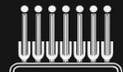




# Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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## What Happened on Sukkot?

by: Rabbi Naftali Silberberg

More than anything else, we seek happiness in life. "Eternal youth" is nice, but what is it worth if it isn't accompanied by happiness...? Yet, no matter how much we accomplish in life – materially or spiritually – for many of us happiness seems to be an elusive quality. There always seems to be *one* more thing we need to accomplish before we can be truly happy. In truth, however, trying to achieve happiness via personal accomplishments or successes is akin to trying to gain wealth through frequenting casinos—you're always "oh so close" to winning the jackpot! Let us examine the nature of the holiday of Sukkot, and thus solve the mystery of happiness.

On its surface, the holiday of Sukkot is quite bizarre. Every other holiday on the Jewish calendar commemorates an event which occurred on that particular date; but nothing happened on the 15th of Tishrei which would explain the establishment of a holiday on this date. Every other holiday celebrates a major event which saved the Jewish people from grave danger (such as Passover, Chanukah, or Purim), or changed the course of Jewish history (such as the forgiveness G-d granted the Israelites on Yom Kippur or the giving of the Torah on Shavuot), but Sukkot celebrates a relatively "minor" miracle—the Clouds of Glory which miraculously surrounded the Jews for the forty years they spent in the desert. During this same period, the Jews were also the beneficiaries of another two miracles, the Manna and the wa-

ters which were produced by the rock—the "Well of Miriam." Yet these two miracles, which seem to be of vastly greater import than the Heavenly Clouds – the Jews could not survive without food and water, but they certainly had the means to erect tents to protect themselves from the elements – did not spawn any holidays.

And Sukkot isn't "just another holiday"; it is the most joyous of the three Biblically mandated festivals. In the holiday prayers, each festival is given a short description: Passover is the "Season of our Liberation," Shavuot is the "Season of the Giving of our Torah," but Sukkot is simply described as the "Season of our Rejoicing"! Indeed, the Talmud states that "one who has not witnessed the Festival of the Water Drawing (held on the nights of Sukkot in the Holy Temple) has not seen joy in his lifetime!" Today, too, it is customary to assemble on the nights of Sukkot; to sing, dance, say "*I'chaim*," and be merry (be sure to find the celebration in your area). But why? What is the reason for the tremendous joy on this holiday?

Incredibly, the secret of Sukkot seems to be its lack of any great miracle. All miracles (or personal achievements) are limited in some way, causing the resulting joy to also be limited. The joy is limited by the scope of the benefit which the miracle or achievement produced; and when the effects of the miracle or accomplishment wear off, the joy becomes passé. Furthermore, there is a Mishnaic dictum: "He who has one hundred desires two hundred, and he who possesses two hundred craves four hundred." It is impossible for one to be ecstatic about a certain achievement

**Mazal Tov!**  
Chosson Torah: Ari Poyurs  
Chosson Bereishis: Jared Landsman

### Calendar

#### Shabbat Chol Hamoed

- ◆ Shacharis 8:30 am; Shtibl 8:45 am
- ◆ Shul Brocha in the Sukkah.
- ◆ Kohelet
- ◆ No Lulav & Esrog
- ◆ Mincha: 5:30 pm
- ◆ Shabbat ends: 6:38 pm

#### Sun 30 Sep - Hoshana Rabbab

- ◆ Special Shacharis
- ◆ 2nd Minyan: 7:00 am
- ◆ Last day for Lulav & Esrog
- ◆ Candlelighting: 5:49 pm (Blessings for Yom Tov & Shehecheyanu)
- ◆ Full Yom Tov Service: 6:00 pm

that darkness because we know that Someone Else believes in us even when feel like giving up on ourselves.

While Passover celebrates our collective freedom and Shavuot celebrates our collective covenant, Sukkot celebrates our collective happiness. On Sukkot, we draw our focus away from the material houses and objects which we accumulate during the year and instead concentrate on the root-soul that we all share that transcends those material differences. If we never take a break from the pursuit of happiness to actually choose to be happy about our happiness, we get stuck in that race of accumulation. Sukkot is about taking the break and leaving everything behind as we take leave from our homes and make those choices.

Perhaps Sukkot cannot be referred to as *Zeman Zichroneinu* because remembering the past focuses on who we once were, not on who we can become. Becoming whole within ourselves and at one with our people cannot be defined by the materialistic and ego-driven differences of our pasts. For it to be attained, unity must be future-driven. It is about what we can accomplish tomorrow by working together today.

We may not always know where we're supposed to go as individuals or where we're headed as a collective nation, but perhaps those don't matter as much as we think they do. Happiness isn't about getting it right all the time, but about making the choice to try. G-d can be found within the darkness if we choose to look for Him. Have the courage to choose...you may be surprised at what you find buried within!

### Live & Laugh Mother Superior

Mr Goldstein was awarded the job to paint the local Catholic Church and Convent. After several days on the job, the Mother Superior called him into her office.

"Mr Goldstein," she said, "I would like you to please change three things in the performance of your job. Number one, please remove your painter's cap when you enter the sanctuary. Number two, please refrain from washing your hands in the Holy Water, and Number Three, please stop calling me MOTHER SHAPIRO!!!!!"

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when there is always so much more that can be accomplished.

For example: On Passover we celebrate our liberty. Yes we were liberated, but so many of us are still horribly enslaved—to our jobs, to peer pressure, and (most importantly) to our impulses and whims. Shavuot is about Torah, but have we taken full advantage of this magnificent gift which G-d gave us?

True happiness comes from that which each and every Jew intrinsically has; a personal relationship with G-d. This relationship derives from the Divine Soul which every Jew possesses and which was hopefully uncovered during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The awareness that no matter what a Jew's personal spiritual state may be, this relationship is always there – after all, a son or daughter continues to be a son and daughter even if they do not exactly follow the parents' wishes – triggers incredible joy. *No matter what, you are connected to G-d, and He really cares about you!*

## The Joyous Water-Drawing Ceremony *Simchat Beis Hashoeivah* By Rabbi Menachem Posner

*He who has not seen the Water-Drawing Celebration has never seen joy in his life (Talmud)*

Every Jewish festival is celebrated with joy. Often there are additional emotions added to the mix: awe on Rosh Hashanah, regret on Yom Kippur, freedom from oppression on Passover. But the holiday of Sukkot is pure joy. In our prayers, we call it simply “the season of our rejoicing.”

### ***Sukkot in the Holy Temple***

One of Sukkot's most joyous observances was known as Simchat Beit Hashoeivah, the Celebration of the Water-Drawing. When the Holy Temple stood, every sacrifice included wine libations poured over the altar. On Sukkot, water was also poured over the altar in a special ceremony. This ritual engendered such joy that it was celebrated

with music, dancing and singing all night long.

Every morning of Sukkot at daybreak, a group of Levites and priests went down to the Shiloach stream, which ran south of the Temple Mount, and drew three *log* (a Talmudic liquid measurement) of fresh water to be poured on the altar after the daily morning sacrifice. Their arrival at the Temple with the water was accompanied by trumpet blasts. (For Shabbat, the water was collected before the onset of Shabbat and stored in a golden vessel in the Temple.)

There were two holes in the altar into which liquid was poured. One hole was for the wine that accompanied every sacrifice, and a second, smaller one was reserved for the Sukkot water. The holes were different sizes to allow the wine and water, which have different consistencies, to drain at the same speed.

The nights of Sukkot were spent celebrating this once-a-year offering. The Talmud describes the celebrations of Simchat Beit Hashoeivah in detail: Priests kindled fires on great candelabra, lighting up Jerusalem as if it were the middle of the day. Throughout the night pious men danced holding torches, scholars juggled and Levites played music while the lay people watched with excitement. The Temple courtyard was specially furnished to accommodate this event, and a balcony was erected for women so they could observe the revelry.

Though not explicitly mandated in the Torah, the water libation is part of the oral tradition passed down from Moses. For this reason, the Sadducees, who rejected the Oral Law, bitterly disputed the practice. Once the priest honored to do the libation was sympathetic to the Sadducees and, instead of pouring the water into the hole in the altar, he spilled it on his own feet. The on-lookers were horrified and pelted him with their *etrogim*. From that time on, whoever poured the water libation lifted the jug of water high in the air, so that all could see him perform the mitzvah properly.

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### ***Celebrating Today***

Even today, when we no longer have a Temple, and the water libation ritual is discontinued, many communities still celebrate Simchat Beit Hashoeivah with music and dancing during the nights of Sukkot, in keeping with the Torah's directive, “You shall rejoice on your holiday.”

Why was this event accompanied by such fanfare and celebration? Part of the answer is that Jews of old were happy to demonstrate their fealty to tradition, even those traditions not specified in the Torah. In addition, the water-drawing was said to be accompanied by a great awareness of G-dliness, to the degree that it is said that, along with water, people would “draw” prophetic revelation.

The chassidic masters explain that the water celebration signifies a joy caused by a connection to G-d so deep and so true that, like water, it has no describable taste. And like water, it sustains all life.

## Being Happy About Our Happiness

By Jonah S C Muskat-Brown

I once attended a talk where the speaker suggested that depression can only really grip us if we become depressed about our depression. As a clinical social worker, I'm well aware that this condition can be debilitating and that there is usually little we can do to prevent its onset. I'm also aware of the many existing and emerging tools and strategies that help us manage and even thrive during episodes. Although I feel that both of these are much larger discussions for other times, as a clinician, I began wondering if the same approach could hold true about our happiness.

Passover is known as *Zeman Cheruteinu* (the time of our freedom) because it was then that we experienced collective freedom from Egyptian bondage. On Shavuot, referred to as *Zeman Matan Torateinu* (the time of the giving of our Torah), we celebrate collectively receiving G-d's Torah at Mt. Sinai. But calling Sukkot *Zeman Simchateinu* (the time of our happiness) seems incongruous. The Talmud explains that we sit in the *sukkah* either to remem-

ber the miraculous, protective clouds that surrounded us throughout our desert travels, or to recall the huts we dwelled in during these journeys. But neither of these reasons imply any element of happiness. At most, we should refer to Sukkot as *Zeman Zichroneinu* (the time of our remembrance)!

To understand Sukkot as *Zeman Simchateinu* we first have to define happiness. It can't be a state of *having*, because we see little correlation between happiness and the amount of wealth and belongings a person accumulates in life. Neither can happiness be a state of *being* because not every moment that we experience across the lifespan is positive: people get sick, relationships shatter, individuals experience financial hardships, etc. As King Solomon aptly wrote, there is a time and place for each emotion under the sun – and not every situation we face is supposed to be joyous.

Since happiness can't be a state of *having* or a state of *being*, it must be a state of *becoming*. When we view happiness through this lens, we approach life as an unfolding journey of continuous growth and development, with inevitable bumps along the way. But by shifting our perspective towards those realities, we can choose to become happier.

The most significant element of any *sukkah* is its *sechach*, which must be mounted low enough that we can see it and remain mindful of it, and dense enough that it provides more shade than sunlight. It seems as though G-d desires that the holiest aspect of our happiest festival be focused more on darkness than on light. Why?

Because G-d can be found within the darkness, in the shade of the *sechach*, and within the challenges we face as we journey through life. Happiness isn't about knowing everything all the time, but about understanding that we are each placed in specific situations because we have something to offer those moments which no one else can. Choosing to be happy about our happiness isn't about blindly accepting the struggles we face or ignoring the painful realities we may encounter. It means having the courage to embrace