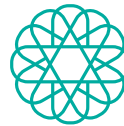


Building a Shelter of Peace



Often framed as a symbol of peace, the sukkah reminds us of the many forms peace can take: internal, political, familial, communal. The sukkah, like peace, can be both a fragile structure and a safe shelter.

Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook¹, translated from Ma-amarei Hara'ayah vol. I, pp. 149-1

Jewish law validates a sukkah even when it has gaping holes, when it is built from little more than two walls, or has large spaces between the walls and the roof. Even such a fragile structure still qualifies as a kosher sukkah. The same is true regarding peace. Peace is so precious, so vital, that even if we are unable to attain complete peace, we should still pursue a partial measure of peace. Even an imperfect peace between neighbors, or between an individual and the community, is worthwhile. "How great is peace!" proclaimed the Sages (VaYikra Rabbah 9:9). The value of peace is so great that we pray for it even if it will be like a sukkah—flimsy and temporarily rendered fit only by special laws.

Evening Liturgy, Hashkiveinu²

הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מִלְּכָנוּ (שׁוֹמְרֵנוּ) לְחַיִּים וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סֶפֶת שְׁלוֹמָךְ, וְתִקְּנֵנוּ בְּעֶצֶה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, וְהַגֵּן בְּעַדֵּנוּ, וְהַסֵּר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב, דָּבָר, וְחָרָב, וְרָעָב וְיָגוֹן.

Allow us, Adonai our God, to sleep peacefully; awaken us to life, O sovereign. Spread over us Your **canopy of peace** [*sukkat shelomekha*], restore us with Your good counsel, and save us for the sake of Your name. Shield us. Remove from us enemies, pestilence, sword, starvation, and sorrow.

Questions for discussion:

- What, if any, are the differences between the peace that Rav Kook is describing and the type of peace that the Hashkiveinu prayer is describing?
- How do we accept imperfect peace? Do we accept an imperfect peace?
- Do you find one type of peace more compelling, or more difficult, especially during sukkot?



1. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), was the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of British Mandatory Palestine in the Land of Israel. He is considered to be one of the fathers of religious Zionism.
2. **Hashkiveinu** is the second blessing following the Shema during Maariv. It is a prayer asking for peace and safety throughout the night, and literally means "Lie us down." Translated from Lev Shalem, emphasis BJ

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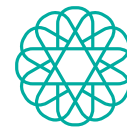
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Sukkot as a Practice in Gratitude



Sukkot is a time to step outside the sturdiness and stability of our homes; putting the things that bring us security, certainty, and comfort on hold, however briefly, while we sit in the sukkah. As we dwell in a fragile sukkah for a week, exposed to the elements around us, we are encouraged to explore and be grateful for the forces beyond ourselves that helped us get to this moment in our lives.

“Why do we sit in the Sukkah?” by Professor David Golinkin¹

Rabbi Yitzhak Aboab lived in Spain in the fifteenth century. In his classic book of Jewish ethics, *Menorat Hamaor*, he gives still another explanation for sitting in the sukkah (Ner 3, Kelal 4, Part 6, Chapter 1, ed. Mossad Harav Kuk, p. 315):

When the Sages said in the Tractate of Sukkah (fol. 2a): “Go out from your permanent dwellings and live in a temporary dwelling”, they meant that the commandment to dwell in the sukkah teaches us that a man must not put his trust in the size or strength or conveniences of his house, even though it be filled with the best of everything; nor should he rely upon the help of any man, even though he be the lord of the land. But let him put his trust in Him whose word called the universe into being, for He alone is mighty and faithful, and He does not retract what He promises.”

“This explanation is the subtlest of all we have seen thus far. Rabbi Yitzhak Aboab thinks that the main point of living in the sukkah for seven days is to increase our faith in God. When we live in a sturdy house, we are protected from the elements; rain and cold and heat do not harm us. As a result, we begin to have faith in our homes, not in God. Likewise, we tend to place all of our trust in men, especially influential rulers and leaders. By living in a flimsy sukkah for seven days, exposed once again to the elements, we realize that ultimately we must put our trust in God who rules over our houses, the elements, and all human rulers.”

Questions for discussion:

- Do you see the role of God in helping you get to the “conveniences of [your] house” and “your permanent dwellings”? In what ways?
- What other forces beyond ourselves helped you get there?
- What is it about leaving your home and going into our sukkah that is a practice in acknowledging the things that you have been given by God?



1 “Why do we sit in the Sukkah?” by Professor David Golinkin, President, The Schechter Institutes Inc., Jerusalem. The full article is at schechter.edu and can also be found in Professor Golinkin’s book: *Insight Israel*, second series, Jerusalem, 2006, chapter 5.

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Dwelling in the Sanctuary of Faith



Kabbalistic thought teaches that the sukkah is a literal shade of faith—a physical location in which the Shekhina¹ dwells, and that all those who sit in the shade of the sukkah inhabit that space alongside Her. On this holiday that is framed around so many elements of the natural world—the sun, sky, stars, wind—we are pushed to consider aspects of our experience that we can't see or feel, but that can be just as present in our lives, such as faith and trust.

Zohar²: Emor 103b

תָּא חֲזִי, בְּשַׁעֲתָא דְּבֵר נֶשׁ יְתִיב בְּמִדּוּרָא דָּא, צִלָּא דְּמַהֲיִמְנוּתָא, שְׂכִינְתָּא פְּרָסָא גְּדַפְהָא עָלֶיהָ מְלַעֲיָלָא, וְאַבְרָהָם וְחֲמִשָּׁה צְדִיקִיָּא אֲחֵרִינִין שְׂוִיִּין מְדוּרֵיהוֹן עָמִיהָ.

"Come and see: When a person dwells in this abode, [the] **shade of faith**, Shekhina spreads Her wings over them from above and Abraham and five other righteous ones make their dwelling with them..."

Daniel C. Matt, Commentary on the Zohar: Pritzker Edition

When a person dwells in the sukkah—described as a 'shade of faith'—Shekhina hovers over them. She includes all of the sefirot³, the entire realm of faith.

Questions for discussion:

- What do you experience spiritually as you sit in the sukkah? Where might you experience the Divine presence in the sukkah?
- The Zohar speaks specifically about faith. In what do you have faith—God? People? Science?
- What do you imagine might come of cultivating faith—in anything? Where does faith work for you in your life? How is it different from "experience" or even "trust"?
- If you don't experience the feeling of faith, would you want to?



1. "The Shekhinah is God viewed in spatio-temporal terms as a presence, particularly in a this-worldly context: when God sanctifies a place, an object, an individual, or a whole people—a revelation of the holy in the midst of the profane." Encyclopedia Judaica, vol 18. Page 440–444.
2. The Zohar is the chief text of the Jewish Kabbalah. It can be earliest traced back to Spain in the 13th century. "Zohar" can be translated to mean radiance or light.
3. Kabbalistic thought teaches that God's self could not be understood, but God has revealed attributes that interact with each other and the world. Just as human beings are made up of various internal traits or tendencies of personality, all of which interact with one another, so too God is made up of various internal traits or drives, known as the sefirot. (From myjewishlearning.com)

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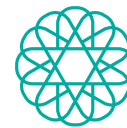
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The Sukkah as a Space for Those in Need



Sukkot is particularly associated with bringing people into our space. While we make a particular point to invite in traditional (and non-traditional) Ushpizin¹, holy guests, we are also taught that the essential guests are “the poor,” those who have less than us and are in need of a meal.

Zohar² Emor 103b

ואמר רבי אבא, כתיב בסוכות תשבו שבועת ימים, ולבית ישובו בסוכות. בקדמיתא תשבו, ולבית ישובו. אלא, קדמא לאושפיזין. תנינא, לבני עולמא...

“Rabbi Abba said, ‘It is written: *In sukkot you shall dwell seven days* and after then, *they shall dwell in sukkot!* Well, the first is for the guests [the Ushpizin], the second, for inhabitants of the world.... For whoever has a share in the holy seed sits in the shade of faith to welcome the guests [Ushpizin], to rejoice in this world and in the world that is coming....

Zohar Emor 104a

דאית ליה חולקא בעמא ובארעא קדישא, יתיב בצל דמהימנותא, לקבלא אושפיזין, למחדי בהאי עולמא ובעולמא דאתי ובעי למחדי למסכני. מאי טעמא. בגין דחולקא דאינון אושפיזין דומין דמסכני הוא. והוא דיתב בצל דא דמהימנותא, וזמין אושפיזין אלין עלאין, אושפיזי מהימנותא, ולא יהיב לון חולקיהון, בלהו קיימי מניה, ואמרי (משלי כ"ג:ו') אל תלחם את לחם רע עין וגו'

They [the host] must gladden the poor. Why? Because the portion of those guests whom they have invited belongs to the poor. And the one who sits in the shade of faith [the sukkah] and invites these supernal guests [Ushpizin], guests of faith, yet does not give them their portion—they all stand back from them, saying ‘Do not eat the bread of a stingy person, nor desire their delicacies.’ (Proverbs 23:63)³

Questions for discussion:

- Why is it particularly important to think about giving to those who have less during Sukkot?
- How does this concept connect with the other themes of the season? Rosh Hashanah? Yom Kippur? Teshuvah?



1. According to Kabbalistic tradition, one opens their sukkah to ushpizin (spiritual and metaphorical guests) each night in order to both fulfill the commandment of haknasat orhim (welcoming in guests) and bring their spiritual qualities into the space. While the traditional Ushpizin include our patriarchs and prophetesses, this tradition has since grown to include modern day figures from Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Golda Meir. Learn more about the practice of welcoming ushpizot at ritualwell.org/ritual/ushpizot-guide.
2. The Zohar is the chief text of the Jewish Kabbalah. It can be earliest traced back to Spain in the 13th century. “Zohar” can be translated to mean radiance or light.
3. Zohar: Pritzker Edition, with commentary by Daniel C. Matt

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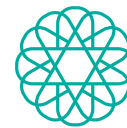
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Opening Our Sukkot and Sharing Space



The sukkah is known for its openness and for its readiness to accept guests. It is easy to say we should welcome everyone equally into our own sukkah, but more difficult to actually invite people who make us uncomfortable and with whom we wouldn't normally seek to share space. Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev invites us to consider the ways that this, too, is part of the spiritual work of Sukkot.

"Loving and Beloved: Tales of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, Defender of Israel" Compiled by Simcha Raz

In the Future:

At some future time, all the tzaddikim will be invited to enter the 'sukkah made with the skin of the Leviathan.'¹

But I, Levi Yitzhak, I also will desire

To enter that same sukka.

Surely the angel at the entrance will prevent me from entering and ask me angrily:

Hey - How do you deserve this, a simple fellow like you,

To push yourself in here among the tzaddikim and giants of the world?

I will reply: 'Do not be angry.

To me, to my sukka,

I permitted simple people to enter,

And I was not at all embarrassed by them.'²

Questions for discussion:

- How can this understanding of this reason for the sukkah be a model for embrace at all times?
- How can we make sure that the sukkah is inclusive for everyone?



1. According to one Talmudic text (Bavli Bava Batra 75a), in the future God will make a Sukkah for the righteous, made from the skin of the Leviathan, a mythical, powerful sea beast.
2. A teaching from the Hassidic master, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev (1740–1809), also known as the Kedushat Levi

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