

Why does *Sukkot* follow so closely after *Yom Kippur*? Indeed, not only are they close to each other on the calendar, a deeper connection between them is suggested by the *Halachah* that one should perform some part of his *Sukkah*-building on *Motzai Yom Kippur* / the night when *Yom Kippur* ends. Why?

R' Moshe Eisemann *shlita* (former *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Ner Israel in Baltimore, Maryland) explains: Our Sages refer to *Yom Kippur* as a day of salvation or liberation. A gift such as liberation brings with it responsibility, and it must be cherished and nurtured. It also must be protected, and that protection is provided by the *Sukkah*, as explained below. Thus, it is no coincidence that the first stop that *Bnei Yisrael* made after their liberation at the Exodus was at a place called "*Sukkot*." Thereafter, they were protected by the Clouds of Glory, which our *Sukkot* commemorate. For the same reason, every night in *Ma'ariv*, we recite the blessing, "*Ga'al Yisrael*" / "The One who redeemed *Yisrael*," and then we pray, "And spread over us the *Sukkah* of Your peace." And, after *Yom Kippur*, we hurry into our *Sukkot*.

R' Eisemann continues: The *Sukkah* extends our *Yom Kippur* experience. On *Yom Kippur*, the *Shechinah* was with us. At the conclusion of that holiday, the *Shechinah* departs, so we build a *Sukkah* and invite it back. The *Sukkah* protects what we accomplished on *Yom Kippur*. How so? By placing the imprint of sanctity on everything we do in ordinary life. We eat in the *Sukkah*, drink in the *Sukkah*, sleep in the *Sukkah*, relax in the *Sukkah*, etc. Everything is sanctified. Therefore, *Sukkot*, R' Eisemann writes, tells us how a Jew who "lives" *Yom Kippur* looks. (*The Themes of the High Holiday Machzor* p.162)

Why is there no *Berachah* on building the *Sukkah*? Because it is not a *Mitzvah* which one must do with his own hands; indeed, one could even have a non-Jew build a *Sukkah* for him. (Tractate *Menachot* 42a)

*Rashi z"l* explains: If there were a blessing, it would have to be (consistent with the usual formula), "Who sanctified us with His *Mitzvot* and commanded us to build a *Sukkah*." However, that statement would not be true; *Hashem* did not command us to build a *Sukkah*, as is evident from the fact that a *Sukkah* built by a non-Jew is also kosher. (*Rashi: Commentary to Menachot* 42a)

Some say that the reason there no *Berachah* on building the *Sukkah* is that we only recite a blessing on a complete *Mitzvah*. Building a *Sukkah* is, at best, the beginning of a *Mitzvah*. (*Bet Yosef, Orach Chaim* ch. 641)

Nevertheless, observes R' Shaul Eliezer Yedidiah Taub z"l (1887-1947; the "*Modzitzer Rebbe*"), there is an allusion to a *Berachah* in the *Sukkah* itself, as follows:

Although *Halachah* requires a *Sukkah* to have only two full walls and a partial third wall, a "complete" *Sukkah* is composed of four walls ("*D'fanot*"), with *S'chach* on top. The *Gematria* of the word "*Dofen*" (singular for wall), multiplied by four (for the four walls), plus the *Gematria* of the word *S'chach*, equals 660, which is also the *Gematria* of the words, "*Baruch Attah Hashem*." (*Imrei Shaul*)



The *Halachah* states that one is exempt from sitting in the *Sukkah* if doing so will cause him to suffer. Why? We do not find that one is exempt from other *Mitzvot* (for example, eating *Matzah*) merely because observing the *Mitzvah* may be unpleasant!

R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern z"l (the "*Kotzker Rebbe*"; died 1859) explains: The idea of the *Sukkah* is that one negates his independent existence and places himself completely in G-d's hands. If one suffers from sitting in the *Sukkah*, it is an indication that he has not succeeded in nullifying his independent existence. What, then, does he accomplish by remaining in the *Sukkah*?! (*Emet Ve'emunah* No. 10)

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**"On Hoshana Rabbah they circled the Mizbei'ach / altar seven times. Rabbi Acha said: 'As a remembrance of Yericho'." (Talmud Yerushalmi: Sukkah 4:3)**

When *Bnei Yisrael* entered *Eretz Yisrael*, the first city they conquered was Yericho. They did this by circling Yericho once each day for six days, then seven times on the seventh day, whereupon the city's walls collapsed (see *Yehoshua* ch.6). Paralleling this, when the *Bet Hamikdash* stood, a procession circled the *Mizbei'ach* one time on each of the first days of *Sukkot* and seven times on *Hoshana Rabbah*. In turn, we recall that practice on the seven days of *Sukkot* by circling the *Bimah* in *Shul* a similar number of times while reciting *Hoshanot*.

But, what is the connection between the conquest of Yericho, which took place in *Nissan*, and *Hoshanot* on *Sukkot*?

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z"l (Spain 1255-1340) explains: On *Sukkot*, we sacrifice a total of 70 oxen--13 the first day, 12 the second day, etc. The 70 oxen parallel the 70 nations of the world, and the decreasing number offered each day alludes to the eventual disappearance of those nations. (Some explain that the "disappearance" of the nations refers to mankind's eventual unification under the one, true G-d, at which time there will no longer be separate nations.) A procession marching in a circle likewise alludes to the disappearance of the nations, as is evident from the fact that that is how Yericho--the first place in *Eretz Yisrael* conquered by *Bnei Yisrael*--fell.

R' Shmuel Eliezer Eidels z"l (*Maharsha*; Poland; 1555-1631) writes: The purpose of *Hoshanot* is to seek *Hashem's* protection from our enemies. (The word "*Hoshana*" means "Please rescue [us].") That was the very same thing that *Bnei Yisrael* sought when they circled Yericho.

Some explain the parallel between Yericho and *Hoshanot* as relating to the fact that the War of Gog and Magog will be fought on *Sukkot* and will culminate on *Hoshana Rabbah*. [That is why two of the *Haftarot* that we read on *Sukkot* relate to that war.] We allude in our prayers to Yericho, the first of our battles in *Eretz Yisrael*, as a surrogate for the final battle. Some say that that battle will take place in the plains surrounding Yericho.

(Quoted in *Otzar Mefarshei Hoshanot* pp. 28-31)

On *Sukkot*, several of the *Haftarot* that are read discuss the future Redemption. R' David Tevel Rubin z"l (1792-1861; rabbi of Minsk, Belarus) explains: Our long exile is due to the sin of hating each other, which is manifested by speaking *Lashon Ha'ra*. That is why gentile nations frequently make decrees against us from which they derive no benefit, just as one who speaks *Lashon Ha'ra* frequently derives no benefit from his words.

The *Sukkah* is the antidote to *Lashon Ha'ra*. In Hebrew, letters are formed by five different parts of the mouth/throat. Each of the four letters of the Hebrew word "*Sukkah*" (סוכה) comes from a different one of those parts. The only type of letter not found in the word "*Sukkah*" is one formed by the tongue, for the other four parts of the mouth/throat form an enclosure (*Sukkah*) and imprison the tongue, preventing it from speaking. (*Derashot Nachalat David* No.10)

**Iyov was complaining about his suffering, but when he saw that the third wall of a *sukkah* need be only one *Tefach* / handsbreadth wide, he immediately felt better. (Midrash Pli'ah)**

R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l (rabbi of Oleszyce, Galicia and other towns; died 1841) explains: We read in *Tehilim* (39:6), "Behold like hand breadths You made my days." This teaches that the dimensions of the *Sukkah* (which are measured in *Tefachim* / hand breadths) allude to the types of activities that man engages in during his life. How so?

Man's activities can be divided into three categories: *Tov* / that which is good for him; *Mo'il* / that which is helpful to him; and *Areiv* / that which is desirable to him. Man may engage in the first two categories as much as he wants, writes R' Zvi Elimelech, but the third category should be used only as necessary.

This is alluded to by the minimum design criteria for a *Sukkah*: two complete walls, and a third wall which is a *Tefach* wide--hinting that man may engage in a full measure of activities which are *Tov* and *Mo'il*, but he should only engage in a small measure of those activities which are *Areiv*.

In order to successfully limit his participation in the third category of activities, man must realize that his life in this world is fleeting. This is alluded to by the *Sukkah*, which must be at least 7 *Tefachim* wide by 10 *Tefachim* high (approximately 28 inches by 40 inches). After Yom Kippur, when man has repented, he moves into the flimsy *Sukkah* to demonstrate his awareness that during the seventy (7x10) years of his life, he should not feel at home in this world, but rather like a traveler passing through.

When Iyov learned this lesson, it made his suffering easier to bear. Once one recognizes that this life is only a way station, he does not expect it to always be comfortable or pleasant. (*Bnei Yissaschar: Ma'amarei Tishrei* 10:19)

An anonymous author asks: Why is it sufficient for a *Sukkah* to have only three walls? After all, the *Sukkah* commemorates the Clouds of Glory which surrounded *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert, and they made four walls!

One answer is that we need an opening to leave the "Clouds of Glory" in order to earn a living. The generation of the Exodus did not have that need.

When Iyov lost all of his wealth, he was upset with himself. Why had he bothered? Why had he not devoted his whole life to learning Torah instead? But when he saw that the *Sukkah* has only three walls, he realized that *Hashem* intends for some people to leave the *Bet Midrash* and work. This made him feel better.

(*Binat Nevonim*)

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of *Enayim La'mishpat*) writes: The *Sukkah* raises the banner of Jewish unity and harmony. In the *Sukkah*, the Jew separates from the rest of the world and unites with his Creator, with himself, and with his nation. This is why we invite the holy Patriarchs, the foundation of Jewish unity, to visit us in the *Sukkah*. *Sukkot* culminates in *Simchat Torah* / rejoicing with the Torah. As R' Saadia Gaon z"l (882-942; author of the earliest known work on Jewish Thought) wrote: "Our nation is a nation only through its Torah." (*Yerach Ha'eitanim* p.113)