

...IN HIS SUKKAH

by Rabbi Label Lam

Here we go again, moving out of the comfort of our warm homes to expose ourselves to the elements, in our chilly Sukkos, in celebration of what we refer to in our prayers as "the time our joy". I realize that it may not seem like such a happiness inducing activity to be watching your breath as a visible vapor while you're trying to enjoy your Yom Tov meal. At the risk of sounding heretical, what is that we are meant to find in the confines of that flimsy backyard box that's supposed to deliver that ever elusive feeling of pure "joy"?

In the forests around Buczacz on Sukkos in the Jewish calendar year 5703, a mere 67 years ago, the following personal account was given by Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Horowitz: *The tramp of the storm troopers came suddenly to our ears. It was the third day of Chol HaMo'ed, and I was sitting with my son Shmuel in our Sukkah in the midst of the forest. All the Jews, who were with us, hurried out and escaped to their hiding places. We two, however, could not do this, since our hideout was only a little away from the Sukkah, and if we went there we would could easily be tracked and found by our searchers. I decided that we would do best to stay in the Sukkah and leave the rest to HASHEM.*

Circumstances had brought me to such a level of faith as I had never before experienced, and I think I never will again. I said to myself that if HASHEM wished us to be revealed to the enemy and be killed, I was prepared to accept this. I only asked that it not happen here in the Sukkah. What a Kiddush HASHEM it would be if I could tell my fellow Jews that the Mitzvah of sitting in the Sukkah had saved me from death! The non-believers in our group, seeing this, would be convinced too. They would all see that "one who keeps a Mitzvah will come to no harm". "Not for my sake, HASHEM", I prayed, "but do it for Your sake (Tehillim 115:1) that Your Name may be sanctified before everyone." I recited Tehillim in a whisper and mentioned the names of my ancestors back to the Ba'al Shem Tov, which tradition says helps to draw down divine protection.

Then we saw the evil ones approaching. The thud of their boots came closer and closer. They walked back and forth in front to the Sukkah three times- but they did not seem to see anything. It was as if they had been struck blind. We peeked out through the cracks in the Sukkah's walls. We saw them standing right next to us. We saw every detail of their uniforms, but they could not see the Sukkah. Suddenly one of the evil ones pointed off to the distance, indicating that he spotted something suspicious, perhaps a Jew's hiding place. Immediately they all set off and disappeared into the forest. We took a deep breath, thanking G-d for taking us from death to life. Later on others were all wondering where we had been while the thugs were searching the area. When they heard

that we had been in the Sukkah, they were astonished, and agreed that a miracle had occurred. Even the scoffers among them admitted that G-d's hand had been at work. King David's words had come true for us: "He will hide me in His Sukkah on the evil day." (Tehillim 27:5)

The Nazis did not find who they were looking for that day but Rabbi Horowitz discovered something very rare, even in this day and age. He found himself a safe place **in His Sukkah!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.