**Shabbos Stories for**

**Yom tov sukkos 5781**

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**Succot**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**



 This holiday is named after the commandment of living (or at least eating all meals) in a 'Succa' (a hut with only branches and leaves for a roof) for seven days beginning the fifteenth of Tishre.

 Like all the Jewish holidays and commandments, Succot and the Succa are done on a certain date that a miracle occurred.

 For example; Pesach is the date the Jews left Egypt, Shavuot; when we received the Ten Commandments, Rosh HaShanna; when man was created, Purim; when we were saved from Haman etc. The only exception is Succot.

 Succot is the only Jewish holiday that does not commemorate a date upon which a miracle occurred. Rather it reminds us that for the entire forty years the Jews were in the desert G-d protected them with clouds of 'glory'.

 The Rabbis have explanations why G-d wants us to celebrate when we do but all agree that no special miracle happened on the date we celebrate it; the fifteenth of Tishre.

 Why is Succot different?

 Here is another strange fact; Chabad Chassidim do not sleep in the Succa; they claim it makes them spiritually 'uncomfortable'.

 Although according to the Shulchan Aurach, (Aurach Chiam 640:4) it is permissible for one who is uncomfortable to refrain from sleeping in the Succa but usually Chabad Chassidim are renowned for their self-sacrifice and disregard for discomfort when it comes to doing commandments. For instance they eat all their meals in the Succa even when itâ€™s pouring rain and they are exempt from doing so.



**The Lubavitcher Rebbe, zt”l, during his years in Paris**

 Even the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt”l) himself, while he was living in Paris (before he was Rebbe during the years 1933-1940) just after the German conquest, actually risked his life a few days for Succot. He traveled alone through the war zones and over dangerous borders to Italy to buy an etrog (a citrus fruit used in the 'Mitzva' of 'shaking the Lulov') because there was none in Paris that fit his qualifications.

 Why, then, when it comes to sleeping in the Succa, is Chabad different?

 Here is a story that will help to explain.

 The Lubavitcher Rebbe rarely left Crown Heights. In fact he seldom left his headquarters in 770 Eastern Parkway. But it so happened that once the Rebbe had some problems with his eyes that required a check-up.

 A doctor, who happened to be a religious Jew, was contacted and a special appointment was made after working hours for the Rebbe to visit his office.

 The examination required that the doctor put drops in the Rebbe's eyes and, because the drops took several minutes to begin their effect and the Rebbe had to sit and wait, the doctor sensed that it was a golden opportunity to ask the Rebbe a question that had been bothering him.

 The Rebbe agreed and the Doctor asked.

**The Doctor’s Question**

 "Rebbe, I've traveled around the entire world and everywhere I go I see Chabad houses and Chabad representatives working day and night helping Jews.

 "I mean, their dedication is really amazing. They live in the worst conditions, have great difficulty getting Kosher food or teachers for their children or a million other things that religious Jews need, and sometimes they even endanger their and their family’s lives, I mean they live in some places of the world that are not always Jew friendly.

 "So my question is; if they are doing so much then why hasn't Moshiach arrived yet? Why hasn’t he come?

 The Rebbe looked up at the doctor very seriously, hesitated several seconds and answered. "I have the exact same question and it doesn’t allow me to rest.

 "But one thing I can tell you" the Rebbe continued, "is that I don't let the Chassidim rest either. I don't let them sleep at nights"

 The next story is about an ex-basketball manager who became a 'baal tshuva'; a religious Jew because of the Rebbe. The story is a long and interesting one but one episode is very relevant to us.

**The Rebbe Urged the Baal**

**Teshuva to Get More Sleep**

 The Rebbe took a special liking to him and once told him that he should get more sleep.

 “But Rebbe,” he replied “You also don’t sleep very much. Look at how black your eyes are. Why do you worry about me? You should worry about your own health."

 The Rebbe looked at him and smiled “My job is to worry for all the Jews in the world, and that keeps me awake nights. But your job is to listen to me and get more sleep.”

 From these two stories we can learn something about sleeping. It’s not very productive.

 But if it’s so negative then why did G-d make sleep necessary? The Rebbe once asked this question in one of his discourses and explained that the reason sleep is good is because we wake up. And without the change we experience by waking man would never imagine that drastic change of awareness is possible.

 But now, after we wake from sleep, we can understand that perhaps we can wake up again from our normal awareness to an awareness of the Creator.

 And this is exactly the topic of the Succa; as the sentence says Sit in Succa seven days so you should KNOW etc.' (Lev. 23:42-43)

 In other words the purpose of sitting in the Succa is to know and be aware to the G-dliness that surrounds and permeates us. And with this knowledge will come world peace and prosperity.

**Symbolizing World Peace and Harmony**

**That will Reign in the Days of Moshiach**

 That is why the Succa, more than any other commandment, symbolizes the world peace and harmony that will reign in the Days of Moshiach.

 As Maimonides explains that Moshiach will bring about that 'The world will be filled with the KNOWLEDGE of G-d and peace.' (End of Laws of Kings) and this is especially stressed in the Holiday of Succot.

 In our prayers after each meal of Succot we request G-d to rebuild the fallen SUCCA of Dovid" (i.e. the Reign of Moshiach)

 Also Succot and Moshiach both deal uniquely with the gentiles: Moshiach will bring all the gentiles to abandon their various religions and worship only their Creator (as we say thrice daily in 'Alenu').

 And in the course of the seven days of Succot (in the days of the Temple) a total of Seventy oxen were sacrificed in order to bring blessing to the 'Seventy' nations of the world. And our reciting of those sacrifices now in the daily Succot prayers simulates that blessing.

**All the Gentiles will Come to**

**Jerusalem to Celebrate Succot**

 Similarly the HafTorah for the first day of Succot (Zacharia 14) tells us that in the days of Moshiach all the gentiles will come to Jerusalem to celebrate Succot.

 Also the holiday of Succot featured the 'Water drawing' ceremony which again refers to Moshiach when the G-dliness will fill the world like WATER. (See end of Rambam)

 So that answers our question; the reason Succot does not celebrate any particular date or miracle is because it, more than any other Jewish Holiday, commemorates the coming of Moshiach. And the arrival of Moshiach is supposed to occur any and every moment.

 And the reason Chabad doesn't sleep in the Succa (it seems to me) is that we have to be working every moment to make it happen one moment sooner. That the blessing of Succot should envelop the entire world.

 And, as we saw in the above stories, when trying to bring Moshiach there is so much work to do that there is no time to sleep.

 On the other hand, after Moshiach arrives there will be no NEED to sleep. The Good will be so great, awareness of truth will be so incomparable and people will have such a drive for G-dliness that there will be no need for sleep to teach us to change ourselves.

 So in any case, sleep and the Succa (at least as far as it symbolizes Moshiach) just don't go together. And because Chabad is so involved with the goal of bringing Moshiach it is specifically THEY that don't sleep in the Succa.

 But the reason that Succot occurs when it does (after the High Holy Days) is because hopefully we will be so pure-minded after the intense prayers and soul searching of Rosh HaShanna and Yom Kippur that we will realize the awesome lesson this holiday is teaching us.

 May HaShem reveal His true peace upon the entire world, raise the fallen Succa of Dovid and give us all a Chag S'meach! And we can make it happen even one moment sooner! Even one more good deed, word or even thought can actually tip the scales and bring Moshiach NOW!!

*Reprinted from the Sukkot 5779 email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**The Special Guest of**

**The Dzikiver Rebbe**

 One year, on the first day of Succos, the Dzikiver Rebbe didn’t have a guest, so he asked his son (the Imrei Noam zt’l) to go outside and look for someone who needed a yom tov meal.

 The son walked around the streets until he found a homeless, drunk person. “Come with me,” he said to the pauper. “My father wants you to eat the seudah with him."

 The Dzikiver Rebbe rejoiced with his guest and served him fish, meat, and other delicacies.

 The Rebbe said: “Avraham Avinu didn’t have more respectable guests. But Avraham cared so much about people that he was eager to bring home anyone who desired a meal. At least, on this day, we should emulate Avraham Avinu’s ways…”

*Reprinted from the Succos 5781 email of Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.*

**The Tepliker Rav and**

**The Arba Minim**



 Many people who lived in Yerushalayim would bring their four minim to Reb Shimon Ahron Polonski zt’l, the Tepliker Rav, to ask him whether they were kosher and mehudar.

 In return for this service, he asked them to donate some money to the poor of Yerushalayim so that he could help them with the yom tov expenses.

 One person told him, "After I buy the four minim, I won't have money left to help the poor."

 The Tepliker Rav told him, "Who says you have to buy the four minim? You can borrow the four from someone else and perform the mitzvah that way. However, if a poor family is sad on yom tov because they couldn’t afford to buy a meal, and if they shed even just one tear, that creates a kitrug ( complaint) in heaven, which is very hard to amend."

 One time The Tepliker Rav acted on this advice. One year, on the first day of Succos, the Tepliker Rav asked someone to lend him his esrog. He had a lulav, hadasim and aravos, but he didn’t own an esrog.

 This is what happened: On Erev Succos, the Tepliker Rav heard shouts and cries coming from his neighbor’s home, so he knocked on their door to see what was going on and if he could help. It was a broken family. The father had died, and the children were orphans. Although the mother remarried, things still weren't smooth in the family.

 At the door, they told him that one of the children had broken the pitom on the step-father's esrog. "The step-father is now in the mikvah, but we are worried about what his reaction will be when he finds out what happened."

 The Tepliker Rav understood what they meant. He might rebuke the orphan very harshly for breaking the pitom, and he might be angry with his wife, too, for allowing the child to get close to the esrog.

 The Tepliker Rav told them, "When your step-father comes home, tell him that I asked to see the esrog, and I ruled that it was pasul. You don’t have to tell him that it broke. Instead, I will bring you my esrog…"

 Therefore, that year, the Tepliker Rav didn't have an esrog. Someone else's shalom bayis and simchas yom tov were more important to him than owning his own four minim.

 A similar story happened with Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz zt'l. Throughout the year, Rebbe Mordechai put aside money to buy the four minim. One year, as he was going to buy an esrog, he saw a simple Yid, crying bitterly. "What’s the matter?" he asked. The man told him that his horse had died. “I'm a delivery man. The horse was my source of parnassah, and I don’t have money to buy another one.”

 Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz gave him money to buy a horse, and with the leftover money, he purchased an esrog. It wasn't the most beautiful esrog, but it was all he could afford to buy with the leftover money.

 When he came home, he said to his family, “This yom tov, everyone else is going to make a brachah on a beautiful esrog, while we will make a brachah on a beautiful horse…”

 That Succos, Rebbe Mordechai davened in the beis medresh of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk zt’l. Rebbe Elimelech said, “I smell the scent of Gan Eden coming from your esrog.”.

*Reprinted from the Succos 5781 email of Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.*

**Staying Focused**

 The doctor’s waiting room wasn’t air-conditioned; neither was it well furnished. It was evident that the worn-out tiled floor hadn’t been washed for quite a while. And, as always, the doctor was behind schedule.

 Most of the people waiting for their appointment accepted these discomforts in silence. It wasn’t their first time here, and they were accustomed to these matters. They kept coming back, despite these hardships, because the doctor was from the best in his field.

 A first-time patient was waiting for his turn to see the doctor, and he was very upset with the service. Unlike the others who accepted it in silence, he spoke out loudly.

 “I never saw anything like this in my life. A doctor should care about his patients. Why isn’t the air conditioning? Why are the chairs uncomfortable? Why is this room so dingy? And why can’t this doctor keep to his schedule? My appointment was supposed to be an hour ago!

 “I used to go to Dr. Ploni. He is a specialist in the same field… He has a waiting room as it should be. He invests in the most modern furniture, the room temperature is always comfortable, controlled by an automatic air conditioning system, and he keeps to his schedule.”

 The people in the room asked him, “Is he a good doctor? Are his patients happy with him?”

 “I never heard that anyone was happy with him. I wasn’t either, and that’s why I changed doctors. He isn’t the wisest guy around if you know what I mean. I don’t know how he ever graduated from medical school. But the waiting room is first class…”

 The nimshal is: Succos is approaching. We will sit in the Succah; we will take the four minim. The Succah will be beautifully decorated, and the four minim will be the most precious set.

 All is good and well, but what about the performance of the mitzvos? How will they be performed? With joy and desire? With a connection to Hashem? Or with sadness and disinterest?

 We must keep focus and perform the mitzvos in the best way we can. Everything can be perfect, externally, but it is essential to make the mitzvos perfect internally, too. The heart and the intention are the main parts of the mitzvah. On the topic of keeping focus, we share another mashal:

**The Miser and**

**The Rosh Hakahal**



 Another story is told about a year when there were very few esrogim for sale. In one town, everyone chipped in towards buying an esrog – and each person gave as much as he was able to.

 However, one wealthy person refused to contribute. He was a miser, tight with his money, and figured that the community would manage without his contribution.

 The community managed to buy the esrog… but it wasn't easy. The merchant saw that they were slow to come up with the money, and he warned them that if they don’t pay the full price, he will take the esrog elsewhere.

 The rosh hakahal paid the difference, and they managed to buy the esrog, without the help of the wealthy miser. The four minim were in the rosh hakahal's home because he had paid for most for the esrog.

 On Yom Tov morning, the people of the town lined up in front of the rosh hakahal's home, and each person was given a moment to make a brachah and shake the four minim.

 The wealthy miser was also standing in line, but when it was his turn, the rosh hakahal didn’t give him the four minim. "Because of you, we almost didn’t have this esrog. I won't give it to you."

 The wealthy miser left the rosh hakahal's Later that morning, the rosh hakahal was walking to the beis medresh for shacharis, proudly holding the four minim.

 The wealthy miser ran over to him, shouted the brachos he and and lifted the rosh hakahal, and shook him to all six sides. He figured that this was the only way he would be able to fulfill the mitzvah of shaking the four minim. The community's rav saw this and told the rosh hakahal to allow this wealthy man to hold the esrog and lulav in his hands.

 When the miser man died, his deeds were weighed in heaven. The scale tipped to the side of sin. One compassionate malach asked, "Did you place the mitzvah of the four minim that he performed that year on the scale?"

 "We did," the court replied, "and we placed his shame on the scale, too, because he felt humiliated when the rosh hakahal didn’t permit him to shake lulav, but it still isn't sufficient. The scale is tipped to the sin of guilt."

 The malach said, "But you should also put onto the scale the weight of the rosh hakahal, because he lifted him to keep the mitzvah." The rosh hakahal's weight was put on the scale, and the scale tipped to the side of virtue, and he was granted entry to Gan Eden.

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**Which is the**

**Greater Mitzvah?**

 In Yerushalayim, there was a jewelry store next to a shop that sells esrogim and lulavim, etc. A scholar went into the jewelry store, and a simple person went into the shop of the four minim. They met outside the stores, each carrying their purchase in their hands.

 The simple person said, "I made a much better purchase than you because I bought a mitzvah."

 The scholar replied, "You bought a mitzvah derabanan (because that year Succos began on Shabbos, and lulav began on the second day of yom tov and was miderabanan), while I bought a mitzvah de'oraysa (because he would give this gift to his wife, so she will be happy on yom tov).

 We don’t know how to measure the mitzvos, but what we must know is that being happy on Succos isn’t merely a good idea, a Chassidic concept, a proper attitude, a good idea, etc., rather an obligation of the Torah.

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**The Cell Phone Call and the Prison Lulav and Esrog**

 Believe it or not, there are still some people among us who don’t own a cell phone. Reb Baruch Buxbaum of Boro Park is such a person. He doesn’t have a cell phone, for he found it greatly disturbs his Torah and tefillah. But, he admits, not owning a cell phone in this generation isn’t a simple matter, because it is so hard for others to contact him.

 His business partner is Reb Sender from Williamsburg. Reb Baruch calls Reb Sender every morning from his landline house phone, and they make up where and when they will meet that day.

**Setting Up a Meeting in Manhattan**

 One morning, Reb Baruch called his business partner, Reb Sender: "I will be on 42nd St. in Manhattan in an hour… Can we meet there?"

 "Certainly, but tell me, did you finally buy a cell phone? I see a cell phone number on the screen…"

 Reb Baruch replied, "I didn’t buy a new cell phone, and, as you know, I'm not planning to do so. I borrowed the phone from Reb Mendel Rosenberg, the head of the Boro Park chevrah kadishah…"

 An hour later, Reb Sender was standing on the corner of 42nd St., as they made up, but Reb Baruch wasn’t there. (He couldn’t call him, since Reb Baruch didn’t own a phone.) Reb Sender thought that maybe he misunderstood where to meet him, so he walked around the street a little bit, hoping to find him.

 Suddenly, he heard someone calling, "Rabbi! Rabbi!"

 Reb Sender turned and saw an older woman, hurrying towards him. She told him that she needs advice. She said, "My husband is Jewish – I'm not, and now he is in the hospital. The doctors don’t expect him to live. Can I ask the doctors to pull the plug and let him die?"

 Reb Sender told her that it was forbidden to kill even an old, dying person.

**My Husband Did Teshuvah in Prison**

 She said, "My husband used to be religious, but he become irreligious, and he married me. He committed many white-collar crimes and was in prison for several years. It was in prison that he began to do teshuvah. He had permission to go home for the holidays, but he told me that in prison there was a succah and the four minim. He wouldn’t have them at home, so he preferred to remain in prison. A few weeks ago, he suffered a stroke, and he's been in the hospital since then. The doctors say he won’t make it. "What should I do when he dies? Can I call a priest and bury him in a Christian cemetery?"

 "Don’t do that," Reb Sender told her. "He should be buried as a Jew."

 "But I don’t know who to contact. I don’t know how to arrange these matters."

 Reb Sender remembered that he had the phone number of Reb Mendel Rosenberg, the head of the Boro Park chevrah kadishah, since Reb Baruch had just called him from that number. He gave her the number and told her that when her husband is near his death, she should contact Rabbi Rosenberg. She was very grateful for all the advice she received.

 Soon afterward, Reb Sender found Reb Baruch waiting at a different corner. (They had indeed misunderstood each other.)

**The Hashgachah Pratis of the Story**

 This story shows hashgachah pratis. If Reb Sender hadn’t been waiting for Reb Baruch, he wouldn’t meet this woman, and she wouldn’t know how to deal with her dying husband. She may have even pulled the plug and killed him before his time, and then have him buried in a Christian cemetery. Also, by Hashem’s providence, Reb Sender had the chevrah kadishah's phone number on him that day, because Reb Baruch called him from that phone. All these steps were arranged by Hashem, to help this baal teshuvah.

 We can see from this story how precious teshuvah is to Hashem. Many miracles and hashgachah pratis happened, so this baal teshuvah could live out his life and then have a proper Jewish burial.

 Perhaps it was also in the merit of Succah and the four minim that this Yid kept, at the end of his life, with mesirus nefesh. He refused a leave from prison to keep the mitzvos of Succah and the four minim.

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