

BS”D

In The Name Of Shade

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Tonight is the yartzeit of my father, Avraham ben Moshe, so I will start with a short story. Ever since I can remember, my Dad would often say, “why do you think I am working? Only to put a roof over your head and food on the table.” What a strange idea I thought to myself. This notion seemed so strange to me since we really took for granted that we had “a roof over our heads and food on the table”. However, upon growing up I began to appreciate the depth of this claim – we really cannot take for granted that we have a roof over our heads nor food on the table. How appropriate that his yartzeit is on the day we go out from our roofed houses to the thatched roof of the Sukkah (hasukkah begag shel sachach) and gain an appreciation for our roofs.

Putting a roof over our heads is of course what Sukkot is all about. And this brings us to a very strange halacha which, I believe, emphasizes the essence of the holiday:

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים הלכות סוכה סימן תרלה

סוכה, אף על פי שלא נעשית לשם מצוה, כשרה; והוא שתהיה עשויה לצל, כגון סוכת א”י, נשים, בהמה, כותיים, רועים, קייצים, בורגנין, שומרי שדות; ...

The halacha says that we need not say leshem mitzvat sukkah when putting the sachach to complete the sukkah but only leshem tzeil. Basically this means that we can go into any old hut (tzrif) that was made, even by a non-Jew, for shade and fulfill the mitzvah of Sukkah. That is very different than the making of other objects with which we perform mitzvot – e.g. tzitzit, tefillin. WHY?! What is the difference between sukkah, tefillin and tzitzit?

When performing them we say “BAAEMHAKBV lehitatef betzitzit / lahaniach tefillin / lshv basukkah.” In each case we perform an action using an object. Each one has the bracha mention the action (lehitatef/lahaniach/leshev) and the object (betzitzit/tefillin/basukkah) – but only one allows the object made without specific intent for the mitzvah. Both tefillin and tzitzit require explicit intent for making a mitzvah object without which one CANNOT perform the mitzvah with the resulting object – i.e., the mitzvah object is PASUL.

I remember how distraught my son Eitan was when he had tied his first pair of tzitzit only to find out that one must say “leshem mitzvat tzitzit” beforehand for without the declaration the tzitzit are pasul!¹ He was a trooper and with a few tears in his eyes, started all over. He decided that he must know everything he can before taking on a new

¹ There is a heter to use the tzitzit – without saying a bracha on them – until one can procure valid tzitzit (Shul”A O”H 14:2).

task, and with that he decided we would learn all of the Mishna Berura for his Bar Mitzva! But I digress.

So, again, what is the difference between tzitzit/tefillin that demand an explicit declaration of intent for the mitzvah and the sukkah which does not?!

The answer is in the mitzvah. That is, what is the point of the mitzvah. With tzitzit and tefillin the point is to put on these objects – they are the END (tachlit) of the mitzvah NOT the MEANS (emtzaim). The Sukkah on the other hand is precisely the opposite. The Sukkah is simply the MEANS to fulfilling the END which is getting out of your house, out of your permanent residence, out of your protective roofed structure. And for what reason? The Torah tells us explicitly:

פרשת אמור

(מג) לְמַעַן יִזְדַּעוּ דַרְתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסִּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאֵי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יִקְוֶה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

Of course, the Torah also tells us the REASON for tzitzit and tefillin:

במדבר פרק טו, מ

(מ) לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם :

שמות פרק יג פסוק ט

הֲזָה לָךְ לָאוֹת עַל יָדָךְ וּלְזָכְרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת יִקְוֶה בְּפִיךָ כִּי בְּיַד חֻזְקָה הוֹצֵאתָ יִקְוֶה מִמִּצְרַיִם :

Nevertheless, the mitzvah is completed when you put on the tzitzit, regardless of any other message you are to realize. So much so, that you say a blessing upon performing the mitzvah. This is in contradistinction to performing the mitzvah of Sukkah. You do not say “leshev basukkah” upon entry to the sukkah, not even when you sit in it for a time, not even if you eat or drink, but rather ONLY when you are to have a meal (acc. to Sefaradim) or at least a significant food staple (acc. to Ashkenazim). The point is that the mitzvah of Sukkah is made when you actually take the time to actively dwell – as deemed by eating significantly. It is not the eating and it is not the sukkah, but the two together that engender the performance of the mitzvah. RSRH notes the combination of the two in the halacha that the Sukkah must include person and his TABLE:

רש"י הירש ויקרא פרק כג פסוק מג

המקום המקורה על - ידי הסכך חייב לכלול "ראשו ורובו ושולחנו" (שם ע"ב); לבל נפריד את עצמנו מעל שולחנו; לבל נמסור רק את עצמנו להגנת הסכך - ונשאיר את שולחנו תחת תקרת הבית; אלא נבין, שה' לבדו יגן עלינו ועל שולחנו; לבל נאמר: נפשנו היא בידי ה'; אך הלחם להחיות בו את נפשנו הוא תחת השפעת כוחות מתחרים רבים - התפתחות הטבע, יד המקרה וחכמת אנוש; עלינו להתחשב באלה; ... לא כן, אלא "בסכת תשבון", תשבו כעין תדורו; נכניס לסוכה את כל חיינו הרגילים; ...

We are to realize that ultimately it is God that cares for us and supports us. By going into the Sukkah we are to realize that we are taking SHELTER, that we, as physical

beings in this world, need PROTECTION and SUPPORT. We NEED “a roof over our heads and food on the table.” The going out of our houses to live in thatched shacks brings home the idea that we are INCREDIBLY FRAGILE (shavririm), that without the proper environment our stay in this world is precarious at best. And this of course should bring home the message that indeed our ultimate PROTECTION comes from above – ain lanu al mi lehishaen ela ela avinu, avinu sheBashamayim. And this is really the message of

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מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

That is, just as God took care of the Jewish people throughout the desert sojourn, so too he takes care of us. Or in the words of RSRH:

נזכור, שכך למדנו מפי ה' בהוציאו אותנו מארץ מצרים; כי ה' הורנו לבטוח בו בשמחה, להיצפן בסוכו ולחסות בצילו, בלא דאגה ובלא מחסור; וכאז כן עתה ...

You knew all this or course. But it is interesting to see the philosophy come out of such a minute detail of the halacha.

Hag Samayach!