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# סוכות

WITH

# R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

## A Fleeting World

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## Part I. Forty Years in the Sukkah

### Citizens Only

When Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave the *Am Yisroel* the command to leave their homes every year for seven days and move into the *sukkah*, He introduced it in a most unusual way: כל האזרח בישראל ישוב בסוכות – Every *eizrach* - it means every established citizen - in *Yisroel* must dwell in *Sukkos* (Vayikra 23:42).

Now, the word *eizrach* is a peculiar way of describing those who are commanded to live in the *sukkah*. No other *mitzvah* is described like that. We're not told that an *eizrach* should pick up the *daled minim* or that an *eizrach* should wear *tefillin* or keep *Shabbos*. It's only here that the Torah chooses to use this unusual word: "Every *eizrach* should make the *sukkah* his home for seven days."

Now, if we're going to try to understand why this one *mitzvah* is depicted in such a manner, we should first make an attempt to discover what it is that we are trying to accomplish when we move into the *sukkah*; why is the *eizrach* commanded in this *mitzvah* altogether?

### **The Secret Is On The Surface**

And we won't have to search far to find the answer because when it comes to the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* the Torah tells us the reason straight away: כל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסוכות – Every *eizrach* in *Yisroel* must dwell in *Sukkos*, למען ידעו דרתיכם כי בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל – in order that your generations will know that I caused the Children of *Yisroel* to dwell in *sukkos* when I took them out of *Mitzrayim*. It's an open *possuk* – we're trying to remind ourselves of the forty years we spent in tents in the wilderness.

Isn't it a pity that people only look at the *drashos*? They want to hear fanciful explanations and that's all. They're interested in high level things, *sodos*, – but to hear something with some meat on it, something that talks to them at their stage in life? No, they think it's too simple for their sophisticated minds. But the truth is that *drashos* might be very good but *ein mikra yotzei mi'yedei pshuto*, and therefore we should pay attention to the plain meaning of these words: “You should dwell in *sukkos* in order that you should know that I caused the *Bnei Yisroel* to dwell in *sukkos*.” Not to remember that “they dwelt in *sukkos*,” but rather הושבתי – that “I caused them to dwell in *sukkos*!” It means “I purposefully seated them in *sukkos* for forty years when I took them out of the land of *Mitzrayim*.”

### **Forty Years on the Move**

Now, we think according to what we learned in *chumash* when we were little children, that the entire episode of the *Dor Hamidbar* was nothing but a punishment because of the *meraglim*; the spies spoke *lashon hara* about *Eretz Yisroel* and the people cried and therefore the *Am Yisroel* was sentenced to wander around in the wilderness for forty years.

And while it is certainly not false to think so, it's absolutely not the whole story. Because even if the nation now had to wait forty years before coming into *Eretz Yisroel*, we could have lived at least with some sense of permanence in the wilderness; Hakodosh Boruch Hu could have kept us in one place and we would have built stone homes. For forty years we could have lived in one place overlooking *Eretz Yisroel*, seeing the land every day and mourning for our great sin that prevented us from entering the land. That would have been a punishment! So why is it that Hakodosh Boruch Hu made us wander from place to place for all these years living in portable flimsy tents?

The answer is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu had a plan that He had foreseen from the beginning. And the plan was that there had to be a *hakdamah*, a preparation, to *Eretz Yisroel*.

### ***Preparing for Luxury***

I'll explain that. *Eretz Yisroel* was going to be for the *Am Yisroel* a new kind of existence – an existence of luxury. It was a land flowing with milk and honey and all good things; a land of *v'achalta v'savata*, of eating to satiation, and a place where *lo sechsar kol bah*, where nothing would be lacking. And most of all, it was a land of טוב בתים מלאים כל טוב – *homes filled with all good things* (Devarim 6:11). They were going to move into ready made houses; resplendent homes made of stone that were filled with all good things.

ובתים טובים תבנה – “You'll build beautiful homes (*ibid.* 8:12) when you come into the land,” said Hashem. It means that they would try to make their homes even nicer than they found them. That's human nature – even the poorest person tries to make his home beautiful. And why shouldn't he? That's his place! And so they all got busy “building beautiful homes.” וישבת – *and then they moved into those nice homes*. It was a dream come true after so many years of wandering and living in tents. They would be living the good life in *Eretz Yisroel*!

## Hashem Wants Happy Jews

And Hashem wanted that! He wanted that we should be on the land *kiyemei hashamayim al ha'aretz*, forever and ever, enjoying His gifts. There's no greater success than serving Hashem *בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרוב כל* – *in great happiness because of the abundance of all good things that He provides you* (Devarim 28:47). The greatest form of *avodas Hashem* is when you're living in a nice home and you're enjoying life and you're serving Hashem in the midst of this happiness. Like I always say, to do *teshuva* while you're eating watermelon or ice cream is the best kind of *teshuva*. The *Chovos Halevavos* says that.

And so, when they would enter into *Eretz Yisroel* they would be given an opportunity to achieve more than any other situation could afford them. To live in strong and secure homes filled with all good things and to become more and more grateful to Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the midst of luxury. They would sing to Hashem all their days; to shout in happiness to Him, that's the highest form of *avodas Hashem*.

## The Land and The Landlord

At yet, at the same, as great of an opportunity luxury and convenience may be, the Torah tells us that there's a very great peril in living this kind of existence. *ובתים טובים תבנה וישבת* – *You'll build homes, and then you will dwell in those those nice homes, ושכחת את השם* – *and you'll forget about Hashem*.

You'll forget Hashem?! That's impossible! They never forgot Hashem in *Eretz Yisroel*! But it means, you won't think about Him as the Landlord; as the One who owns this home that you're living in. You'll forget that He is the One who gave it to you. Certainly you'll *daven* every day. And you'll say *kriyas shema* and you'll mention *yetzias Mitzrayim*. Certainly! But it's possible to do all these things, and still to forget that you're living in Somebody else's home; that you're only a visitor passing through this world.

## The Very Long Hallway

Now, the Torah is not against making houses. It's not against beautifying your home either. *But it's against forgetting that it's only temporary.* Build *batim tovim*, yes! *V'yashavta*, and dwell in them, yes! But don't fulfill the end of that *possuk*, ושכחת את השם. Don't forget that you're only a visitor passing through this world and that sooner or later – hopefully later – you'll be going back to Hashem.

Some people get nervous when they hear such talk; that we're only visiting temporarily and we'll have to leave, they're not interested in such talk. But it's the truth – it's the most important truth you'll ever know: העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא - *This world resembles a corridor, a hallway, that is leading you into the palace of the Next World.* (Avos 4:16). We're walking down a hallway; that's all this world is. It's a long hallway and we want it to last as long as possible, but it's only a hallway after all.

## Bricks Are Dangerous

Now, such to acquire such an attitude is easier said than done! It's not easy to live in בתים מלאים כל טוב, in strong houses filled with all good things, and to remember that it's only temporary. It's not easy to live in a house made of brick that seems like it will last forever and to always remember that it won't.

And so, as much as Hashem wanted to give the *Am Yisroel* the great opportunity to serve Him “with a happy mind because of the abundance of all good things that He provides,” He couldn't just suddenly plunge the people into such a test without some preface. To be prepared for success at living such a lifestyle you need a big *hakdamah*. And the *hakdamah* was going to be בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציאי אותם מארץ מצרים – *for forty years the Am Yisroel would live in sukkos.* Before they could come into *Eretz Yisroel* and move into the beautiful stone houses that Hashem had prepared for them, they would need to spend forty years learning *mussar*. And so, Hakodosh Boruch Hu sat them in tents for forty years – they didn't only *learn mussar*; they *lived it*.

## Every Day Moving Day

For forty years they had the opposite of *Eretz Yisroel*! They didn't have "homes filled with all good things" – they didn't have any homes at all! They sat under roofs that were made of cloth – maybe branches or planks of wood – that couldn't protect them much. The walls were pretty flimsy too – they certainly weren't walls of brick. Who's going to waste effort building a brick house if the next minute he might have to pack up and move on?

That's how they lived – every day they had to be on the alert, maybe they'll hear the sound of the trumpets that would summon them to pull up the stakes of their tents and start moving. They never had any kind of security in the *midbar* that they would remain in one place for longer than a day. It's true, in some places they remained for many many days but every day they were in trepidation. Every minute the trumpet might sound and say: "Get moving!"

You understand what a disturbance that is for a normal feeling of security in this world?! Let's say you move into a home but you know that at any moment you might be summoned to leave, with you and your family, and never come back. You wouldn't do anything! You won't try to make any repairs, nothing. Any minute, you might get a notice to move out! And even if you lived there fifty years, you never had a minute of *menucha*, of permanence.

## The Forty Year Mussar Seder

And that was Hakodosh Boruch Hu's plan from the beginning; the *Am Yisroel* would spend forty years of training, preparing for the day when they would finally come into *Eretz Yisroel*. The forty years of living in *sukkos* were intended as a lesson in what *Olam Hazei* really is. They woke up every morning to see flimsy walls blowing in the wind and they fell asleep every night looking at a flimsy roof made out of almost nothing. And they were being reminded all the time that this world is a very flimsy world. It was a forty year experience of understanding that this world is only temporary, that we're only passing through.

So now when they came into the walled cities and stone houses of Eretz Yisroel they were ready! They said, “We’ll have houses filled with all good things but we’ll be on guard not to deceive ourselves. We’re prepared for this test.” And they moved into these big beautiful houses of stone with humility: “Ahhh,” they said. “*Boruch Atah Hashem*. It’s not ours. You give it to me for seventy years, maybe a hundred years, but after that I’ll be leaving this flimsy world and enter into the real world.”

## *Part II. A Week in the Sukkah*

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### **Good Things Don’t Come Easy**

But how long would such an attitude last? Ten years? Fifty years maybe? Habit, after all, is overpowering, especially if it’s practiced for generations; and therefore such an attitude surely wouldn’t last on its own for a hundred years. But Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants it to last for thousands of years! למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם – כימי השמים על הארץ – You should be on the land like the heavens are over the land – forever. “I want it to be forever!”

And therefore, in order to remind the *Am Yisroel* not to forget the *mussar* they learned in the *midbar* Hashem gave us the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*. Every year on *Sukkos* the entire nation moved out of their beautiful homes that they had found when they moved into the land and they went out into the *sukkah*, a flimsy little building, for seven days.

They sat there and slept there and ate there and the whole time they were reminding themselves, כי בסוכות הושבתני את בני ישראל – Hashem kept us in huts for forty years in the wilderness. “Ahh! This is how Hashem sat us in the *midbar* for forty years! And it was all for the purpose of teaching us that no matter how big our houses are and no matter how many years we’ll be established on our land, we should never forget the lesson that we’re only visitors in this world.”

## **The Conundrum Is Resolved**

And that's the answer to the question we asked in the beginning of the lecture: What does it mean *kol ha'eizrach b'Yisroel teishvu ba'sukkos*, that every established citizen should sit in the *sukkah* for seven days? What's this queer word, *eizrach*?

Now, if you know a little *lashon kodesh*, you'll remember that *eizrach* means a burgher, a solid citizen. And the *possuk* is telling us, "You solid citizens, you important people who feel so secure in your lives, must forsake your homes and move into *sukkos* for seven days."

The Torah is emphasizing the purpose of the *mitzvah* here—even the established *eizrach* who dwells in a palatial residence must move out of his sturdy home and live in a flimsy *sukkah* for seven days. Because that's how we all feel; we all know implicitly that this world is our place. And therefore, no matter how big or small of a home you had, no matter how strong and secure your home was, you had to leave that home and walk humbly into your *sukkah* and say, "I'll never forget that I'm just a temporary visitor here and I'm not as important as I imagined."

### **Buy The Cheaper Sukkah**

That's why one of the fundamental *halachos* of building is that it must be constructed in such a way that it could be a temporary dwelling. If it's more than twenty *amos* it's not kosher because such a height requires sturdy walls. And the Torah doesn't want sturdiness – it must be a *diras ar'ai*, something that is small enough that it could be made with a flimsy construction and remain standing. It's not that the Torah is trying to make it easier for you by letting you get by with a less expensive *sukkah*; it's insisting that the *sukkah* be a flimsy and temporary structure.

And it is into this little flimsy hut that the *eizrach* – that's all of us who feel so secure in this world – must relocate. Because that's the lesson we're trying to learn – living in such a dwelling humbles us by means of uprooting us from this world. That's how it is; you

can't feel too established in this world if you're living in a little booth made of almost nothing.

### **Mr. P. Is No More**

You know, when you live in a brick house with strong walls and a heavy roof it's not so easy to remember that you're only a guest passing through this world. The proof is in the pudding; look around – who doesn't think that he's here in this world for the next ten thousand years? Everybody imagines so!

Like the man who moved in next door to me years ago; I remember him well because as we walked to shul on Shabbos morning he would be outside in his garden clipping his bushes. So this man decided to put up a metal fence around his yard; an expensive wrought iron fence. And in the middle of the fence was a big metal circle - like a shield, an escutcheon - and he put his initial, a big P of cast iron, in the middle. A fence like that could stand for a thousand years!

Well, it wasn't too long. One night, we heard outside somebody crying out. His son was running out of the house, running down the street, yelling "Oxygen!" He ran around the corner to the fire station and brought back a little oxygen tank but it was too late; his father was finished with this world already.

And so the family eventually moved, and now somebody else bought the home. The colored man living there now has a big P on the gate in front of his house! It's not his initial, but it's still there in heavy metal, an insert in the gate memorializing the man who thought he would be around forever.

### **We're Not Much Better**

And the truth is we, the *frummeh*, are not much better; we think that *this* is our place. That's why people put everything they have into the house – all types of luxuries and of course expensive rugs that could last forever. "We'll be here forever!" Of course, if you sit him down and talk to him you'll see that he knows all about this

world being only a hallway before the palace of the Next World; he'll tell you that *ha'olam hazeh prozdor lifnei ha'olam haboh* but it's not easy to live with that attitude when the hallway is made of brick houses. Even your home is a big test!

That's why you have to know that when you move into a nice apartment or a home, you must know that you're in bigger danger than a man who lives in a broken down rented flat; because there, there's always a leak from the ceiling – the bathroom above you is dripping down on you – and you have no interest in settling there forever. You don't feel like it's your permanent place at all. Every Monday and Thursday you threaten the landlord to leave and the truth is he doesn't care. As soon as you move out he'll put in three Puerto Rican families instead of you and he'll make more money.

People who live in such places are in much less danger of forgetting that they're visitors in this world. They're constantly reminded that this place is not 'it'. When you live like that there's nothing to cause you to be too much attached to that place. Other things maybe will make you forget, but not your home.

### **The Greatest Danger**

But if you have a nice apartment or maybe even your own home on a nice quiet street – could be you have a garden too – then you need a special warning. The Torah says, "Beware, because there is a very big chance that you might fall in love with your little estate." You walk out in the morning smoking your pipe and you turn your head viewing your garden and you see your flowers and your shrubs and you see the street is quiet and clean and you feel like it's all yours and that you'll be living here for the next ten thousand years; it means there's a very big danger that you'll forget that you have a Landlord. There's nothing to remind you that you're not going to be here for a very long time.

And today we're in a bigger *sakanah* than ever before because no matter what type of apartment you have, you're living more permanently than our forefathers ever did. There's no question that

the comforts and conveniences of this world are a very big danger; they breed a feeling of “this world is it!” And therefore if the *Am Hashem* is going to succeed at never forgetting the important principle that this world is merely a passing ship in the night, they require special instruction. And if you don’t get instruction or if you don’t listen to instruction, there’s a great danger of spending your days in this world thinking that this world is forever – that this is the world that counts.

### **Ah Gantz Yuhr Sukkos**

And that’s why we have the *mitzvah* of living in a *sukkah* today. We move into a temporary dwelling because we’re expected to use it as a glorious opportunity once a year to remind ourselves of the flimsy habitations in the wilderness. For seven days we imitate the *Dor Hamidbar*, the Generation of the Wilderness, and we try to learn the same lesson that prepared them for moving into real homes.

Of course, it’s not only on *Sukkos*; all year long is also a good time to remind yourself. There’s no harm if you’ll walk outside of your home once in a while and think about what we’re saying now. You can even try it tonight. Before you walk into your house, stop on the sidewalk and take a look at your home and think, “This house is only temporarily mine. Even if I have the deed and I paid off the mortgage already, it doesn’t matter. I’m only a temporary resident in this world.”

And while that’s something you can do anytime during the year, the days of *Sukkos* are *especially* dedicated to this great principle of *ha’olam hazeh domeh l’prozdor lifnei ha’olam haboh*, that this world is only a hallway before the next world; we’re only passing through a vestibule in this world making our way to the palace of the next world.

### **No Privacy, No Protection**

That’s what the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* is telling us: **צא מדיירת קבע ושב בדיירת ארע** — *Leave your home and go into the temporary dwelling*

(Sukkah 2a). And so we move out of our affluent homes into a place where there's almost nothing; a few wooden walls, a flimsy roof, some paper ornaments hanging from the ceiling. And even though you might spend money to beautify it, it's still nothing like your home. Your expensive chandelier and fancy dining room table are missing because you'll only be here for a short while.

That's why it's *kosher* with just two walls and a *tefach*. Two walls and a flimsy roof?! That's a very weak protection against the elements. The bamboo sticks won't keep you dry in a downpour and if a cold wind is blowing on *Sukkos* you'll need an overcoat. And even if it's not cold and rainy, but the people passing by won't give you much privacy there – the neighbors hear everything you say. At least in your home if you want to yell without embarrassing yourself you can close the windows. But in the *sukkah*? You can't act like an *ezrach*, like a permanent citizen, when you're in a place that has only two walls and a *tefach*. You can't expect too much in the way of privacy and protection when you're residing in your 'home' on *Sukkos*.

And that's exactly what we want! We want to remind ourselves that we're not so established after all and therefore for seven days we take up residence in a *diras ar'ai*; we sit in a flimsy *sukkah* and we drill into our heads that we're not as established as we imagined ourselves to be.

## *Part III. A Lifetime in the Sukkah*

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### **A Visitor's Guidebook**

And now we come to the subject of what is the result of this knowledge? What's expected to be the result of living in the *sukkah* and knowing that this is a flimsy world; that we are merely visitors making a temporary stopover?

The result is that we have to act like visitors! What does a visitor do? Let's say a business man comes to China. He doesn't

come there to mingle with the Chinese or to eat Chinese food. He's not going to get busy building a brick home and planting gardens. Maybe he will, but only if it will help him achieve his goal. Because he knows that he's there for one purpose – to take out as much money as he can from China! While he's visiting there that's his sole interest.

### **The Royal Shipwreck**

And that's the *marshal* that the *Chovos Halevavos* gives. He tells the story of a man who was shipwrecked and as he was swimming to the shore of an island he saw a committee standing there to welcome him. And as soon as he came up onto dry land, these islanders approached him and clothed him with royal robes and put a crown on his head. Then they all bowed down to him and escorted him with splendor to a palace in the middle of the island and sat him on a beautiful throne.

Now, this man didn't ask any questions. He was so amazed, so shocked – he didn't know what was taking place but he bided his time and made a plan to find out what this was all about. After a few days he began to look around at the people present in the palace to see if he could find someone with whom he could talk. He wanted somebody he could confide in, somebody that would be willing to help him make sense of what was taking place.

He looked around and he saw one man who seemed to be more prudent than the others; someone who seemed to be a very sensible man. So the new king made sure to show him signs of special regard – he gave him some gifts and some honors and he made sure to become friendly with the man.

### **Term Limits: The Ancient Version**

And then one day he took this man aside when nobody was listening and he said, "Tell me my friend, what's this all about? What's taking place here that they took a stranger like me and put me on the throne?"

So this man said, “Look; it’s a secret but because you showed friendship to me, I’m going to divulge it to you. Every year we choose a new king for our island. When the hurricane season comes, ships always wreck themselves on the rocks near the island and what we do is we take the first survivor who comes ashore and we make him king. That’s our system of running our affairs because we don’t want any king to be here too long – we don’t want our king to be too comfortable. And so, at the end of the year we take our erstwhile king off the throne – we don’t give him any warning; we drag him from the throne, strip him of his royal garments and put him naked in a little rowboat, a little box, and we push him out to sea again.”

### ***Emptying the Island***

Now, what was the result of this new information? When the new king heard this, he didn’t waste a second. He went into the export business. He got busy exporting as much gold and silver and diamonds from that island as he could. As much as he could he sent because he didn’t want to leave anything there; he knew that sooner or later he’d be back home and that whatever he shipped off the island during this year, that’s what he would be left with forever. And so, with secret messengers he got busy sending out all he could and he prepared for that day that he knew would finally come.

And come it did. One day, without a word of warning, the islanders came storming into the palace and they took him off the throne and escorted him to the beach; they picked him up by all fours and put him in a little wooden boat and they gave it a big push out into the sea. And he started paddling for his life! But he paddled happily – he knew where he had to go. He left with nothing but he was already well prepared.

### ***Emptying This World***

And so we’re learning now what our job is in this world – we have to go into the export business! We’re here to take out as much as we can.

Now, what to export, there's a lot to talk about – but the first step is to *know* that you're in the export business and to live with that knowledge; that's already a very valuable piece of information. Once you really believe that – if you have a friend who can tell you the truth like that king had, or maybe you'll take the lesson from the *sukkah* like you're supposed to – so you're already on your way; exactly what to export is only the details.

There's so much to export; *mitzvos* surely are valuables that you can take along with you. Thinking about Hashem, that's definitely something that will be waiting for you in the next world. *Torah u'ma'asim tovim*, that's clean cash that you should always be shipping out of this world. Or *tzedakah* that you give. If you give away charity, it's in *your* pocket and you'll take it along with you forever.

### **All For the Boss**

I once knew a Mr. Herman *zichrono l'vracha* from the Lower East Side. Now, Mr. Herman was one of the very few devoted *frum* Jews in the olden days of America; *b'leiv v'nefesh* he was devoted to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And he told me once that at the time of the Great Depression when he saw that his business was quickly failing and all his money was going lost, so he right away took a thousand dollars - in those days a thousand dollars was a small fortune - and he gave it away to *tzedakah* on the spot. He said, "Why should I lose that too? Why should I lose my chance at exporting more goods into the Next World?" He was a smart businessman, Mr. Herman, and he quickly exported another container out of this world.

Now, what to do for *this world* while you're still here - I'm not going to tell you right now what you should or shouldn't do. Should you beautify your home? Should you try to make money? The businessman in China has to sleep somewhere! He can't sleep on the street. He has to eat as well and keep himself healthy if he wants to succeed. And if he'll be there for a few years so he'll have his family with him and he'll have to provide for them as well. And that costs money. And therefore certainly you must live normally. But

you should keep in mind always this great principle that it's all part of the export business. Don't ever lose sight of the fact that you're only visiting here.

### **The Chofetz Chaim Visits Radin**

This story, you remember, was told here already but I'll repeat it. A visitor from America once came to see the Chofetz Chaim, *zichrono livracha*, at his home in Radin. And when he walked in he saw him sitting in a little room. There was no furniture there except a table of boards and a bench of boards. So he thought that maybe they were renovating the house inside, in the real house, and the Chofetz Chaim, in the meantime, was exiled to the empty room with makeshift furniture while they were preparing the house for him.

So he said, "Rebbe, where is the furniture?"

So the Chofetz Chaim said to the visitor, "And where is your furniture?"

So he said, "I'm only a tourist – I'm just a visitor here."

So the Chofetz Chaim said, "So am I."

That's how great men lived – they lived with the attitude that this world is only a temporary place. Of course, they lived in this world. They married and had families and lived in homes and made a *parnasa* and everything else that's needed in this world; but they understood what it was all about.

### **The Train You Won't Miss**

Let's say you're in Grand Central waiting for the train and you have a chance to do some business there. You can buy from one person and sell it to somebody else at the station. Why not? No reason why not. But you have to know that soon you'll be hearing a whistle and the conductor will shout, "All aboard." And you won't have a choice; you'll have to get on board. And so if you'll keep that in mind, that the train is coming sooner or later, so there's no reason

why you can't have a nice home as well. As long as you'll be able to hop aboard with a big amount of paper money or banknotes that you'll be able to cash in when you get to your destination, so you've accomplished!

So if you buy a beautiful home and you have a big garden around it, OK, I'm not saying you can't invest into beautifying your place. Why not? If you like garden work, agriculture, if you have a green thumb, why not? If you can paint on your own, or you can hire people to beautify your home, why not? Maybe why yes? You'll have to think that through. But whatever you decide, there's a condition that you always must keep before your mind's eye; that we're only tenants. And even though you have a deed and it's registered in City Hall, and you're painting your house, and fixing your garden, you must never forget that you're only a tenant here.

And that's the great lesson of the *sukkah*. It's reminding you not to get distracted by the permanence of this world. The *sukkah* is shouting at you: Remember always that העולם הזה רומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא - *This world is only a lobby leading you into the palace of the Next World*, and therefore התקן עצמך בפרוזדור - *prepare yourself in the lobby*, כרי שתיכנס לטרקלין - *in order that you should be able to enter the banquet hall*. That's *Olam Haboh!* That's what we're aiming for and therefore we won't let ourselves get distracted by this permanent world that is beckoning to us with two hands all the time.

### **You're Invited After 120**

Imagine a man who is fortunate enough to have been invited to a feast, to a celebration that the king is making in his luxurious palace. It's an honor to have been invited because it's only the select few who are privileged to enter the private ballroom of the king and revel in all of the delights that only the king is capable of providing.

And so, as this man walks through the hallway that leads to the ballroom, he is approached by a valet who offers to take his coat, and then a waiter carrying a tray of sweets is proffering to him the

opportunity to taste from the delicacies. And as he steps closer to the ballroom there is coffee and tea, all kinds of hot drinks. And this man begins to get lost in the pleasures of the *prozdor*. He's enjoying the delicious chocolates and he forgets that he's merely walking through a vestibule where he is supposed to be preparing himself. He should be preparing himself to see the king; he has to prepare a greeting, something to say to the king, and he should make sure his necktie is straight and that there are no stains on his suit. He should be concentrating on making sure that he is fit for his entrance into the ballroom where he will stand before the king and have the opportunity to delight in the presence of royalty and enjoy all of the kingly pleasures.

### ***The Tap On The Shoulder***

But this foolish man is getting distracted. Some small chocolates and a warm cup of tea are keeping him too busy for such preparations. And even when he passes by the mirror, and is reminded of his purpose in this hallway – to straighten himself up – he is distracted by the beauty of the mirror, the ornate designs and sparkling jewels. He's admiring the beauty of it all and getting lost in the beauty of the vestibule.

What do we do with such a fellow? We remind him! So as this guest is munching on his chocolate and sipping his tea and admiring the plush wall to wall carpeting, he is startled by the waiter who taps him on the shoulder, “Keep moving, sir.” And when he reaches for another sweet, the ‘mean’ waiter tells him that enough is enough. “Use the mirror to straighten your necktie, to fix your shirt, and move on. Keep moving; don't get distracted by the sweets in this hallway. Enjoy them, but keep moving along towards the ballroom.”

### ***The Waiter in the Sukkah***

And that waiter is the *sukkah*. For seven days the *sukkah* is tapping us on the shoulder and reminding us, “Don't forget that this world is a *diras ar'ai*; it's just a temporary and flimsy world that

won't be yours forever. In a few weeks the *sukkah* will be all gone; and in a hundred and twenty years your world will be gone too."

And the more we pay attention to the taps on the shoulder the the happier we live in this world because every second becomes more and more precious; we're accomplishing in the *diras ar'ai* of this world by preparing our station in the *diras keva* of *Olam Haboh*.

### Have A Wonderful Yom Tov

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#### Continued from back cover

of sinking *chalilah* to the level of the non-Jews. We don't maintain our spiritual level properly and that's how we become more susceptible, we are more easily influenced by the ways of the *umos ha'olam* and it could be someone will even succumb to the depths of *avodah zarah*, *chas v'shalom*.

It's important to find productive ways to utilize *chol hamoed* – even for children. There is a *tzadik* in Boro Park who every *chol hamoed* he gathers together many children and he takes them to *talmidei chachomim*, to *tzadikim*, to listen to them. It's a practice that should be copied by others – that's using *chol hamoed* properly. In your own house, you can make a *seudah* on *chol hamoed*. Besides for the regular *seudah*, you can make a party for the children too. Give them nosh. Sing songs with them. Talk to them about the Yomtiv. Whatever it is, you must find ways to use *chol hamoed* properly.

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך וזקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

**What does the gemara mean when it says כל המבזה את המועדות כאילו עובר עבודה זרה - “Anyone who disgraces the yomim tovim, it’s considered as if he worshipped idols”?**

A:

The *yomim tovim* are intended to rejuvenate the spirit in each of us. During the year, you have to go out into the world and often you have to mix with the gentiles – maybe you work in a non-Jewish environment and even if not, you’re influenced by the gentile environment anyhow. It’s difficult to maintain an elevated state of *ruchniyus* week after week if your mind is constantly surrounded with gentile ideas.

And now Yomtiv comes along and you have the chance now to recharge your batteries. We spend time on Yomtiv – on *chol hamoed* too – only with *frum* Jews and we’re expected to use that time to think over all of the great lessons that the Yomtiv is teaching us. We have to spend the minutes of *chol hamoed* filling up with *ruchniyus*, recharging our batteries.

Now, I know that it has become a *minhag* to take trips on *chol hamoed* and I don’t want to say that you shouldn’t do it. However, the truth is that *chol hamoed* wasn’t meant to be a vacation time. When we treat *chol hamoed* like that, when we treat it lightly, so we’re interrupting the recharging of our batteries, and that puts us at risk

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In honor of Motty W.