

Sukkot 5778

BS"D Sukkot 5778

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

The Parsha and Current Events: Ushpizin

The critical factor in any sukkah is its schach (the leafy roof), which is governed by three Halachic conditions: (1) it must be from the vegetable family (grown from the earth); (2) it must be detached from the earth at the time of use; and (3) it must be an entity that cannot acquire tuma, making bread or fruit not valid material for schach.

The Zohar (Emor 103a) and kabbalists have revealed that during Sukkot the souls of the seven great leaders of Israel – Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and King David – appear in every kosher sukkah as ushpizin (guests). Some claim that each one appears individually on his respective night, while others claim that they appear together, with one serving as the leader in his respective night.

Is it not strange that these tzadikim leave their places in Gan Eden to visit our humble earthly Sukkot?

I suggest the following explanation:

These great men do not leave their places in Gan Eden, but rather the great sanctity of the sukkah becomes an extension of the heavenly Gan Eden where we meet with them. And this explains the three halachot of the schach mentioned above (vegetable source, detached from the ground, and cannot acquire tuma), which are the very same characteristics of the

earthly Gan Eden, as described in the book of Bereishiet.

As a garden, it was part of the earth; but its ephemeral, spiritual nature detached it from the natural laws that govern the earth. There was no tuma in Adam and Chava's Garden.

I believe the intention is only to the Sukkot in Eretz Yisrael, just as the earthly Gan Eden is in Eretz Yisrael.

Celebrating Sukkot in the galut

YEARLY EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK "WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT" FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE GALUT:

Reb Yisrael and his sons erected their sukkah 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 sukkah 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 sukkah should be considered to be that galut.

Reb Yisrael, his wife and children left the warm comforts of their beautiful house 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 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 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 them to return to their spacious 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 were 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 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 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!

For those who might not have grasped the subtle references, the beautiful home is Eretz Yisrael and the insane, irrational and irreverent clinging to the sukkah with the rabbi's approval is the present-day Jewish sojourn in the galut after the establishment of Medinat Yisrael – with the consent of their rabbis.

Chag Samayach

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