



From a Place of Purity to a Place of Peace

Anyone who has ever been to Jerusalem in the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot will testify to a unique energy in the air. The city is abuzz. The excitement is palpable, as people fill the streets and flood the markets, buying the *Arba Minim*, supplies for their *sukkot*, and food for the holiday.

Many have the custom to begin building their *sukkah* immediately after Yom Kippur. After fasting and praying all day, they eat something and get right to work – going from one *mitzvah* to the next – not delaying or missing the opportunity. It’s a labor of love, which expresses the desire to translate the inspiration of the past 25 hours into action. There is something magical that takes place on these moonlit Jerusalem rooftops and balconies. It’s an intense ending to an intense day.

Curiously, the custom to begin building one’s *sukkah* immediately following Yom Kippur is cited by the Rema twice: once in the last section of the *Laws of Yom Kippur*, and then again in the first section of the *Laws of Sukkot*.

Why does the Rema – always meticulous in his comments – cite this custom twice? And what is the reason for this practice? Can’t the *sukkah* wait till tomorrow?

The first time the Rema records the *minhag*, he mentions “those scrupulous in observance (*hamedakdikim*) begin building immediately...” The Mishnah Berurah interprets this to imply that everyone else begins the next day. That is why the custom is

mentioned twice. Once for those who begin at night, and once for those who begin the next day. However, that answer is difficult to accept because the Maharil (*Minhagim, Hil. Sukkot*) writes that immediately following Yom Kippur “every individual” should be involved in building the *sukkah*. Every individual – not just those scrupulous in their observance!

Perhaps there is a deeper answer.

By building the *sukkah* immediately after Yom Kippur, we recognize the intimate connection between Sukkot and the days that immediately precede it. By mentioning the custom in both the *Laws of Yom Kippur* and again in the *Laws of Sukkot*, the Rema stresses this connection.

According to Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (*Chochmat Shlomo, Orach Chayim 625:1*), we begin building the *sukkah* right after Yom Kippur, as G-d, so to speak, covers our sins on Yom Kippur and on Sukkot He covers us with His *sukkah*.

The intimate connection between the Days of Awe and Sukkot is also deeply rooted in our historical experience. According to one opinion, the *sukkah* represents the Clouds of Glory, which protected the Jewish people in the wilderness. But after the Sin of the Golden Calf, the Clouds of Glory were removed. On Yom Kippur, the Jewish people were forgiven for the Sin of the Golden Calf, and the Clouds of Glory returned.

The Vilna Gaon writes that Sukkot commemorates the return of the Clouds of Glory and with them, the

Divine Presence. This is why Sukkot is celebrated at this time of year, immediately following Yom Kippur.

Once Sukkot begins, we are surrounded by *mitzvot* – an expression of our closeness to G-d. We carry the *lulav* through the streets, raised like a banner, expressing confidence that we were victorious in judgment just a few days ago.

And while we are required to rejoice during every festival, Sukkot is especially joyous. In fact, Sukkot is called the “time of our rejoicing.” It is the very paradigm of joyful celebration – the “*Chag*.” That joy is a result of the closeness we feel to G-d, achieved during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

As we sit in the *sukkah*, the Divine Presence surrounds us. In Chassidic thought, it is a symbol of G-d’s love. The Sefat Emet compares the *sukkah* to a *chuppa*, a wedding canopy. It is the canopy under which the Jewish nation is wed to G-d. The *sukkah* is also an embrace. According to *halacha*, the *sukkah* must have at least two walls and a handbreadth of a third. The two walls and a handbreadth are imagined as an arm providing a great big Divine hug.

And after having gone through the Days of Awe – isn’t that all we need?

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