructing the Sukkah and decorating it was a special event for the Rosh Yeshiva, Hagaon Rabbi Elazer Menachem Mann Shach *zt"l*. Much has been written and told about those who assisted in building Rav Shach's Sukkah. He showered blessings upon them, which was his way of expressing his deep appreciation.

Rav Shach was unique in his meticulousness not to benefit from the service of others. Despite his old age, he would search for a long time for the *Rambam* or the *Rashba* on *Masechet Sukkah* rather than request help from any of his *talmidim*; he truly did not want to inconvenience others. But when it came to building his Sukkah the required effort was beyond his limited strength. Yet even then, he wanted to express his gratitude and heartfelt thanks to them. His "payment" to them was a generous blessing – which always came to fruition.

One of his close *talmidim* who witnessed this relates: Most of the *bachurim* became engaged within that year; very few returned to the Rosh Yeshiva the next *erev Sukkot*. Hundreds of Jewish sons and daughters found their *zivug* in this way. The "payment" turned into a goal in and of itself. **All those who wished to find their marriage partner or be blessed with children wanted to assist Rav Shach. They wanted to help so as to merit salvation, to give so as to be blessed by the Rosh Yeshiva, until everyone knew: Whoever had come of age and had not yet found his *zivug* should help put up Rav Shach's Sukkah.**

The tradition of helping Rav Shach build his Sukkah began in his original home in Yerushalayim. His Rabbanit *a"h*, took the initiative and asked *bachurim* from the Chevron Yeshiva for help.

"And how will I repay them?" the Rosh Yeshiva asked his wife once the Sukkah was complete. The Rabbanit replied that there were several older *bachurim* among the helpers who had not yet found their destined partner. "You can bless them," she suggested.

Rav Shach was pleased with this idea. He may not have been aware of the power his blessings possessed or the extent they were accepted on High, but those he blessed became engaged that year. In fact, throughout his life he credited the fulfillment of his blessings to his Rabbanit.

Motza'ei Yom Kippur was when they began building the Sukkah. This was the Rosh Yeshiva's wish. That same night they finished erecting the Sukkah, and the next day the regular volunteers would come and hang the decorations. Already then, the next morning, Rav Shach requested that the tablecloth be spread over the table. On the eleventh of Tishrei the table already looked festive, as if it was *erev Yom Tov*, complete with the challah cover waiting to cover the fresh challot.

Once the Sukkah was ready, Rav Shach would inspect it. His face radiated joy and expressed delight as he surveyed the walls. He was particular that the *s'chach* should be very thick. No decorations were hung from the *s'chach*, their place was on the walls alone. Then he would return to

his room full of joy and bless the waiting *bachurim* who had helped build the Sukkah. It was a unique occasion. Often he even drank a *l'chaim* with the young builders. The type of blessing and the way he addressed them differed for each boy. Some received blessings they had not requested and were not even aware they needed!

Sometimes Rav Shach did not have enough strength and asked to postpone giving the blessings. If the workers were unable to return later, they would write their names and requests on a paper which they handed to a family member who would later give it to the Rosh Yeshiva. Then Rav Shach would take the list of names in his hand and recite several chapters of *Tehillim* with intense concentration. He could often be seen on Motza'ei Yom Tov *rishon* (the culmination first day Sukkot) saying *Tehillim*.

During the Chag, when Rav Shach lit the Yom Tov candles or after Kiddush, he sat and prayed for the salvation of all those names written on the list.

The Rosh Yeshiva was particular that all decorations brought to him should be hung in the Sukkah. This was not an easy feat, but he found the time and invested the thought to satisfy everyone. He involved himself in the placement of the decorations, finding place for the more difficult ones right near his place at the table. He was truly an example of expressing Hakarat Hatov in many ways.



"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"

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