

Parashat Ha'azinu - Succot, 5779, 2018:

The Succah of Peace

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shayna Yehudit bat Avraham Manes and Rivka, and Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, the *refuah shlaimah* of Yakir Ephraim ben Rachel Devorah, Eliezer ben Sarah, Anshul Pinchas ben Chaya and the safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

The *mitzvah* of dwelling in the succah initially appears to be quite straightforward. By way of illustration, the Rambam (Maimonides, 1135-1204) formulates the obligation in this manner:

What is the *mitzvah* of dwelling in the succah? One should eat and drink and dwell in the succah for the entire seven-day period both at night and during the day in exactly the same manner that he dwells in his house during the other days of the year. Throughout the entire seven-day period, a person should treat his house as a temporary dwelling and his succah as his permanent dwelling. As it says in the verse: You shall dwell in succot for seven days (*Vayikra* 23:42). (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Succah* 6:5, translation my own)

The Rambam's emphasis is clearly upon the *ma'aseh hamitzvah*, the actual manner in which the commandment is to be performed. In contrast, the Tur (Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher, 1270-1340) spends a good deal of time in his introduction to *Hilchot Succah* presenting and analyzing the rationale behind this *mitzvah*:

“You shall dwell in succot for seven days...in order that you should know throughout the generations that I caused the Jewish people to dwell in succot when I led them out ... [from Egypt]” (*Vayikra* 23:42). The Torah makes the *mitzvah* of succah dependent upon the Exodus from Egypt. So, too, in the case of many other *mitzvot*. This is so, since this is a matter that we saw with our eyes and heard with our ears and no one is able to deny it. It teaches us about the truth of the existence of the Creator, may He be exalted, and that He created everything according to His will. It also teaches us that He has the power, the dominion, and the ability, both in the upper and lower worlds, to do with them as He so desires... (Translation my own)

The Tur uses this introduction as a podium for presenting the true meaning and significance behind the oft-quoted phrase “*zacher l'yitziat mitzraim*” (“a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt”) that is found in every single Kiddush that we recite, and alongside many of the *mitzvot* in the Torah. In addition, he takes this opportunity to stress the conceptual connection that obtains between the *mitzvah* of succah and such essential theological principles as the existence of the Creator and His omnipotence in both the Heavens and the earth.

The Bach (Rabbi Yoel Sirkes, 1551-1640) builds upon the Tur’s analysis in order to reveal the hidden levels of meaning that constitute the *mitzvah* of dwelling in the succah. He notes that the Tur’s vital point is to be found in his emphasis upon the indispensable role that proper intention (*kavanah*) plays in performing the *mitzvah* of succah, namely, viewing the succah as the symbol of *yetziat Mitzraim* (the Departure from Egypt). The Bach echoes this fundamental notion in his closing comments:

The purpose of the *mitzvah* of succah is to remember the Departure from Egypt. This is accomplished through one’s dwelling in a succah wherein the shade is greater than the sun. This, in turn, is a reminder of the Clouds of Glory that protected them [the Jewish people] ... through their wanderings in the desert.

Additionally, he teaches us that the highest form of fulfilling this obligation necessitates careful focus upon the Torah’s phrase, “... in order that you should know throughout the generations that I caused the Jewish people to dwell in *succot*.” The Bach maintains that this “will enable one to fulfill the *mitzvah* in its most proper fashion (*k’tikunah*).” Thus, for the Bach, if one desires to fulfill the *mitzvah* of dwelling in the succah in its ultimate sense, one must have *kavanah* (intentionality) regarding two aspects of the *mitzvah*,

namely, its inextricable link to the Exodus and the great kindness of Hashem that enabled us to dwell in succot after He took us out of Egypt.

As we dwell in our succot this *chag* (holiday), may Hashem fulfill the beautiful words found in our Friday night *tefilot* (prayers): “And spread over us the succah of Your peace. Blessed are You Hashem, Who spreads the succah of peace upon us and upon all His people Israel and upon Jerusalem.” *V’chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom and *Chag Sameach!*

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They may also be found on <http://www.yutorah.org/> using the search criteria of Etengoff and the parasha’s name.

The email list, *b’chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com>.

*** My audio *shiurim* for Women on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

*** I have posted 164 of [Rabbi Soloveitchik’s](#) English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link.