

ABSOLUTE SECURITY

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

Moshe's review of the three pilgrimage festivals offers a new perspective on Succos, the "Feast of the Tabernacle" which celebrates the Divine protection we enjoyed while we dwelled in Succah booths during our forty year trek through the wilderness. "A festival of Succos you shall make for yourself...You shall rejoice on your festival ...A seven day period shall you celebrate to Hashem your G-d in the place that Hashem your G-d will choose, for Hashem will have blessed you in all your crops and in all your handiwork, and you will be completely joyous." (Devarim/ Deuteronomy 16:13-15) The two primary mitzvos (Divine commandments) of Succos - living in the Succah booth and waving "the four species" (branches of date palm, willow and myrtle with a citron) - are nowhere to be found in this narrative. Why is the Torah preoccupied with joy at the time of the harvest, while it is ignoring the most essential mitzvos of Succos?

Michtav Me'Eliyahu (collected writings and discourses of Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1891-1954) of London and B'nai Brak, one of the outstanding personalities and thinkers of the Mussar movement) explains that the ingathering of produce at the time of this festival creates a false sense of satisfaction that one's livelihood for the year is certain. But Shlomo HaMelech (King Solomon) counseled us in Mishlei (Proverbs) "Give me neither poverty nor wealth, but allot me my daily bread. Lest I be sated and deny [You] and say, 'Who is Hashem?'" (30:8-9). Therefore, the Torah in an earlier discussion of the festival of Succos instructed us "You shall dwell in Succah booths for a seven day period," (Vayikra/Leviticus 23:42) to inculcate the appreciation that our protection does not come from the roof above our heads; rather, it is Hashem's shelter that safeguards us. Indeed, we are never truly sated until our hearts release our dependence on physical pursuits.

Therefore, continues Rabbi Dessler, the Torah charges us, "You shall celebrate on your festival," - our celebration should be a spiritual connection with our Guardian. In as much as we do not marry during the festival, for the Talmud (Tractate Moed Katan 8b) expounds, "'You shall celebrate on your FESTIVAL'...and not because of your bride," how much more so that we should not celebrate because of material gains and confidence in them. Ultimately, concludes Rabbi Dessler, this spiritual celebration is most profoundly realized with the aforementioned release of our dependence on physical pursuits, when our feeling of wholeness and satiation from our connection to Hashem supplants that sense we got from our wealth.

"A festival of Succos you shall make for yourself...You shall rejoice on your festival ...A seven day period shall you celebrate to Hashem your G-d..." When we "make for [our]selves" a Succah and

"celebrate to Hashem" for the sanctuary His supervision - not our actions or possessions - provides, then our festival will be a true source for rejoicing.

Have a good Shabbos!

Kol HaKollel is a publication of the Milwaukee Kollel Center for Jewish Studies 5007 West Keefe Avenue; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; 414-447-7999