

Dvar Torah for Sukkot

Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Umanin 4:14-19*

A talisman to dissolve one's fears is to remember our patriarch Avraham.
(*The Aleph-Bet Book*, Fear A4)

You can rid yourself of fear by giving charity.
(*ibid.*, A5)

The sukkah is both a protective hug and an intimate embrace.

In attempting to locate the source for the *halakhah* that a sukkah may not exceed a certain height (20 *amah*, approximately 30-35 feet/10 meters) one of the Sages of the Talmud (*Sukkah 2a*) suggests the following verse: "A hut (sukkah) for shade from the heat of the day" (*Isaiah 4:6*). His peers reject this proposal because they claim that the verse is referring specifically to sukkah of the Messianic era (*Sukkah 2b*). Nonetheless, all concur that the sukkah protects.

The sukkah is related to two concepts. One is lovingkindness which was personified by Avraham Avinu (our patriarch) and Aharon HaKohein (Aaron). The second concept to which sukkah relates is Binah, the supernal Imma (mother) who protects her children (*Tikuney Zohar 3a, Likutey Moharan I, Lesson #266*).

It seems strange that a temporary shack, so defined by its height limitation and the fact that its roof must be made of material no more substantial than straw, is what Hashem (God) chooses to show His love and protection for us. Yet this may be precisely the point. Under ordinary circumstances brick, steel and tons of reinforced concrete definitely afford a great degree of protection. That's the way God made it. On the other hand, when the normal situation is all fouled up, Hashem may have something else in mind. As Rebbe Chanina ben Dosa put it, "The One Who told oil to burn will vinegar to burn." And it did (*Taanit 25a*).

By stripping away our normal perception of reality Hashem is growing our *binah* (insight). He is reminding us that He and He alone is our Protector. Sometimes He uses this stuff, sometimes He uses other stuff. To Him it's all the same. We have to rely on Hashem, not on stuff.

In addition to the physical protection that our homes normally afford, they also afford us spiritual protection. My neighbors and the public at large (and I as well!) pursue various misguided goals. By championing these goals, by discussing them and merely by thinking of them as they breath, all those people create an atmosphere that may seduce me to their way of thinking. In my home I have the ability to limit, if not altogether seal out, that poisonous air.

So why does Hashem send me outside, where I may succumb? Especially after I and many, many others have spent Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the intervening days, filling the air with the call of the shofar, as well as our own inarticulate cries and countless words of longing and desire to return to Him?

The mitzvah of sukkah is fulfilled mainly by eating, drinking and sleeping in the sukkah. These activities cover the gamut of desires to which we are prey: eating and drinking, money (which pays for eating,

drinking, etc.) and sex. Specifically now, when the air of the world is rich with the call of the shofar and our heartfelt prayers for the new year, we must go outside to absorb them. What of the danger of the poisons in the air? The *skhakh*, the "straw" roof that is full of holes, acts as a protective filter, letting in only the holy air and keeping out the unholy air.

Our eating, drinking and sleeping thereby become something else. Instead of seeing only their physical exterior, viewing them as mere pleasurable activities with which we may fall in love and which may push us away from Hashem (God forbid!), we can see and use their spiritual dimension and use them (properly) to express desire for Hashem. We have to love Hashem, not stuff.

agutn yom tov!

chag sameach!

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[Home](#) | [Dvar Torah Index](#) | [Zmanim Index](#)