

Sukkot 5775

BS"D For Sukkot 5775

Two excerpts from my book "With All Your Might" dealing with the holiday of Sukkot

1- An allegory relating to Jewish life in the galut when the gate to Eretz Yisrael is open.

Reb Yisrael and his sons erected their succah adjacent to the kitchen door, as they had done for many years.

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

Reb Yisrael, his wife and children left the warm comforts of their beautiful house and entered the succah 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 succah, they got quite used to the pleasant smell of the schach and the pretty pictures on the walls and the overhanging decorations and were content to remain there even after the chag! They were able to peer into their permanent home with its luxurious amenities, electrical gadgets, state-of-the-art under-floor heating units, thick hanging drapes, lush carpets and much more, but entertained no interest in returning there.

As odd as it may seem, the family became accustomed to the crowded cold interior of the succah. 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 them to return to their spacious home.

When their rabbi came to visit, it was surprising that he encouraged them to remain in the succah rather than to return home; because it was in the succah 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 were indeed their own!

Reb Yisrael and his wife and children saw the strangers living in the house; but in veneration for the succah, 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 succah, despite the fact that their beautiful home was beckoning 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 eye-sore, but Reb Yisrael and his family dodged them one by one and steadfastly remained in their fragile dwelling.

Then came the terrible night when one third of the succah 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 succah was home and their home was galut.

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



2- The testimony of this incident that occurred during the Shoah was brought to the attention of Dr. Shlomo Zalman Kahana, who established the Holocaust Museum on Mount Zion, by a survivor of one of the extermination camps.

The survivor related that once a week the Germans would inspect the prisoners; those who could still work were given one more week to live, and those who were too sick were sent to be gassed.

And he continued, "One day I came upon my close friend, Reb Aryeh, who was crying. 'Are you crying because of tomorrow's inspection?' I asked. Reb Aryeh replied that sadness overcame him because tomorrow will be Sukkot and '*...we don't have a sukkah to sit in, nor the four species to hold (lulav, etrog, hadassim and aravot*').

The following morning Reb Aryeh came to me with a happy look. He cried out '*Thank HaShem, we have a sukkah and the four species to hold.*' I thought Reb Aryeh was losing his mind. '*Where are we to get a sukkah and the four species in this hell-hole?*' I asked.

Then Reb Aryeh took my hand and said very slowly, as a teacher would to his student. 'The Gemara says that one of the reasons for sitting in a *sukkah* is to recall the clouds which covered the Jewish camp in the desert. Look! A cloud is covering our camp. It is the cloud of smoke ascending right over us from

the crematoria. We shall sit under that cloud and it will be our *sukkah*.

And the Midrash states that the four species parallel the major organs of the body. The *etrog* represents the heart; the *lulav* the spine; the *hadassim* the eyes and the *aravot* the lips. So I will hold you and you will hold me and we will fulfill the *mitzva* of the four species while under the cloud of the crematoria.'

That day Reb Aryeh was taken away to the gas chamber."

This is to love HaShem **"with all your might."**

Chag Sameach!

Nachman Kahana