

Mazal Tov to our graphic designer
Mrs C Gordon
on the birth of her son

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Everything you need to know about Succot

By Rabbi Moshe Stamler

Here's what you need to know.....

Open up the very first chapter of the Shulchan Aruch and look at the very first paragraph: 'Shiviti Hashem Lenegdi Tamid – I place G-d before me constantly' is a great principle of the Torah.'

The verse quoted here continues: 'He is at my right hand; I will not fall'. The Vina Gaon explains: if I place Him before me, He responds and stands at my right side. The more a person thinks about G-d, the more G-d is watching over him.

This two-way relationship is very much a part of the process of Teshuva from the start of Ellul through to Succot. Teshuva is expressed as 'Bring us back in complete Teshuva before You.' Getting back to living before G-d: returning to a situation where we live always aware of His closeness and His love. 'Shiviti Hashem Lenegdi Tamid' – I place G-d before me constantly' is the end-game of all our actions and the goal of our Teshuva, to come back to living before Him. When we bring Him back into our lives, He responds.

Rosh Hashana is a day of - as the Rambam puts it - 'fleeing and flight to Him.' We stand before Him, keenly aware of His power and presence. The more we stand

before Him in judgement, the easier the judgement.

On Yom Kippur we mention hundreds of times the sins 'I committed before You': we admit that we have behaved as if He were not there, as if we can live and breathe and think and pump the blood round our own bodies without His constant presence, and when we say viduy we are bringing all these actions back before Him. We return to Him, and he forgives us.

The succah is a continuation of this refrain: sitting in the 'shade of Emunah', leaving behind the permanence of our homes and living in a structure which cannot fully protect us. 'Ki yitspeneni besuccah, He will hide me in His succah.' Hashem, I know you are there.

The succah is a 7-day crash-course in 'Shiviti Hashem Lenegdi Tamid'. The Torah stresses 'so your generations shall know....' Why do we the later generations have to know what happened back then in the desert? Because essentially, we are in the same situation; they were on a journey where the natural order of events did not allow for their survival; they lived and existed by the succot, the clouds of glory, the divine protection from all sides. We Jews travel through history in the same way. A whole list of persecutors, oppressors and detractors; we are living under the physically flimsy, partial roof of the succah which represent the shade of Emunah, the shade of 'Shiviti Hashem Lenegdi Tamid' – He is standing at my right side. לִמְנוֹן יֵדְעוּ דוֹרוֹתֵינוּם : He wants us to know, to be aware, because the more we know Him the more He knows us. The more we are aware of G-d's presence, the more He is watching over us. No wonder the Torah stresses 'you shall know.....': it is that knowledge which is our protection.



Halachot of Succot

By Rabbi Namir Cohen

*And you shall take for yourselves on the first day.....
And you shall rejoice before G-d for seven days.'*

The Sages explain this verse: it is a mitzva to take the four minim on the first day of Succot anywhere in the world, whereas for the rest of Succot one only takes four minim in the בית המקדש. After its destruction we are left with the מצוה only on the first day. However, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai wanted us to do actions to make us remember and long for the בית המקדש, bringing us to teshuva and tefilla that we will merit to return to Zion. Hence, he instituted that for the rest of Succot Rabbinical law requires Lulav and Etrog to be taken even whilst we are in Exile. So today we have:

- Day 1 - a Biblical Mitzvah
- The last 6 days - a Rabbinical Command to take the four minim.

Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, however, forbade taking the four minim on Shabbat, to safeguard its sanctity. Therefore, this year when the first day of Succot falls on Shabbat, we will not be fulfilling the Biblical obligation, only the Rabbinical one, from Sunday to Friday.

1. Therefore the first time we will shake lulav is on Sunday the 16th of Tishri, thereby fulfilling the Rabbinical obligation, saying the 2 Berachot 'Al Netilat Lulav' and 'Shehecheyanu'.
2. In the above-mentioned verse, it states 'Take for yourselves on the first day', which the Sages explain to mean that on the first day of Succot we may not use a borrowed Lulav: to fulfil the obligation, we must acquire the lulav and the owner will later reacquire it. (This may be done through 'giving a present on condition one receives it back'.)
3. On the second day of Succot those who live in Israel can fulfil the Mitzvah with borrowed Minim, but for us in Exile, one must own one's four minim in order to be able to make a Beracha.
4. The Shulchan Aruch (או"ח תרנו"ו) stipulates that one must not give his four minim as a present to a child until all adults have fulfilled their obligation, since although a child can acquire it, according to Biblical law he cannot transfer the ownership back to someone else.
5. On a regular year, this would cause a problem, for even if a child is only given the Lulav after all adults have fulfilled their obligation, the adults will have a problem on the second day, as a Ben Chutz L'aretz needs to own the Lulav in a way which satisfies Biblical law.
6. So ideally, the child should have his own kosher set. If that is not an option, one can rely on the opinion that allows using a borrowed Lulav for Mitzvat Chinuch, and the adult makes sure not to transfer possession of the Lulav to the child.

7. This year however, since we only have one day - the second day of Succot - where we are required to own the Lulav, one can suffice with one set and give it as a gift to the child, after all adults have fulfilled their obligation.
8. Even if one has more than one child, one set is still sufficient. It should first be used by children aged six and above, as they can transfer ownership on a Rabbinical level, and other children - who are only obliged Rabbinically - can use the Kinyan Derabanan for the Mitzvah Derabanan; the last child to use it could be a five-year-old, who cannot transfer ownership, even Derabanan. (Younger children are below the age of Chinuch, so they can use the borrowed Lulav.)
9. The Aravoth, Hadassim and Lulav are Muktzah on Shabbat and cannot be moved for any purpose. The Etrog, however, is not Muktzah and is permitted to be smelled (as opposed to the Hadassim, which are not). However, if one is particular not to move his Etrog in case it gets damaged, then it is Muktzah due to 'chisaron kis', and cannot be moved for any purpose.

Preparing from the first to second day of Yom Tov

10. In a regular year, in the event that a person has accepted the second day early - before the end of the first day - and prayed Arvit, he/she can cook and heat food on the first day for the sake of the second day's evening meal, provided one eats from each cooked food before sunset, as we do in our community.
11. Alternatively, if some of the food is needed for the first day, when cooking for the first day, one can add food for the second day to the pot but only before the pot is placed on the fire.
12. The act of adding additional pieces is not considered an act of preparing, which would be prohibited to be done from the first day to the second day, as it only involves Tiltul [moving] and is necessary for a Mitzvah, in addition to the fact that each piece could potentially be the one eaten on the first day.
13. This year, obviously, this is not an option, as the first day is Shabbat, and no cooking is allowed until Shabbat is properly terminated.
14. However, one may take food out of the freezer on Shabbat for it to thaw for the second day, since as mentioned above, such preparation is permitted, for a Mitzvah. [Beware of 'bererah'.]
15. However, one may not use this leniency to carry a Machzor, (even those who carry in the Eruv) on the Shabbat, for Yom Tov.
16. Even though Shabbat is on the eve of Yom Tov Sheni, one may eat Seuda Shelishit even after Zeman Mincha Ketana; however, one should be careful not to eat a lot, so as to have an appetite for the meal of Yom Tov Sheni.



What is the reason for the mitzvah of succah?

R' Shmuel Livshin

What is the reason for the mitzvah of succah?

The Torah itself gives the reason - למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל ביהוצאי ארצם מארץ מצרים - "So that you should know that I sat Bnei Yisrael in succot when I took them out of Mitzraim". What is that referring to? One opinion says that it is to remind us of the actual succah (house/tent like structures) in which we lived in the desert. R' Eliezer however is of the opinion that it is to remind us of the ענני הכבוד, the clouds of glory, that protected us in the desert from the sun. This later view is adopted in the Shulchan Aruch, and should be our intention when fulfilling the מצוה. The only problem is, if we are commemorating the ענני הכבוד that we were given when we left מצרים, surely כבוד should be together with פסח ניסן when we actually left?!

The conventional answer given to this question (טור) is that ניסן is the beginning of spring, a time when it would be normal to start going out into summer huts as the weather gets warmer and it would not be noticeable that our intention is for the sake of the מצוה. So ה' told us to go out and sit in the succah in תשרי, at the beginning of winter when it starts to get colder, to make it clear why we are going outside. [Just to point out the obvious in case you were wondering; why not have succot mid-winter to make it REALLY clear? the answer is simple: mid-winter it will be raining all day and we wouldn't be able to sit in the succah at all!]

The Vilna Gaon however has a different explanation: we are not commemorating the ענני הכבוד per se. After the חטא of the עגל the ענני הכבוד were taken away. משה רבינו ascended Har Sinai for 40 days to pray for forgiveness, and then again for another 40 days to receive the second set of

לוחות. He descended with the ענני הכבוד on לוחות שניות. Next the people spent a few days preparing the Mishkan, culminating on the 15th of תשרי with the erection of the Mishkan. Only at this point did we merit the return of the ענני הכבוד.

This means we are actually celebrating the return of the ענני הכבוד after our sin. This showed us that ה' had accepted our teshuva. Succot is a celebration of our joy that ה' gave us this wonderful gift called teshuva with which we can not only amend all we have ever done wrong but even turn these acts into merits.

However, there is another level to the kindness: what were the ענני הכבוד? What exactly did they do? They made our experience in the מדבר more pleasant: they smoothed out the ground to make the walk easier; they kept out the sun so that it wouldn't be too hot; they protected us from all types of dangerous creatures. They weren't like the Manna or the well which gave us food and drink, both bare necessities that we needed for our survival. The ענני הכבוד were an added bonus, a sign that ה' loves us. He was looking after us, not just to keep us alive; because He cared about us; He wanted to make things more comfortable. The Ari z'l points out that the minimum number of walls for a succah is two and a bit, which corresponds to the two parts of the of the arm and the hand, symbolising a one-armed embrace from ה'.

This is the real Simcha of succot. Not only did ה' forgive our sins, which is no small thing, but He still loved us. The return of the ענני הכבוד was a sign that even after sinning, teshuva has the ability to bring us back to where we were previously [if not even higher] and Hashem still cares about us. We can go back to having that close connection with Him.

This is why Succot is called זמן שמחתינו - the time of our joy. What a bliss that our teshuva was accepted!

But this concept isn't just remembering a historical Simcha about a teshuva that once was. We learnt this lesson from that episode and can now apply it to our very own lives. The timing of Succot after חטא is a perfect time for us to celebrate the כפרה that we achieved on the holy day for our own sins. It's very much a concept that we live with and should appreciate.



Diamonds On The Roof

By R' Shmuel Oppenheimer

The succah symbolizes the great love from Hashem after we have repented from our sins. [See previous article.]

A hardworking and poor newly religious young man in New York wished to perform the mitzvah of building a succah. The problem was that he lived in a very tall block of flats and none of the balconies were succah-friendly. The only option he had was to build it on the roof - on the 22nd floor! He approached the landlord, explained that he wanted to build a succah and asked permission to use the roof for a week. The landlord rolled his eyes and replied that using the roof will cost money, and, he wanted a proper contract written in front of a lawyer. The tenant was horrified! He thought to himself "Do I need to pay so much money for one week to use the empty roof and even sign a legal contract?" Seeing no other option, he reluctantly paid the large amount and signed the contract.

Off he went up to the roof to build the succah. When he got to the top of the building, he couldn't believe what met his eyes. A dump! Rubbish strewn everywhere; it was filthy; he couldn't find a clearing anywhere to build a succah. He was totally distraught. He'd paid so much money, signed a contract with a lawyer, and now, this is what he gets! He thought "surely I'm an exempt in these circumstances from building a succah". Then he decided: "No! I'm going to work hard and clear a space and build it". As he started to clear up, he came across a white bag, he opened it and to his shock found.... Diamonds! He took the bag straight down to the local police station and handed it in to the Lost & Found department. All the officers came to look at this crazy Jew who handed in a bag of diamonds. They took his information and he hurried home to build his succah.

A few weeks later he got the summons at the police station. "The diamonds are yours" they declared. The owner passed away recently and he has no heirs. According to the law since they were found on your roof, they belong to you. Before he could digest the good news of his new fortune, his phone rang, it was the landlord. "Those diamonds are mine; the roof belongs to me..." "No" he replied "I rented it off you!" The landlord didn't relent and they ended up in court. The judge ruled that since there was a proper contract signed in the presence of a lawyer... it goes to the tenant!

That Jew surely felt the love that Hashem has for us!



In Praise of The Lazy

R' David Schlama

Rabbi Eliezer, a mentor of Rabbi Akiva, used to say at Succot time "I praise the lazy ...who don't [read-*can't be bothered to*] leave their home during the Chag"-and thereby perform the mitzva of Succah much better [Masechet Succah 21a, see also Pesachim 50b ושכר].

There is something larger to learn from this. The "negative" traits of character such as laziness, pride, hardness of heart, etc were given to us not only to overcome them, but also as a help to avoid mistakes. Being too lazy to fight will make one refrain from quarrelling; having a healthy pride of being a בן/בת ישראל makes it easier to distance ourselves from foreign influences; hardness of heart is needed...to pull ourselves out of bed after a short night!

On reflection...there are many other examples. Hashem in his kindness gave us all the tools to succeed in all His mitzvot; we just need to use the right one in each situation. But first, we need to know the theory...here again we see how beneficial it is to study the Torat haMidot in our Mussar sefarim.

