

V'Samachta B'Chagecha: And You Will Be Happy On Your Holiday...

The Torah tells us about the yomim tovim throughout the year in two distinct *parshiyos*. The first time the Torah discusses the yomim tovim is in *Parshas Emor* and the second time is in *Parshas Re'eh*. While much of these two descriptions are similar, there are a few notable differences, specifically relating to the Torah's mentioning of Shavuos. Whereas the first parsha mentions Shavuos without referencing simcha, the second parsha does mention it. In contrast, the Torah uses the word simcha numerous times in describing Sukkos.¹ However, while Sukkos is mentioned in the Yom Tov tefilla (in the Shemoneh Esrei) and in the Yom Tov kiddush as *z'man simchaseinu* — a time of our happiness, Shavuos is not referred to with this phrase. Why do we apply the term *z'man simchaseinu*, the time of our rejoicing, specifically to Sukkos rather than to the holiday that commemorates the receiving of the Torah on Har Sinai and about which the Torah teaches (Devarim 16:11) *v'samachta lifne Hashem Elokecha* — you will be happy before Hashem your G-d?²



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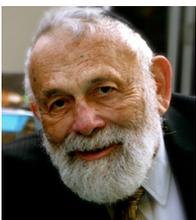
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The Nature of Simchas Sukkos

One answer to this question and an approach to the nature of simchas Sukkos in general was offered by the *Bnei Yissaschar*, authored by Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Spira of Dinov, who lived toward the end of the 18th century. He provides a truly fascinating discussion of this question in his *ma'amarim* for the month of Tishrei (10:22). The *Bnei Yissaschar* develops the idea that Shavuos represents the time that Hashem gave us the Torah and He was happy. It is true that we accepted it but the overall giving was via G-d, and the language in the Torah specifies that one should be happy before G-d —

v'samachta lifne Hashem Elokecha. In other words, in a certain metaphysical sense, we are joining in and celebrating with Hashem's happiness during the Yom Tov of Shavuos. However, when the Torah (Devarim 16:14) refers to Sukkos, the terminology specifies that it is our happiness — *v'samachta b'chagecha* — and you will rejoice on **your** festival. The *Bnei Yissaschar* goes in depth into the various reasons for this but the essential idea is that it is our simcha to have the mitzvah of sukka. Therefore, the emphasis during Sukkos is on our happiness and we allude to this emphasis in the verbiage of the Shemoneh Esrei and Kiddush additions by always mentioning *z'man simchaseinu*.

The Center for the Jewish Future would like to thank Rabbi Dubitsky for his long standing contribution in editing the Torah To-Go publication.



This dvar Torah is dedicated *l'ilui nishmas* HaRav Yakov Moshe ben Yisrael Nossan, Rabbi Jacob Rabinowitz *zt"l*, who was niftar this past year on the 7th of Shevat. He served for many decades in numerous administrative and teaching positions in Yeshiva University including Dean of Students, Dean of Erna Michael College (EMC) and Gemara Rebbe in IBC. I had the zechus and the privilege to be in Rabbi Rabinowitz's shiur for two years in Yeshiva and to have had him as my mentor for the many years that followed until his passing. Rabbi Rabinowitz is the author of *Yemin Yakov*, one of the sources included in this article. *Yehi Zichro Baruch*.

Hashem's Relationship To Bnei Yisrael

Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, the Rav zt"l, also addressed this question and explained that Sukkos is different than the other holidays in another interesting way as well. He explains that the *arba'ah minim* represent the unity of the Jewish people, as is well known and as we teach our children from a young age. However, this unity is due to the fact that we are all in close proximity to Hashem ("*banim laMakom*" — children of G-d), because He is close to us as we refer to Hashem also as *Avinu Malkeinu* — our Father our King. That is one of the main themes of the Yomim Noraim time period. Although Hashem is King over the entire world, He chose to be our King specifically and forged a covenant with us with the *Torah she'ba'al peh*, the Oral Law. For this reason, the Rav explained, Sukkos is called *z'man simchaseinu* even though one has an obligation of simcha on the other yomim tovim as well. G-d's specific closeness to us during this time period and His dwelling amongst us at this time is the source of our simcha.³ This idea that Sukkos represents a distinct level of happiness is a unique quality of this Yom Tov.⁴

Although simcha is mentioned many times regarding Sukkos, it seems at odds with the Yomim Noraim that precede it. In fact, Rabbi Shlomo Aviner lists a few sources that show that simcha is in some ways required or needed after going through the High Holiday period.⁵ He elaborates on this theme from various writings of Rav Kook zt"l, which teach that the spiritual level one achieves on Yom Kippur removes a person, somewhat, from worldliness, since we are all focused on spiritual pursuits. Rav

Kook explained that both this world and the next are intertwined and therefore if we focus on spirituality during the High Holiday period we must then increase our focus on the worldly aspects of life when returning to the Yom Tov of Sukkos and the simcha that we experience.

On more of a *derush* (homiletic) level, there is a fascinating Gemara that alludes to this aspect and the duality of Sukkos. The Yerushalmi in *Maseches Sukkah* (5:1), in the midst of a discussion identifying which shevet Yonah HaNavi came from, teaches another insight. The Gemara tells us that Rabbi Yonah elaborated and taught that Yonah ben Amitai went up to the Beis HaMikdash during the *Shalosh Regalim*, attended a *simchas beis hasho'eiva*, and *ruach haKodesh* (Divine spirit) fell upon him. The Gemara understands from this story that in order to have the Divine spirit rest upon an individual, one must be happy. The *Korban HaEdah* (one of the major commentaries on the Yerushalmi) says that it was this Divine spirit that told Yonah to go to Nineveh and it was from that assignment from which he famously fled.⁶ One could ask why it was Yonah, specifically, that teaches us this principle.⁷ Perhaps on a level of *derush* one could say that it was for the exact reason that we mentioned earlier. The same sefer Yonah that is read on Yom Kippur (*Yom HaDin*) to teach about teshuva, and the same sefer that teaches us about turning the *midas hadin* (attribute of justice) into the *midas harachamim* (attribute of mercy), is perhaps the same sefer and navi to teach us about the coalescence of *yir'a* (fear) and simcha. Therefore, after reading about Yonah on Yom Kippur, we can happily enter the holiday of Sukkos and enjoy a greater state of simcha.

Spiritual Levels

This notion that simchas Sukkos is both unique and necessary does not explain nor describe the level of joy one must feel during the holiday. As mentioned, there are some meforshim that explain that the level of happiness is different during the Yom Tov of Sukkos than during the other yomim tovim.⁸ The *Mishkan B'Tzalel* offers a second approach to the nature of simchas Sukkos and explains that there are numerous halachos that were designated for Sukkos due to its level of simcha. He questions why the principle of *bachag nidonin al hamayim* (we are judged on the holiday regarding water supply for the year) and *simchas beis hasho'eiva*, which included the water libation on the Mizbeach, were designated for Sukkos. After all, isn't rain on Sukkos a sign of being cursed?⁹ He answers that Sukkos is not like all other yomim tovim that are *chatzi l'Hashem and chatzi lachem* (half designated for spiritual activities and half for physical enjoyment). Rather, Sukkos is all l'Hashem.¹⁰ Everything that we do on Sukkos is engulfed by the notion of the sukka and the majority of our activities take place within it. Therefore, all material aspects of Sukkos are engulfed by spirituality and even the *chatzi lachem* aspect of Yom Tov becomes part of l'Hashem. That is the reason that Hashem designated these mitzvos for Sukkos. It is a time that everything is in a heightened spiritual level. Moreover, while all the other yomim tovim have a level or fixed amount of simcha, on Sukkos the simcha itself is also for Hashem and therefore has no boundary.¹¹

Yom Tov of Inclusiveness

A third approach to the nature of simchas Sukkos was posited by Rav Nissan Alpert zt”l, regarding Sukkos’ relationship to the other yomim tovim that comprise the *Shalosh Regalim*.¹² He explains that, in some aspects, Sukkos embodies the essence of all the yomim tovim. He asks why the Torah (Vayikra 23:41) has to use the words “*shiv’as yomim bashana*” — seven days in the year — in describing Sukkos when “*shiv’as yomim*” without the word “*bashana*” would have sufficed. He answers that since Sukkos ends the *Shalosh Regalim* time period, Sukkos, so to speak, incorporates all the seven days of Yom Tov that occur during the year (two days of Pesach, one day of Shavuos, one day of Rosh HaShana, one day of Yom Kippur and two days of Sukkos). Therefore, he explains that when the Torah states *v’chagosem oso chag l’Hashem shiv’as yomim bashana* — and you shall celebrate it as a holiday seven days in the year — it means that you will celebrate Sukkos, which includes and incorporates the seven days of the other yomim tovim throughout the year. Furthermore, it states the word *simcha* three times regarding Sukkos in the Torah, since it incorporates all of the *Shalosh Regalim* and their happiness. It is in this vein, perhaps, that Sukkos is also different hashkafically than the other yomim tovim since it includes their happiness as well.

The Message of the Ushpizin

The *Yemin Yakov* authored by Rabbi Yakov Rabinowitz zt”l, has another approach as to what the nature of simchas Sukkos is based upon.¹³ He begins his explanation by quoting from a peirush on the *Zohar* that

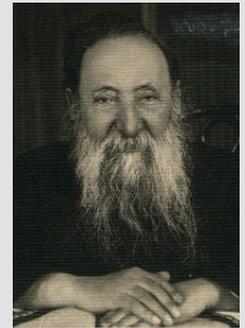
seems to tie the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah with the custom of inviting the *ushpizin* into our sukkah throughout the holiday. In fact, support is drawn to this connection by analyzing the verse in *Emor* (23:42) which uses both second and third person verbiage when discussing the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah. The explanation given for this seeming contradiction is that the first word of “*teishvu*” — “you shall dwell” — refers to the *ushpizin*, and the second term “*yeishvu*” — “they will dwell” — is referring to B’nei Yisrael sitting in the sukkah. To this day, we follow the example of Rav Hamnuna, who upon entering his sukkah would invite in guests and then invited the *ushpizin* to his sukkah as well.

Rabbi Rabinowitz raises the question as to why the custom of *ushpizin* is specifically tied to the mitzvah of inviting guests on Sukkos. After all, wouldn’t we have more readily connected these concepts at the time of Pesach? That is when the malachim visited Avraham and from where we learned that inviting guests and fulfilling the mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim* is “greater than greeting the Divine Presence.” Moreover, we announce on the seder night that all who are hungry should come and join us! In other words, what is it about the nature of the sukkah that connects the mitzvah of inviting physical guests and the idea of inviting spiritual guests — the leaders of the Jewish nation — the *ushpizin*?

The *Yemin Yakov*, in answering this question, quotes the famous dispute in the Gemara (*Sukkah* 11b) between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva. The Gemara quotes from *Parshas Emor* (23:43) that G-d caused the Jewish people to dwell in sukkos. Rabbi

The Guests in the Sukkah

Someone once came to visit R. Chaim Ozer Grodzenski on Sukkot. R. Chaim Ozer told his guest that he is welcome to eat in the sukkah



R. Chaim Ozer Grodzenski

1863-1940

but that he personally is not feeling well and the cold was bothering him, so he will be eating inside. Midway through his meal, R. Chaim Ozer came out to join the guest in the sukkah. R. Chaim Ozer explained that he originally exempted himself from the sukkah based on the fact that *mitzta’er* (discomfort) exempts one from sukkah. However, he realized that *mitzta’er* does not exempt one from the mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim* (inviting guests) and since his guest is eating in the sukkah, it is most appropriate for him to keep his guest company despite the discomfort.

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Eliezer says that these “booths” were the clouds of glory while Rabbi Akiva explains that the sukkos were actual physical booths. It is interesting, notes the *Yemin Yakov*, that whenever Rabbi Akiva argues with Rabbi Eliezer, we follow Rabbi Akiva, but

in this instance most agree with the explanation of Rabbi Eliezer.

Rabbi Rabinowitz explains this anomaly based on the *Zohar* and its commentaries that one who performs the mitzvah of sukkah is rewarded both in this world and the next. Therefore, we can understand that Rabbi Eliezer is not disagreeing with Rabbi Akiva but rather he is expanding on his explanation. Rabbi Eliezer did not agree that the sukkah we use is representative singularly of the booths in the midbar. Since Sukkos is “zman simchaseinu” more so than other holidays, it is impossible that the mitzvah to celebrate this holiday could be fulfilled with the construction of temporary dwellings that are not beautified in the same way our homes are. Furthermore, Rabbi Eliezer’s reasoning would seem to indicate that our world is only temporary. As Sukkos is celebrated during a season of harvest and gathering, this emphasizes the distressing idea that man will one day be “gathered.” These ideas seem to lean toward a more mournful time. Therefore, Rabbi Eliezer explains that the sukkos are representative of much more than just physical dwelling places but also the clouds of glory — the dwelling place of G-d’s Divine

Presence. This emphasizes that after we build the temporary dwelling in this world, we will merit a life in the next world — and this promise is what infuses the Yom Tov of Sukkos with happiness and joyousness even while we dwell in a simple temporary sukkah.

We invite the founders and leaders of our nation into the sukkah, according to Rabbi Rabinowitz, in order to strengthen our connection between the past and the present. Inviting the *ushpizin* into our sukkos in this world reinforces our ability to identify with them and to follow in their paths. We hopefully will avail ourselves of the opportunities we have to do mitzvos that will reward us with a portion in Olam Habah, where we will once again greet our nation’s great leaders. In essence, our sukkos act as a bridge between two worlds, and that is the ultimate cause of our simcha.¹⁴

These different approaches to the understanding of happiness during Sukkos coalesce into one cohesive reason as to why there is a halacha that one who is *mitztaer* (pained) during the holiday is *patur* (exempt) from the mitzvah of sukka.¹⁵ The very essence of the happiness of Sukkos is incompatible with one who is upset or even bothered during the Yom Tov.

Although we have seen that there are varying aspects and opinions as to the degree of happiness on Sukkos, nevertheless they are all in accord with the understanding that it is intrinsic to the “functioning” and feeling of the Yom Tov itself. It should be our sincerest hope that we will all celebrate the Yom Tov of Sukkos with family and community, with the highest level of simcha that each of us can achieve, thereby bringing us all closer to Hashem.

Notes

1. The *Baal HaTurim* has an allusion to the number of times simcha is referenced for each of the holidays. He explains, at the end of *Parshas Re’eh*, that since during Pesach the wheat is still in the field, the Torah does not connect and reference it with simcha. On Shavuot, although the wheat is harvested, the grapes are still on the vines, so the Torah mentions simcha once. On Sukkos, since all of the produce is collected in the house, the Torah mentions simcha twice. In the *Ataros* edition of the *Baal HaTurim*, footnote 87, he presents a lengthier and variant explanation for the *Baal HaTurim*’s count and reasoning.
2. Although there are some specific halachic obligations of simcha, this article will discuss the nature of simcha during the Yom Tov rather than the requirements themselves. Although the usual halachic obligations of simcha include special korbons, eating meat and drinking wine, buying special clothes and jewelry for one’s wife, and apportioning to children special sweets, there is a more subjective halacha that one should do whatever one can and according to one’s ability to increase and create an atmosphere of simcha during the Yom Tov. The Rambam includes in the mitzvah of simcha that one must include at one’s meals the less fortunate. The object of eating is not to be gluttonous or to become inebriated on Yom Tov but rather to increase one’s ability to serve Hashem. See Rambam, *Mitzvos Aseh* 53-54, *Hilchos Yom Tov* 6:17-18, *Hilchos Chagigah* chapters 1-2. There is a fascinating explanation by Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, the Rav zt”l, regarding the Rambam’s explanation of including others in our simcha, that it is due to the fact that part of the mitzvah of simcha is to make others “b’simcha.” See *B’Ikvei*

We invite the founders and leaders of our nation into the sukkah in order to strengthen our connection between the past and the present. Inviting the *ushpizin* into our sukkos in this world reinforces our ability to identify with them and to follow in their paths.



Learn more about the *ushpizin* on the Marcos and Adina Katz YUTorah.org

HaTzone p.95, #12. See further, where Rav Hershel Schachter shlit" quotes a fascinating comment of the *Zohar* which teaches that when we state the halachic principle of the difference between Shabbos and Yom Tov as: *ein kein Yom Tov laShabbos ela ochel nefesh bilvad*, it means that since on Yom Tov one has an obligation of simcha, it would be forbidden for one to eat, so to speak, alone and by themselves — "*bilvad*" (whereas on Shabbos, seemingly, this would actually not apply).

3. *Divrei HaRav* pages 294-296. See also the *Nefesh HaRav* page 314-315, on *Parshas Re'eh* for another explanation for the basis of simcha — namely — *lifnei Hashem* — one's being before Hashem.

4. The *Limudei Nissan*, authored by Rav Nissan Alpert zt"l, at the end of his peirush on *Parshas Re'eh*, has a halachic allusion based on the pasuk in the Torah that discusses being happy on Sukkos — *v'samachta b'chagecha v'hayisa ach sameach*. He said that one who loses a relative before Sukkos and buries them at that time, Yom Tov nullifies the seven days of shiva. The seven days of Yom Tov nullify another seven days of the *sheloshim* and Shemini Atzeres nullifies another seven days since it is its own holiday (in many ways). It ends up totaling to twenty-one days which is exactly the gematria of *ach*. In other words, the days which incorporate simchas Sukkos nullify the total number of days of mourning equivalent to *ach*. The Seforno, Devarim 16:15 also succinctly addresses this major theme by saying that one will not incorporate sadness into one's happiness on Sukkos.

5. In *Am K'lavi*, Vol. II, Rabbi Aviner quotes from both the *Pele Yoetz* and the *Sefas Emes* that the happiness of Sukkos takes us out from the awesomeness of the Yomim Noraim period and, furthermore, that serving Hashem only out of fear is a deficiency in one's being complete "*ki rak al y'dai yir'a ein l'adam shleimus*."

6. Interestingly, the *Bnei Yissaschar* 10, 28 (and quoted on *Maseches Sukka* by the *Beurei HaChasidus LaShas*) in his *ma'amarim* of Tishrei questions the limud of the Gemara and asks why this is what must be learned. After all, could Yonah not have had nevuah before this story in the Gemara, as well? He answers by quoting a *Midrash Shocheh Tov* that shows through historical years that Yonah lived much earlier and yet there is no recollection of his giving nevuah until a later time period that coincides with the story in the Gemara.

7. In fact, the *Bnei Yissaschar* asks the question in terms of why do we learn anything from this specifically — maybe it just happened in this manner but there is no special idea to be learned from it.

8. See the *Mishkan Betzalel* toward the end of *Parshas Emor* — regarding Shemini Atzeres.

9. See the *Piskei Teshuvos* O"C- 639:18, where he lists numerous sources that specify and limit this concept to certain times of the Yom Tov, the location where one resides and whether it began raining before the chag itself.

10. See the *Emek Beracha*, Simchas Yom Tov, where he discusses different levels and aspects to simcha on Sukkos and some practical differences with regard to Simchas Torah. He also discusses whether there are differences to the first night of Yom Tov regarding an obligation of simcha at all or whether it applies to certain halachos only.

11. See also the very first page in *Chidushei HaGra"m V'Hagri"d* where other aspects of the uniqueness of simchas Sukkos are discussed.

12. *Limudei Nissan*, Vol. II, "*Shiv'as Yomim Bashana*."

13. *Yemin Yakov*, Vol. II, pgs. 131- 133. This entire section is based on Rabbi Rabinowitz's explanation of the pasuk in Emor 23:42,

which discusses our obligation to sit in the sukkah on this Yom Tov. He also bases much of his discussion upon commentaries on the *Zohar's* explanation of these pesukim, mitzvos and customs. This author, in translating the article, tried to stay as close to his terminology and wording as possible.

14. Although I have not seen it written in any source, this could be one reason as to why we have the custom of reciting Yizkor on Shemini Atzeres specifically — namely — drawing a connection to our relatives that have passed on with our reflection and commitment of how we want to lead our lives and to raise our families in the future.

15. Of course, the *Shulchan Aruch* O"C 640:4, lists for us some examples, such as it being too windy, or due to a foul odor in the sukka, and flies, as examples that make one *patur* from the sukka. See also *Be'ur Halachah* on this *se'if* for a discussion of it being too cold for oneself to stay in the sukka. The *Piskei Teshuvos*, O"C 640:4, lists other reasons for one to be exempt from the sukka: If there is either a lack of space for one to sit or if the space is too tight for one to sit, if one is embarrassed to enter the sukka due to a sickness which requires one to eat in a special manner and one does not want others to see him eating in such a way, or if there are people such as his creditors or enemies who are inside the sukka. See footnote #13 where he explains based on two different teshuvos the *Sha'arei Deah* and the *B'tzel HaChochma* that one's embarrassment is worse than physical pain.

16. The *Piskei Teshuvos* 640:13, lists another reason that one would be exempt from sitting in the sukka — namely that one is fearful of robbers entering his house while he is sleeping in the sukka due to the nature of the neighborhood wherein he resides. See footnote 39 where he quotes from the *Mishneh Halachos* as to whether one should put himself into such a position to begin with.

