



SUKKOT

This Wednesday night, G-d willing, we will begin to celebrate the festival of Sukkot. Here are a few insights into this special holiday:

Symbolism of the Sukkah

The Torah bids us to leave the comfort of our warm homes and to live for a week in a sukkah, a temporary dwelling with an open roof, covered with branches that allow the wind and rain to enter. This teaches us that life is temporary and we should not become too comfortable in this world.

When a person dies, he is buried in shrouds with no pockets. "You can't take it with you!" A certain lady wrote in her will that when she passes away, she wants included in her coffin her tattered prayer book, Psalms book, and all the receipts for charity she had saved up during her lifetime. That is the only way to "take your money with you!"

Clouds of Glory

During the 40 years that the Israelites journeyed in the wilderness, they were surrounded by "Clouds of Glory" in all four directions, and above and below. These supernatural clouds protected them from the wind, rain and sun, as well as snakes and scorpions. The sukkah commemorates this great miracle that endured for 40 years.

Question: Since the clouds appeared as soon as the Jews left Egypt, why don't we sit in a Sukkah at Passover time?

Answer #1: If we would enter a sukkah during the springtime, it would seem as if we are doing so only to enjoy the fresh warm weather. Only in the fall, when it begins to get chilly, (been outside lately?) is it clear we sit outside for the purpose of performing a mitzvah.

Answer #2: When the Israelites worshiped the "Golden Calf," the clouds left, only to return after Moses had achieved the final atonement on Yom Kippur. Therefore, we commemorate the clouds after Yom Kippur.

LESSONS OF THE SUKKAH

Sukkot is also the "harvest festival." The grain that was left in the field to dry during the summer is now gathered into the storage bins. The rich man with a full bin, who may feel the pride of his own accomplishments, is commanded by the Torah to leave his warm and comfortable home and sit in the little sukkah. He gazes at the stars through the cracks in the "s'chach" (covering of the sukkah) and remembers the Almighty, who took us out of Egypt and provided all of our needs in the desert. It reminds him not to take all the credit for all his success!

On the other hand, the poor man (whose bin is far from full) is worried how he will feed his family in the cold winter. The Torah also commands him to leave his home and sit in the sukkah, see the stars and remember: Just as God provided for us in the wilderness, He won't forget us now, either. (Rabbi S.R. Hirsch)

Have a Chag Same'ach!

Rabbi Cohen

(material courtesy of Aish.com)