

MIRACULOUSLY THE STREAK CONTINUES

by Rabbi Label Lam

For a seven day period you shall dwell in booths. Every resident among the Israelites shall live in booths, in order that your generations should know that I had the Children of Israel live in booths when I took them out of the Land of Egypt. I am HASHEM, your G-d. (Vayikra 23:42-43) I proudly built a quaint little Sukkah for educational purposes at the Yeshiva this week. The kindly janitor, who assisted me, asked me what this whole Sukkah thing was about. Before explaining how real security does not come from the brick and mortar of our solidly build home, I told him in a whimsical fashion, "I don't think I have time to explain because it's a 3327 year old story." That's long time for a nation to survive and thrive.

When we consider Lou Gehrig's streak of playing in 2,130 consecutive baseball games, a record that stood for 56 years, it is heralded as a remarkable accomplishment and it is. That fete was enough to earn him the title "Iron Horse". The sheer physical strength, endurance, resilience, and mental fortitude required are qualities worth marveling at and emulating in our own universe activity. There must have been plenty of fortuitous bounces and some good old fashion luck at play as well to have lasted so long and remained so strong throughout. When he suddenly retired because of a sudden serious illness that would take his life in two years-time, he stood before an adoring crowd at Yankee Stadium and humbly and sincerely declared, "Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about the bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of this earth... So I close in saying that I may have had a tough break, but I have an awful lot to live for." Now, in contradistinction, when we study at the duration of the Jewish People as a Torah Nation, the disproportionality eclipses any faint comparison. Rabbi Yaakov Emden noted almost three hundred years ago, and a lot of water and blood too has traveled over the dam in that time: *"Many have tried to injure us or wipe us out. While all the great ancient civilizations have disappeared and been forgotten-The Nation of Israel who clings to HASHEM is alive today! What will the wise historian answer when he examines this phenomenon without prejudice? Was this all purely by chance? By my soul, when I contemplated these great wonders of our continued existence, they took on greater significance than all the miracles and wonders that HASHEM, Blessed Be He, performed for our fathers in Egypt, in the desert, and when they entered the Land of Israel. And the longer this exile extends, the miracle of Jewish existence becomes more obvious to make known G-d's mastery and supervision over nature and history.*

Somehow the Sukkah brings into focus the entirety of our history. How had we made it this far?! Under what conditions have we endured!? What are the logical odds of us having arrived at this

point and time!? How did it all happen and in spite of waves of tragedy? These are questions that beg persistently for answers as we repose under the flimsy covering of the Sukkah.

In a certain crude way we can reflect on the words of that "iron horse" of baseball when he emotionally delivered his farewell address, "Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about the bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of this earth... So I close in saying that I may have had a tough break, but I have an awful lot to live for." Wow!

For the past two thousand years you've been reading about our bad breaks. Yet today, as we sit in our Sukkah, we can each say, I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth..... So I close in saying that we may have had many tough breaks but we sure have an awful lot to live for- and **miraculously the streak continues! DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.**