

999 Reasons To Be Happy

"Come, kinderlach! We're giving out treats in the Sukkah!"

"Yum. I can't wait. This is really simchas ha'chag (being happy on the festival). Which treats did you buy, Abba?"

"All kinds of goodies, kinderlach. I can't wait to give them to you. However, you must earn them first."

"What do we have to do Abba?"

"Just answer this one simple question, kinderlach. What is the reason that we are happy on Succos?"

"Succos is the end of the harvest season, when we have gathered all of our produce into the house. We have enough food to last the whole winter, and that makes us feel very happy and secure."

"You're right Avi. Let's take it one step further."

"We thank Hashem for all that He has given us."

"Excellent. Does anyone have another reason why we are so happy on Succos?"

"Because we are sitting in the Sukkah, Abba, in the shadow of the *Shechina* (Divine Presence)."

"Wonderful, Chaim. The two full walls of the Sukkah are like Hashem's arm (so to speak). The third one (a hands breadth) is like His hand. How happy we are to get a big hug from Hashem in the Sukkah."

"I have another reason, Abba. All of our sins were just forgiven on Yom Kippur. There is no one happier than a person who is free of sin."

"Marvelous, Esti. You are earning a lot of treats, kinderlach."

"I have a great reason, Abba. We leave our comfortable homes and live in the humble Sukkah to demonstrate that physical comforts are not what we are living for."

"Brilliant, Leah. Does anyone have a reason similar to that?"

"I do, Abba. We leave the permanent home to live in the temporary Sukkah, to show that our stay in this world is only temporary."

"Very deep, Yitzy."

"I have a very big reason, Abba. We have a lot of mitzvos on Succos."

"How does that make us happy, Sara?"

"Because the true happiness is the *simcha shel mitzvah* (happiness of performing a mitzvah)."

"Outstanding, Sara. Let's go further. Who can name the mitzvos of Succos?"

"The daled minim - lulav, esrog, hadassim, and aravos."

"You're on the ball, Yossie."

"Living in the Sukkah."

"That is a very valuable mitzvah Ahuva."

"I know why, Abba. Because you can do it all day and all night. Eating,

sleeping, and all facets of living are all part of the mitzvah of Sukkah."

"Not only that, Abba, but other mitzvos are performed with a specific limb of the body - the hand, the mouth, the head. The mitzvah of Sukkah is performed with the entire body."

"Kinderlach, you deserve all of the treats in the world. You really know the mitzvos of Succos."

"Abba, the treats are nice, but they can't compare to the *simcha* of the *chag*."

Kinderlach . . .

How happy we are on Succos! We have gathered in all of our crops. We are grateful to Hashem. We are sitting in the Sukkah, being hugged by Hashem. All of our sins are forgiven. We shake the lulav. We are constantly living in the Sukkah, performing mitzvos with all the limbs of our body, 24 hours a day. This chag is the ultimate happiness.



The Real World

"Chaim dear, what is Avi doing?"

"He's doing a mitzvah, Imma."

"Which mitzvah, is he doing, Chaim?"

"He's sleeping."

"I didn't realize that sleeping is a mitzvah."

A short time later . . .

"What are you doing Chaim, dear?"

"I'm doing a mitzvah, Imma."

"Which mitzvah, Chaim?"

"I'm relaxing and enjoying our latest photo album."

"Okay you boys. Let's get serious. First, you tell me that sleeping is a mitzvah. Now you tell me that relaxing and looking at pictures is a mitzvah. Since when did you discover these new mitzvos?"

"Imma, we are serious. They are not new mitzvos. We are sleeping and relaxing in the Sukkah. The Torah states, 'You shall dwell in Succos seven days' (Vayikra 23:42). This is the mitzvah. Our sages explain (Gemora Sukkah 28b) that we should live in the Sukkah as we live in our

homes. Sleeping, and all 'home' activities should be done in the Sukkah. Therefore, I get the mitzvah of living in the Sukkah with every 'home activity' that I do there."

"I see, Avi. You are very smart."

"Imma, it goes even deeper than that."

"In what way, Chaim?"

"Rav Chaim Friedlander zt"l explains that the Sukkah converts all of our mundane daily activities into mitzvos. In doing so, it teaches us a big lesson. That even during the rest of the year we can turn everything we do into service of Hashem. As the verse states, 'In all your ways know Him' (Mishlei 3:6). We become accustomed to seeing the mitzvos in all of life's activities, and this carries over into the rest of the year."

"That is fascinating, Chaim. Please tell me more."

"What is this mystical Sukkah, that has the spiritual power to turn everything into a mitzvah? Nothing more than two walls and a *tefach* (a handbreadth) covered by discarded branches and twigs. It does not rank very high on the list of fancy material possessions. It is a parable to this world. Ultimately, the true value of things in this world is measured by the mitzvos that they enable us to do. A big luxurious car is worthless if we cannot use it to do a mitzvah. Yet, a little Sukkah is a valuable thing indeed. It turns everything into a mitzvah. That is how we should look at this world. Like a Sukkah. A temporary dwelling, with the sole purpose of doing mitzvos.

Kinderlach . . .

The Sukkah is a wonderful place. You get so many mitzvos in the Sukkah. Let us treat the Sukkah with the same respect that we treat other mitzvos. When we pray, we are serious and well behaved. That is how we should be in the Sukkah. When we shake the lulav, we are very happy. That is how we should be in the Sukkah.

Succos Questions

- When should we build the Sukkah? (Shulchan Auruch Orach Chaim 725)
- Schach must be made of _____? (ibid. 729:1)
- Can food be used as schach? (ibid. 729:9)
- What activities must we do in the Sukkah? (ibid. 739:1-4)
- Are stolen aravos (cut from a tree without permission) kosher? (ibid. 749:1)
- What are the minimum lengths of the haddas, aravah, and lulav? (ibid. 750:1)
- Can you shake a lulav in the afternoon? At night? (ibid. 752:1)