

SWEAT, TEARS, TOIL

by Rabbi Naftali Reich

Yomim Noraim (the 'High Holy days') are always a most uplifting experience at Ohr Somayach. Standing shoulder to shoulder with other mispallelim in the packed bais medrash as we pray for a good year, one has an inkling of what it was like in the times of the Bais Hamikdosh when hundreds of thousands of people converged in the Temple courtyard. Our sages tell us that they stood 'tzefufuim,' cramped like sardines and yet, when the time came for them to prostrate themselves, there was suddenly ample space for everyone. Was this due to miraculous Divine intervention? Undoubtedly. However, one might also explain this phenomenon on a psychological level.

The Torah teaches us the mitzvah of Hakheil. Every seventh year, the entire nation was commanded to ascend to Jerusalem. Not a soul remained behind. In every corner of the land millions of people made the jubilant journey to rejoice on the festival of Sukkos in Jerusalem. Today, we can actually see at the excavations of 'Ir Dovid,' the remnants of the city walls that surrounded Jerusalem in those days. The entire city is no more than a square mile and a half. How was there room for everybody? It boggles the mind to picture the spectacle. Millions of people without air conditioning, bathroom facilities, garbage pickup service! The streets must have resembled a solid moving mass of sweaty, agitated humanity. What an ordeal it must have been.

Yet, remarkably, the sages tell us that, on the contrary, that no man ever complained in Jerusalem about the lack of space! The people were unperturbed by their meager accommodations. Perhaps there was an element of the miraculous that unfolded in Jerusalem at that time. But, on an essential level, the Jewish people were simply ecstatic and filled with the joy of being in the presence of their Creator. When one is in an ecstatic frame of mind, suffused with happiness and gratitude for being able to be present at the most sublime moments of the year, the physical conditions don't matter.

When each one cares for the other, there is enough for all. As our sages tell us, when a husband and wife are devoted to one another, they can both sleep "on the edge of a knife" but when there is no unity, even a palace will not suffice. Even if one is in the east wing and the other in the west wing, there is no room for comfort. However, when we stand together in harmony and are focused on helping one another, there is always enough to go around. When happiness, appreciation and love prevail, physical shortcomings simply do not play a role.

Wishing you a joyous chag and may soon all be reunited in Yerushalayim with Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

Sincerely

Rabbi Naftali Reich

Text Copyright © 2013 by Rabbi Naftali Reich and **Torah.org**.

Rabbi Reich is on the faculty of the Ohr Somayach Tanenbaum Education Center.