

Shabbos Chol Hamoed Succos 5762

1. Gemara in עייז : In the future nations will ask for another chance to keep the Torah. הקב"ה will give them the mitzvah of סוכה and will then unsheath the sun. The heat will be unbearable and the nations will leave their Succos and kick them. And even though מצטער is exempt from the mitzvah, their failure will lie in their having kicked the סוכה.
 2. Question: Why specifically the mitzvah of סוכה. And, more generally, what is meaning of this story.
 3. On שלש רגלים we celebrate events out of our past: ענני הכבוד, מתן תורה, ענני הכבוד. But not just past - these events define our present reality, which is why we celebrate them. Thus on Pesach we celebrate the חירות that is still ours - אין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק - בתורה. On Shavuot we celebrate the Torah which still guides our lives. And on Succos we celebrate the invisible ענני הכבוד that shelter us now - the ever-present, ever-watchful protection of שומר ישראל.
 4. Essential meaning of סכות: צא מדירת קבע ושב בדירת עראי; leave the structure which we normally trust to protect us - our home, with its (hopefully) solid foundation, firm walls and strong roof - which represents all the structures that we - individually and collectively, as a society - trust to protect us - and remove ourselves to a flimsy, rickety structure in which all that protects us is - not, certainly, the plywood panels and bamboo sticks, but - the invisible ענני הכבוד, the protection of the רבשיי.
 5. The Zohar calls the סוכה: צילא דהימנותא, the canopy of faith. What a profound and beautiful description. Because in our סוכה we live under the shelter of those עננים that can only be seen with eyes of faith. And the stronger our faith, the more real the עננים.
 6. This has been the story of our history in גלות. We have been bereft of all those things that nations usually rely on for protection: armies, borders, etc. No other protection than that canopy of faith.
- Yiddish song: א סוכה'לע א קליינע, child thinks it will fall, but father reassures him it has stood for almost 2000 years.
8. At times we have been מצטער in that סוכה; sometimes, our צער was so great that we could not feel the protection of that canopy of faith. But we never lost our faith in its existence; we continued to cherish it, and to strive to be worthy of it.
7. The Gemara in עייז, with which we began, tell us that in the days of משיח - and it seems that we are living in the days of משיח - הקב"ה will test the nations with a situation in which all the defenses that they had built to protect themselves - wealth, technology, military might - will be of no use against an invisible enemy. A world in which there will be no safe haven, no home front. No shelter except for the invisible canopy of faith. And they will not be able to pass that test - they will despise that סוכה for its flimsiness.

8. But we continue to have faith in that סוכה, that canopy of faith, and so we face the future with equanimity, sure that even were He to unsheath the sun He will continue to protect us beneath it, as the נביא foretold:

וסוכה תהיה לצל יומם מחורב ולמחסה ולמסתור מזרם וממטר

And the סוכה shall be a shade and a shelter, by day and by night, from heat and from storm,

Amen.