



The Special Joy of Sukkot

We are uniquely commanded to be *beSimcha*, to rejoice and to be happy on *Chag HaSukkot*. When the *sukkah* goes up, the decorations adorn its walls, and we eagerly move from our permanent residence to our temporary one, we are enveloped by a natural feeling of excitement and joy. The feelings of warmth that permeate our homes and hearts are specific to this festival.

Sukkot reminds us of the Clouds of Glory in which G-d ensconced us when we left Egypt (Vayikra 23:43), and the protection He provides to us in each and every generation. This protection reminds us that our true security lies not in the walls of our homes of bricks and stone, but in the embrace of G-d's love for us.

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Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik teaches that “Man is basically a homeless being. No matter how large and opulent his home, he is exposed. He is subject to the vicissitudes of life, subject to nature – which at best is indifferent to man, at worst is hostile – and subject to an inscrutable future. There is only one home where man gains security: G-d is called *מטונה*, an abode

(Devarim 33:27). The only home where man can find security is in the *Ribono Shel Olam*, the Master of the World.”¹

It is this visceral feeling of dwelling with G-d that leads to the *simcha* of Sukkot.

“You shall make the festival of Sukkot for a seven day period, when you gather in from your threshing floor and from your wine pit, *And you shall rejoice on your festival...* A seven day period shall you celebrate to *Hashem*, your G-d... and you shall be *only joyous*” (Devarim 16:13-15).

Only in regard to *Sukkot* are we commanded to not only rejoice but to *doubly* rejoice! Elsewhere, in regard to Sukkot, the Torah commands us regarding the *mitzvah* objects of the *chag*:

“And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a tree of splendor, fronds of date palms, and branches of a cordlike tree, and brook willows; and you shall rejoice before *Hashem*, your G-d, for a seven-day period” (Vayikra 23:40).

From this *pasuk*, Rav Elimelech Biderman learns an important and beautiful insight. The *mitzvah deOraita* (Biblically ordained commandment) to take the Four Species on Sukkot is a *mitzvah* only for the first day of the *chag*: “*and you shall take for yourselves on the first day...*” However, the *mitzvah deOraita* to be *beSimcha*, to rejoice and be only happy, is a *mitzvah* for all seven days of the *chag*!

Hence, we deduce from here that the *mitzvah* of *simchat yomtov* on Sukkot is greater than the *mitzvah* of taking the *Arba Minim*!

As the world around us today is storming, and life for our nation and our Land is not easy during turbulent times, it is an *avodah* we must all engage in: imbuing the *midda* of *simcha*, and the ability to rejoice, into our very selves.

Rabbi Avraham Pam taught that, “Helping others is the formula for a life of *simcha*. The theme of Sukkot is that one must leave his permanent dwelling – his own mind – and settle in a temporary dwelling – thinking of the needs of others. In doing so, he will find contentment in his own life and will enjoy a year-round *zman simchateinu*.”²

When we live with the knowledge that G-d is the Source of our *simcha*, and we care for others as we have been commanded (Devarim 16:14, as quoted above), we will truly merit a Sukkot of unbridled, pure and holy joy!

1 Chumash Masoret HaRav Shemot p.224-225.

2 Rav Pam on the Festivals, ArtScroll, p.55.

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