

## Daf Ditty Succah 18: Symbolism

ומודה רבי מאיר שאם יש בין נסר לנסר  
כמלא נסר שמניח פסל ביניהם וכשרה  
בשלמא למיד בין באמצע בין מן הצד בד'  
אמות משום הכי כשרה אלא למאן דאמר  
באמצע בארבעה אמאי כשרה אמר רב  
הונא בריה דרב יהושע הכא בסוכה דלא  
הויא אלא שמנה (6) מצומצמת עסקינן ויהיב  
נסר ופסל ונסר ופסל ונסר ופסל מהאי גיסא  
ונסר ופסל ונסר ופסל ונסר ופסל מהאי  
גיסא דהוה להו שני פסלין באמצע ואיכא  
הכשר סוכה באמצע (אמר אב"י א"ר  
שלשה בסוכה גדולה ומיעוטו בין בקנים בין  
בשפודין הוי מיעוט בסוכה קטנה בקנים  
הוי מיעוט בשפודין לא הוי מיעוט והני

ומודה רבי מאיר שאם יש בין נסר לנסר כמלא נסר — שמניח  
פסל ביניהם וכשרה.

And Rabbi Meir concedes that if there is between one board and another board a gap the complete width of a board, then one places fit roofing from the waste of the threshing floor and the winepress, and the *sukka* is fit.

בשלמא למאן דאמר בין באמצע בין מן הצד בארבע אמות —  
משום הכי כשרה. אלא למאן דאמר באמצע בארבעה, אמאי  
כשרה?

The Gemara clarifies: **Granted, according to the one who said: Both along the side and in the center a *sukka* is rendered unfit with a measure of four cubits of unfit roofing, it is due to that reason that the *sukka* under discussion is fit, as none of the boards is four cubits wide. However, according to the one who said that a *sukka* is rendered unfit with a measure of four handbreadths of unfit roofing in the center, why is the *sukka* fit?** Each board is capable on its own of rendering the *sukka* unfit.

אמר רב הונא בריה דרב יהושע: הכא בסופה דלא הויא אלא  
שמנה מצומצמות עסקינן, ויהיב נטר ופסל ונטר ופסל ונטר ופסל  
מהאי גיסא, ונטר ופסל ונטר ופסל ונטר ופסל מהאי גיסא,

**Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, said: Here, we are dealing with a *sukka* that is exactly eight cubits, i.e., forty-eight handbreadths, wide, and one began placing the roofing from the side. And he places a four-handbreadth board and then four handbreadths of waste, and another board and waste, and a board and waste, from this side, so that the total measure of roofing from that side is twenty-four handbreadths. And then a beam and waste, a beam and waste, and a beam and waste, from that side, so that the total measure of roofing from that side is twenty-four handbreadths.**

דהוּוּ לְהוּ שְׁנֵי פְסָלִין בְּאִמְצָע, וְאִיכָּא הַכְּשֵׁר סוּכָּה בְּאִמְצָע.

The result is that the *sukka* has two four-handbreadth stretches of waste in the middle of the *sukka*, totaling eight handbreadths. In that case, there is the minimum measure of fit roofing required for fitness of a *sukka* in the middle, and everyone agrees that the unfit roofing in the rest of the *sukka* cannot render it unfit. Since the unfit roofing measures less than four cubits on either side, the *sukka* is fit both according to the principle of curved wall and according to the opinion that unfit roofing renders the *sukka* unfit with four cubits.

## Summary

Rabbi Meir and Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, attempt to understand why a particular *sukka* is fit when it has more than four handbreadths of unfit roofing. They decide that because there is four by four handbreadths of fit roofing in the middle, the unfit roofing is invalidated.<sup>1</sup>

Abaye introduces ways that we can diminish the *sukka* that has a space of three handbreadths. He tells us to use the principle of *lavud*. The rabbis argue over whether *lavud* can account for a space in the middle of a *sukka*. Both rabbis look to halachot regarding carrying in an alleyway to provide rationale for their positions. Halacha related to ritual impurity and corpses and sky lights is invoked to further discuss the use of the principle of *lavud*.

Rabbi Yehuda bar Elai teaches that a house breached and then roofed over is a fit *sukka*. Rabbi Yishmael son of Rabbi Yossef says to him, "my teacher, explain." The reply: "This is how my father explained it:" Four cubits between the wall and the breach make the *sukka* fit; less than four cubits leave the *sukka* unfit. Rabbi Yehuda bar Elai teaches us more, this time about fish. *Abramis* (small, mullet-like fish) are permitted. Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosef, says again, "My teacher, explain." He says, "this is how my father explained it: *abramis* from water with kosher

<sup>1</sup> <https://dafyomibeginner.blogspot.com/2014/02/>

fish are permitted; those found with unkosher fish are forbidden. The rabbis then share some interesting, mostly antiquated ideas about why fish swim in different places.

The amorim disagree about whether or not a sukka is fit if it is a roofed portico without posts on the open side. Abaye believe that the roof is fit because the walls extend and seal. Rava says that the sukka is unfit because the walls do not extend and seal. Abaye concedes, agreeing that the walls do not extend and seal in this particular circumstance. Apparently the structure must be permanent and at least three walls must be standing so that people cannot inadvertently walk through the structure.

The Gemara compares this argument between Abaye and Rava regarding whether or not the walls descend and seal with that of Rav and Shmuel regarding a roofed portico. Rav and Shmuel argue about whether or not the roof descends and seals, creating a private domain surrounded by partitions. These definitions determine the functioning of people in and around those places.

Today's learning leads me to imagine the rabbis creating these rules. What a bizarre set of halachot! Is this religion so much different than other religions with odd obligations and customs? Although the rabbis identify multiple proofs for their arguments, it is tough to imagine the rabbis creating more seemingly arbitrary guidelines on how to live.

**Rav Avrohom Adler** writes:<sup>2</sup>

A Sukkah that measures exactly eight amos and one alternates between boards that are four tefachim wide and valid s'chach that is four tefachim wide, the Sukkah is valid. This is even according to the opinion that maintains that boards that are four tefachim wide invalidate a Sukkah. The reasoning for this ruling is because the Sukkah will have eight contiguous tefachim of valid s'chach. and by applying the principle of *dofen akumah*, the Sukkah will be valid.

The Gemara cites a dispute regarding a Sukkah that has less than three tefachim of open area in the middle of the Sukkah. One opinion maintains that the principle of *lavud* can only be applied to the side of the Sukkah but will not apply to the middle of the Sukkah. The Gemara cites proofs to both opinions from laws regarding Eruvin and tumah and these proofs are ultimately refuted.

The Gemara cites a dispute between Rav and Shmuel regarding a pavilion in a valley and the Gemara deliberates if the pavilion is analogous to the debate cited earlier between Abaye and Rava. Rav maintains that one is allowed to carry on Shabbos inside the pavilion because we apply the principle of *pi tikrah yoreid vesoseim*, 'the edge of the roof extends downwards and seals.' Shmuel disagrees and rules that one is only permitted to carry within his four amos. The Gemara concludes that the cases are not parallel because Rav would apply this principle only regarding the pavilion where the walls were constructed for the pavilion. Regarding the porch, however, the walls descending from the roof were intended for the porch and not for the Sukkah.

The Mishna on Daf 17 ruled that if the s'chach is distanced three tefachim or more from the walls. the Sukkah is invalid. If there is invalid s'chach, the Sukkah is valid, as long as the invalid s'chach

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://dafnotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Sukkah\\_18.pdf](http://dafnotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Sukkah_18.pdf)

is not more than four amos away from the walls. Abaye maintains that a wall can be created by applying the principle of pi tikrah yoreid vesoseim, 'the edge of the roof extends downwards and seals.' Thus, Abaye must interpret the Mishna to be referring to a case where one made the s'chach level with the roof of the porch. This would prevent the edge of the roof from being seen and therefore the roof's edge cannot be extended downward.

The Mishna cites a dispute regarding the validity of a Sukkah when one places a row of sticks on the ground and leans the other end against a wall. One opinion maintains that the Sukkah is invalid because there is no roof and the other opinion maintains that such a Sukkah is valid. . The Gemara cites instances where such a Sukkah would be valid even according to the opinion that invalidates such a Sukkah.

There is a dispute in the Mishna if one can use mats for s'chach. There are some mats that are susceptible to tumah and are thus unfit for use as s'chach. The Gemara elaborates regarding the distinctions between a large mat which is usually intended for covering a Sukkah and a small mat that is intended for sleeping purposes. The Gemara also discusses what the halacha would be if one did not have any specific intention regarding the mat.

### **Iyunim-Hashkafah Sukkah is a reward**

The Mishnah cites an incident regarding Tevi, the Canaanite slave of Rabban Gamliel, who would sleep under the bed in a Sukkah. Rabban Gamliel commented to the Chachamim that Tevi was a Torah scholar and he knew that a Canaanite slave is not obligated to dwell in a Sukkah, and therefore Tevi slept under the bed. One must wonder why if Tevi was exempt from sleeping in a Sukkah, he found it necessary to sleep under the bed inside the Sukkah. Tosfos, quoting the Yerushalmi, writes that Tevi slept under the bed to leave room for the Chachamim who were in the Sukkah and they were obligated to dwell in the Sukkah. The reason Tevi did not dwell outside the Sukkah is because Tevi sought to hear words of Torah from the Chachamim. The Medrash Tanchumah states that in the merit of Avraham offering the angels who visited him to recline under the tree, his descendants merited the mitzvah of Sukkah.

The Gemara in Avodah Zara states that in the future when the gentiles request from HaShem that he offer them the Torah, HaShem will offer them the mitzvah of Sukkah, but when it will be too hot, the gentiles will kick the Sukkah and leave. The words of the Gemara and the Medrash offer us a profound lesson in mitzvah observance.

Although one may find it difficult to perform a mitzvah, one can learn from Tevi, who was not obligated in mitzvos that were dependent on time, yet he still dwelled in the Sukkah. Nonetheless, he was not attempting to perform the mitzvah properly. Rather, Tevi sought to hear words of Torah from the Chachamim. In the future, the gentiles will claim that they desire to come close to HaShem, but when HaShem offers them a simple mitzvah to perform, they quickly lose interest because of the difficulty involved.

This is thus the meaning of the Medrash Tanchumah. Avraham was confined to his tent because of his recent circumcision, yet when he saw wayfarers, albeit pagans, Avraham still sought them out and invited them to recline under the tree. When HaShem saw that Avraham was willing to persevere even at a time when he was exempt from hosting guests, HaShem rewarded Avraham that his descendants would merit the mitzvah of Sukkah, where one can dwell in a Sukkah and engage in Torah study.

**Daf Shevui** writes:<sup>3</sup>

Today brings us to the exciting conclusion of the debate concerning how much invalid skhakh disqualifies a sukkah when placed in the middle of the sukkah.

In this baraita R. Meir and R. Judah disagree about whether one can use planks that are four handbreadths wide. While both agree that one couldn't use such planks as skhakh for the whole sukkah, R. Meir (and all the more so R. Judah) allows one to use some planks as skhakh, as long as one puts valid skhakh equal to the size of the invalid skhakh in between each plank.

Clearly, this baraita follows the opinion of the amoraim who hold that in the middle of the sukkah invalid skhakh needs to be four cubits to invalidate the whole sukkah. For if one plank of four handbreadths would invalidate the skhakh, how would putting valid skhakh between it and the next four handbreadth plank help matters?

R. Huna finds a scenario where four handbreadths of invalid skhakh do invalidate the sukkah, but there is still a valid sukkah created. The sukkah is exactly eight cubits in width. And he puts a plank on both sides and then works inward, alternating valid skhakh with invalid planks. In the middle there will be two sections of valid skhakh, each four handbreadths in width. This is sufficient to form a valid sukkah. The walls count because the invalid skhakh is only on the side. If the sukkah were any larger, then you wouldn't have a valid patch in the middle and it would be invalid.

Although I don't usually get in to halakhic matters in these pages, since you spent so long invested in learning this material, I will tell you that the halakhah follows the opinion that four handbreadths invalidates even in the middle of the sukkah. So be careful when you make your sukkah.

We continue to discuss how large a gap of air invalidates a sukkah.

Abaye holds that if one wants to diminish a gap in a sukkah there is a difference between a large and a small sukkah. A three handbreadth gap in a large sukkah can be diminished even with invalid skhakh because once he diminishes the gap, there will no longer be a three handbreadth gap of air. However, if the sukkah is small he can diminish it with sticks, which are valid as skhakh. Since a less than three handbreadth gap is negligible (lavud), the sukkah is valid. However, if he does so with spits, which are not valid skhakh, the sukkah is not valid, even though there isn't a minimum measure of air space or a minimum measure of invalid skhakh. Since of the seven handbreadths of the sukkah (the minimum measure of a sukkah) more than three aren't valid (either air or spits) there isn't sufficient skhakh to validate the sukkah.

The Talmud limits Abaye's statement to a case of a gap on the side of the skhakh. If there is an air gap of less than three handbreadths on the side of the sukkah, the sukkah remains valid for we can

---

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.sefaria.org/Sukkah.18a.1?lang=bi&p2=Daf\\_Shevui\\_to\\_Sukkah.18a.1-9&lang2=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Sukkah.18a.1?lang=bi&p2=Daf_Shevui_to_Sukkah.18a.1-9&lang2=bi)

invoke the rule of “lavud.” However, when it comes to such a gap in the middle of the sukkah, there is a dispute between two amoraim. One holds that the rule applies in the middle as well. The other holds that it does not.

The amora (we don’t know which one) who holds that the rule of lavud applies in the middle derives this from a baraita. The baraita is not discussing a sukkah but rather the beams laid across an entrance to an alleyway on Shabbat. These beams are part of the eruv system and allow one to carry from one courtyard to another on Shabbat. One thing that needs to be done is to lay a beam across the alleyway entrance. The baraita teaches that as long as there is not a gap of three handbreadths between the beam and the wall or between one beam and the other, the system works. This is even true if the gap is in the middle, one beam coming from one side and the other beam coming from the other side. Thus the rule of “lavud” can be applied even in the middle.

The amora who holds that the rule of lavud is not invoked in the middle rejects the proof from the baraita because all of the rules of eruvin, including the beam that allows one to carry from one alleyway to another, are only “derabanan”—of rabbinic origin.

## **A SUKAH WITH ALTERNATING VALID AND INVALID SECHACH**

**Rav Mordechai Kornfeld** writes:<sup>4</sup>

The Beraisa states that according to both Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Meir, a Sukah that was covered with wooden boards that are each four Tefachim wide is invalid. Rabbi Meir says that the Sukah is invalid even when the boards are only three Tefachim wide. Rabbi Meir agrees, however, that when one places an equal width of valid Sechach between each board, the Sukah is valid.

The Gemara asks that this Beraisa contradicts the view of Shmuel. Shmuel rules that the amount of invalid Sechach that disqualifies a Sukah when placed in the middle of the roof (as opposed to at the sides) is four Tefachim. According to Shmuel, why does the Beraisa say that the Sukah is valid in the case of boards that are four Tefachim wide but are separated by strips of valid Sechach? The very presence of the four-Tefach-wide boards should invalidate the Sukah.

The Gemara answers that the Beraisa refers to a case of a Sukah which is exactly eight Amos long, on which one placed alternating strips of invalid and valid Sechach: He first placed a four-Tefach-wide board (invalid Sechach) atop the Sukah at each of the two far sides, followed by four Tefachim of valid Sechach, next to which he placed another strip of invalid Sechach, and so on until he reached the center. In the center of the Sukah's roof, he ended up with two pieces of valid Sechach with a total width of eight Tefachim. The Sukah is valid in this case because the three strips of invalid Sechach on each side are disregarded due to the principle of "Dofen Akumah" (which works for a width of up to 24 Tefachim) and eight Tefachim of valid Sechach are left in the middle.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.dafyomi.co.il/sukah/insites/su-dt-018.htm>

The Gemara concludes that this mechanism works only in the case of a Sukah which is *exactly* eight Amos, or 48 Tefachim, wide. Each half of the Sukah (24 Tefachim of its width) is covered by three pairs of alternating invalid and valid strips of Sechach, each of which is four Tefachim wide.

If the Gemara's goal is to find a case of a Sukah with alternating strips of invalid and valid Sechach such that the final two (valid) strips end up next to each other in the center, then why does the Gemara say that there must be *three* sets of invalid and valid strips?

It is obvious that if there would be four sets, the Sukah would not be valid, because the valid strips of Sechach in the center would be too far away from the walls of the Sukah (28 Tefachim) for "Dofen Akumah" to work. Similarly, the Beraisa cannot be discussing a case in which there is only one set of invalid and valid Sechach on each side of the Sukah, because in such a case no two boards would have between them "a single board's width of valid Sechach," the Beraisa's description of how to validate the Sukah.

Why, though, does the Gemara not say that the Beraisa refers to a case in which there are *two* sets of invalid and valid Sechach? (Each set of two strips is eight Tefachim wide, and thus if two sets cover each half of the Sukah's width, then the Sukah's total width is 32 Tefachim.) In such a case, "Dofen Akumah" still applies, and the eight Tefachim of valid Sechach in the center should be considered a full-fledged Sukah. Why does the Gemara insist that the Beraisa refers only to a Sukah that is 48 Tefachim (eight Amos) wide? <sup>5</sup>

In order to answer this question, we first must ask another question. Why does the Gemara say that the Beraisa is discussing a Sukah which is "exactly" eight Amos (48 Tefachim) wide, and, as Rashi explains, "not more and not less"? The Sukah could also be one Tefach *less* than eight Amos ( $7\frac{5}{6}$  Amos, or 47 Tefachim) and still be valid: Since one starts to cover the Sukah with alternating Sechach by placing a four-Tefach strip of invalid Sechach at each side of the Sukah, the missing Tefach will be lost from the valid Sechach at the center. Consequently, after "Dofen Akumah" is applied, the Sukah will have only seven Tefachim of valid Sechach, but we have learned that a Sukah with seven Tefachim of Sechach is a valid Sukah!

(One cannot answer that the Gemara does not mention a Sukah with a width of 47 Tefachim because in such a case the width of the valid Sechach in the center (seven Tefachim) does not equal the width of the invalid Sechach on either side (each of which is four Tefachim), as the Beraisa stipulates. This answer is not valid, because even in the case of a 48-Tefach-wide Sukah, the amount of valid Sechach in the center (eight Tefachim) is not equal to the amount of invalid Sechach at its sides.)

What is the Gemara's intention when it limits the case to a Sukah that is *exactly* eight Amos wide? The answer is as follows. Rashi (end of 17b, DH u'Modeh Rabbi Meir) explains that when the Beraisa says, "Rebbi Meir agrees that the Sukah is valid if there is an equal width of valid Sechach

---

<sup>5</sup> The ARUCH LA'NER suggests that the reason why the Gemara does not say that the Beraisa is discussing a Sukah that is 32 Tefachim wide is because 32 Tefachim is not a round number of Amos ( $32\text{ Tefachim} = 5\frac{1}{3}\text{ Amos}$ , or 5 Amos and 2 Tefachim). This answer, however, is rather forced.

between each board," the Beraisa means that Rebbi Meir says the Sukah is valid "also" when the boards are four Tefachim wide. That is, Rebbi Meir refers to boards of *both* widths -- boards of four Tefachim and boards of three Tefachim. Accordingly, whatever Sukah he permits with boards of four Tefachim he must also permit with boards of three Tefachim.

If the Sukah is one Tefach less than eight Amos (47 Tefachim instead of 48 Tefachim), it is true that it will be a valid Sukah when the boards are four Tefachim wide. However, it will *not* be a valid Sukah when the boards are *three* Tefachim wide. When each board is three Tefachim wide, how many sets of invalid and valid Sechach will fit on each side of the roof of a 47-Tefach-wide Sukah? Starting from the edge at each side, there will be three pairs of invalid and valid strips of three Tefachim (a total of 18 Tefachim), plus another invalid board of three Tefachim, plus valid Sechach of 2 1/2 Tefachim (for a total of 23 1/2 on each side). Accordingly, some of the valid Sechach is lost, but not any of the invalid Sechach, and thus a majority of invalid Sechach (six Tefachim) is left around the valid Sechach (five Tefachim), which disqualifies the Sukah. The principle of "Dofen Akumah" is unable to cut out the invalid Sechach (as it does in the case of four-Tefach-wide boards), because there are only five (and not seven) Tefachim of valid Sechach in the middle.

Therefore, the Gemara says that the Sukah must be exactly 48 Tefachim wide. Only in such a case does each side have 24 Tefachim which contain four full sets of invalid and valid Sechach, and enough valid Sechach to make the Sukah acceptable (as the Mishnah and Gemara explain on 15a). For the same reason, the Beraisa cannot be discussing a Sukah that is 32 Tefachim wide. Although such a Sukah indeed would be valid with alternating strips of invalid and valid Sechach that are four Tefachim wide, it would not be valid with strips of Sechach that are only three Tefachim wide. In such a case, each half of the Sukah would be 16 Tefachim wide, which would contain two sets of invalid and valid Sechach (each set is six Tefachim wide), plus one invalid board (three Tefachim), plus one Tefach of valid Sechach. The Sukah would have a total of two Tefachim of valid Sechach in the middle, leaving it with a majority of invalid Sechach and without the minimum Shi'ur of a valid Sukah in the middle.

### **CAN "PI TIKRAH" OF THE SECHACH FORM A THIRD WALL**

Rava and Abaye argue whether a Sukah can be formed with the principle of "Pi Tikrah Yored v'Sosem." Rava says that a Sukah that has Halachic walls due to "Pi Tikrah" is invalid. Abaye says that such a Sukah is valid.

Rava challenges Abaye's opinion from the case of a Sukah which has only two parallel walls. In such a case, Abaye should rule that the Sukah is valid, because the edge of the beam ("Pi Tikrah") above one of the open sides between the two walls should "descend" and form the third wall ("Yored v'Sosem"). Rashi explains that Rava's question is that the edge of the Sechach that protrudes over the third side of the Sukah should be considered a "Pi Tikrah." (When the Sechach rests on an Achsadrah, the Sechach cannot be a "Pi Tikrah" because it cannot be seen from within the structure, but when it is alone on the top of a Sukah it should be a "Pi Tikrah.")

Abaye answers that in the case of two parallel walls, "Pi Tikrah Yored v'Sosem" cannot function, because people constantly walk through the area, and it is considered like a Mavoy Mefulash.

What is Rava's question on Abaye in the first place? Rava himself (19a) says that he follows the view of Rav, who says that "Pi Tikrah" normally *does* work to enclose the area inside of an Achsadrah (for example, to permit one to carry in it on Shabbos). He does not apply "Pi Tikrah" in the case of a Sukah adjacent to an Achsadrah because the beams of the Achsadrah are made only to serve what is *inside* (the porch that they cover), but not to serve what is *outside* (such as the Sukah adjacent to the Achsadrah). The Sechach on the Sukah, though, certainly was made to serve the *inside* of the Sukah, and thus even Rava should agree that "Pi Tikrah" works in such a case. Why, then, does Rava ask this question on Abaye? It is also a question on his own opinion. (PNEI YEHOSHUA)

(a) The PNEI YEHOSHUA answers that Rava knew the answer that Abaye would give him (that such a Sukah is similar to a Mavoy Mefulash and thus "Pi Tikrah" does not apply). Since Rava knew the answer, the question did not bother him according to his own opinion.

If, however, he knew the answer to the question, then why did he pose the question to Abaye? Rava reasoned that Abaye, who rules leniently and says that "Pi Tikrah" works even to make a partition to enclose what is outside of the beam, also would rule leniently in the case of a Mavoy Mefulash and say that "Pi Tikrah" works there as well. Since Abaye maintains that "Pi Tikrah" is like a solid wall (and is not based on a Halachah l'Moshe mi'Sinai, which has certain limitations and prerequisites; see Rashi 19a, DH d'Mechitzos), it should be able to form a wall even where people frequently tread.

The Gemara answers that Abaye differentiates between partitions that are made to enclose what is inside of them (in which case "Pi Tikrah" works even to enclose what is outside of the partition), and partitions through which people walk (in which case "Pi Tikrah" does not work).<sup>6</sup>

(b) TOSFOS (DH Sikech), the RAN, and the RITVA understand that the question of Rava is not that the edge of the Sechach should be "Yored v'Sosem" to make a third wall. Sechach cannot be "Yored v'Sosem," because it is placed on the Sukah only as a temporary ("Arai") roof. Rather, Rava's question is that the side of the beam of an Achsadrah which is adjacent to the open side between the parallel walls should be "Yored v'Sosem" to form the third wall, according to Abaye. According to Rava's own opinion, the Achsadrah cannot be "Yored v'Sosem" to enclose the Sukah which stands outside of the Achsadrah.

If this is Rava's question, then why indeed should "Pi Tikrah" *not* work in such a case according to Abaye? Abaye certainly should maintain that it works in such a case, because Abaye himself states that "Pi Tikrah" works to make the beam of an Achsadrah into a wall even when there are *no* other walls to the Sukah.

The answer is that according to these Rishonim, "Pi Tikrah" of an Achsadrah can form only one wall of the Sukah, but it cannot form two walls (see TOSFOS DH Achsadrah). The case in which Rava and Abaye argue is a case of an Achsadrah that has two adjacent (perpendicular) walls, and in order to make a Sukah one needs to make only the third wall. Rava asks that according to Abaye, even if the two walls are opposite each other (parallel) and not adjacent, the beam of the Achsadrah should work through "Pi Tikrah" to make the third wall (as Tosfos explains in DH Sikech).

---

<sup>6</sup> See TOSFOS to Zevachim 77b, DH Odu Li, who applies a similar line of reasoning.

The **RITVA** adds that according to this interpretation, Rava's question on Abaye is understandable even according to the second version of their dispute (on 19a). According to that version, Abaye and Rava argue about the case of an Achsadrah that has Petzimin (pillars beneath the beams). In that case, Abaye says that "Pi Tikrah" works to enclose the third wall, while Rava says that it does not work. When there are no Petzimin, they agree that "Pi Tikrah" does not work to enclose it.

According to Rashi's explanation of "Petzimin," the argument between Rava and Abaye is unrelated to "Pi Tikrah." The Petzimin are pillars that are within three Tefachim of each other, and Rava and Abaye argue about the application of the principle of "Lavud." In such a case, Petzimin certainly are able to enclose the third wall of a Sukah which has only two parallel walls. Accordingly, this version of the dispute maintains that Rava never asked his question on Abaye's opinion.

However, the Ritva points out that according to Tosfos, Rava *could* have asked this question on Abaye's opinion, even according to the second version of the dispute. According to Tosfos and the other Rishonim, Petzimin are not pillars that are within three Tefachim of each other, but rather they are posts at the end of each of the parallel walls of a Sukah. If the parallel walls are set next to an Achsadrah (with a beam that crosses from one wall to the other, and with Petzimin below the beam), then Abaye says that since there are Petzimin, "Pi Tikrah" *in the presence of Petzimin* works to close the additional, third wall. Rava asks Abaye that if "Pi Tikrah" works when there are Petzimin, then it should also work when there are no Petzimin, but merely two parallel walls adjacent to an Achsadrah. Abaye answers that the normal rule of "Pi Tikrah" cannot apply here because the area is Mefulash, open on both ends with people passing through. Only in the presence of Petzimin is "Pi Tikrah" able to form the third wall.

(In fact, this also explains why Rava, in the first version of the dispute, agrees that "Pi Tikrah" works only where there are Petzimin: in the presence of Petzimin, the roof of the Achsadrah certainly forms a "Pi Tikrah" even though it is made to serve the inside of the Achsadrah. (The wall is not formed through "Lavud" of the Petzimin.) Although the Gemara later (19a) uses the word "Lavud" with regard to the Petzimin, it uses the word there figuratively to mean that the wall becomes "solid." The way that the wall is formed, however, is not by way of the principle of "Lavud" but by way of "Pi Tikrah," because the Petzimin are at a distance of more than three Tefachim from each other.)

(c) **RABEINU CHANANEL** and **SHITAS RIVAV** (on the Rif) appear to have an entirely different approach to the Sugya. They explain that even in the case of an Achsadrah adjacent to a Sukah, it is the Pi Tikrah of the *Sechach* that is "Yored v'Sosem." The walls of the homes around the Achsadrah, and the "Pi Tikrah" of the Achsadrah, cannot enclose the Sukah (even according to Abaye), because they are made to serve what is inside of them, and not the Sukah that is outside of them. Only when combined with "Pi Tikrah" of the Sukah do such walls suffice, according to Abaye. Rava, on the other hand, maintains that even with "Pi Tikrah" such walls cannot be used. (However, in the presence of Petzimin -- that is, poles at the four corners of the Sukah that are not part of adjacent houses and therefore are considered part of the Sukah -- even Rava allows "Pi Tikrah" to enclose the Sukah.)

Accordingly, Rava's question on Abaye is that if "Pi Tikrah" of the Sechach works, then it should enclose the Sukah even when it is not adjacent to an Achsadrah, such as in the case of a normal Sukah whose third wall has collapsed. Abaye answers that "Pi Tikrah" alone does not suffice to form the walls of a Sukah when it is not near an Achsadrah (that is, when it is not surrounded by walls of other houses), since it is similar to a Mavoy Mefulash. (This appears to be the intention of Rabeinu Chananel.

**Steinzaltz (OBM)** writes:<sup>7</sup>

The Mishnah (17a) taught that if the roof of a house fell in, the empty area can be filled with *sechach* and will be a kosher *sukkah* if the distance between the walls of the house and the *sechach* is less than four *amot* (based on the concept of *dofen akuma* as discussed on yesterday's <sup>daf</sup>, or page).

Our Gemara relates that when this *halakha* was presented by Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai, he simply taught "a house whose roof fell in can have *sechach* placed on it and it will be a kosher *sukkah*." Upon hearing this teaching, Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yossi cried out "Rabbi, clarify your statement! For my father taught that this is only true if the distance from the walls to the *sechach* is less than four *amot*. If there are more than four *amot* between them, the *sukkah* will be invalid."

This story is followed in the Gemara by a second, similar one. In this story Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai taught that *avroma* – a type of fish commonly found in the Nile – can be eaten. Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yossi cried out "Rabbi, clarify your statement! For my father taught that this is only true in specific places, but in other places the fish is forbidden." Rashi explains that in some places, *shertzim* – small non-kosher worms or other creatures – thrive and they cannot be separated from the fish, but in other places there are no such *shertzim*.

Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger, in his *Aruch la-Ner*, asks why, in fact, Rabbi Yehuda did not fully explain his statements. He suggests that with regard to the *avroma*, Rabbi Yehuda may simply have been relating the situation in the place where he lived, where *shertzim* were not found. With regard to the case of *sukkah*, this may be connected with Rabbi Yehuda's opinion that a normal house is up to eight *amot* in size. Thus, in order for a *sukkah* that is large enough to be the appropriate size and yet fit under the fallen roof, there cannot possibly be more than four *amot* between the walls of the house and the *sechach*.

**Mark Kerzner** writes:<sup>8</sup>

If one does not have the required walls in the *sukkah*, there can still be a possibility to make it valid. We can apply the principle of "the edge of the roof makes a wall," or more literally "the edge of the roof comes down and closes the opening."

---

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ou.org/life/torah/masechet\\_sukkah1319/](https://www.ou.org/life/torah/masechet_sukkah1319/)

<sup>8</sup> <https://talmudilluminated.com/sukkah/sukkah18.html>

Imagine that one has suspended his sukkah roof ("s'chach") in a courtyard surrounded by porches. It has no walls. If the porches are wider than four steps (amot) each, we have just declared such sukkah invalid . However, Abaye argues that the edge of the roof of each porch makes a wall for our sukkah!

How can Abaye argue with the clear-cut rule above? - He tells us that we misunderstood the situation: there the roof of the sukkah was flush with the roof of the porch. But if they are at different heights, we can extend the edge of the roof of the porch and imagine it being the wall of the sukkah.

Earlier in Eruvin we had a similar disagreement concerning a pavilion - does its roof's edge come down and make a wall (which would permit carrying in it on Shabbat). Perhaps Rav, who said that it does, lends support to Abaye in this case? - No, perhaps he does not: in the case of the pavilion its own roof could serve as its wall, but here in the case of sukkah, we want to use the roofs of the porches - maybe here even Rav would not say that it is valid.

**Rabbi Elliot Goldberg** writes:<sup>9</sup>

*Today: More smashed houses converted into sukkahs, plus fish! Stay tuned.*

**Rabbi Yehuda bar Elai taught: A house that was breached and one roofed over it is a fit sukkah.**

Rabbi Yishmael, a student of Rabbi Yehuda bar Elai, is surprised by this teaching. Rabbi Yishmael knows what we read in a mishnah yesterday: that the fitness of such a sukkah is dependent upon the distance between the walls and the breach. If the distance is less than four cubits (about six feet), the sukkah is fit; if it is greater — meaning there is a large expanse of the original roof — the sukkah is unfit.

Rabbi Yishmael now has a quandary: His teacher has issued a statement that contradicts the mishnah. It would not be out of line for him to object and cite the mishnah. As we have seen, many talmudic discussions are constructed around these kinds of challenges. But rather than objecting, Rabbi Yishmael takes a gentler tact:

**My teacher, explain your opinion.**

In response, Rabbi Yehuda bar Elai does indeed clarify:

---

9

**This is how my father explained it: If the ceiling between the wall and the breach is four cubits long, the sukkah is unfit. If it is less than four cubits, the sukkah is fit.**

Given a chance to explain his position, Rabbi Yehuda reveals that he is aware of the stipulation in the mishnah that limits his original statement and agrees with it. His original statement was incomplete (or perhaps imprecise), but not wrong.

Following this exchange, the Gemara brings a second conversation between Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Yishmael concerning the permissibility of a particular kind of fish and it follows the same pattern:

**Rabbi Yehuda bar Elai taught: With regard to the abramis fish, it is permitted to eat it.**

Again, Rabbi Yishmael is surprised to hear his teacher's ruling. The nets used to catch abramis fish typically caught other similar fish which are not kosher and because it was hard to distinguish the abramis fish from the others, the rabbis found it safest to forbid the abramis fish altogether.

Here too, instead of outright objecting, Rabbi Yishmael responds: **My teacher, explain your opinion.**

And Rabbi Yehuda bar Elai responds:

**This is how my father explained it: The abramis found in the rivers where there are also non-kosher fish is prohibited; however, the abramis where there are no non-kosher fish is permitted.**

Rabbi Yehuda explains that his original statement, permitting a fish that is forbidden, applies only in limited circumstances where the original concern — accidentally eating non-kosher fish — doesn't apply. By asking for clarification, Rabbi Yishmael once again gives Rabbi Yehuda the opportunity to explain his position and demonstrate that it does not contradict the established law.

Much of the time, talmudic discourse is constructed out of objections and responses, pitting one rabbinic position (and personality) against another. On today's daf, we see a much more peaceful and cooperative, even loving approach taken by a student who believes his teacher has made an error. I wonder what the Talmud, and our world, would look like if Rabbi Yishmael's approach was adopted more often.

**Rabbi Johnny Solomon** writes:<sup>10</sup>

Today's daf (Sukkah 18a) contains two teachings of Rabbi Yehuda bar Elai which seem totally unrelated - other than the fact that they use similar language.

---

<sup>10</sup> [www.rabbijohnnysolomon.com](http://www.rabbijohnnysolomon.com)

In terms of the first, we are told that, ‘Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai taught: “Where the roof of a house was breached and s’chach was placed over the opening, it is kosher”. Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yossi said to him, “Teacher, please explain more!” to which Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai responded, “This is how my father explained it: ‘If [the gap between the breach with the s’chach and the wall of the house] is more than four amot, it is invalid, whereas if it is less than four amot, it is kosher.’”

Whereas in terms of the second we are told that, ‘Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai taught: “The Avruma fish is permitted [notwithstanding the fact that it is hard to distinguish between this and other non-kosher fish]”. Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yossi said to him, “Teacher, please explain more!” to which Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai responded, “This is what my father said, ‘If [Avruma fish are caught] in a particular part of a river [where similar looking non-kosher fish reside] it is forbidden, whereas [Avruma] from another location in a river are permitted.’”

Clearly, both teachings employ a similar literary structure, but beyond this, what is the connection between the kashrut of a sukkah and where fish is caught?

To explain, we should take a moment to consider the many details of the sukkah and the fact that while – as I explained in my commentary on yesterday’s daf – the laws of Sukkah involve a broad range of halachic ‘compromises’ where we imagine walls both bending and stretching, nevertheless such compromises are only possible within a certain distance (i.e. 4 amot) between a wall and the s’chach. What this means is that notwithstanding these compromises, there are still a number of absolutes in terms of where a person needs to be located, where the s’chach is, and where the walls are which are critical to validating or invalidating the sukkah experience.

Upon reflecting on all these rules, a person may get exasperated about why location matters so much and why a small change in where a person, a wall, or the s’chach is makes all the difference in terms of validating or invalidating the sukkah experience. In response to this, we are told about fish, and how some fish are kosher and some are not, and how different currents in different locations enable the flow of different fish. And having understood this, we can then understand the laws of sukkah which, on a spiritual level, is all about tapping into the flow of the *‘tziluta dim’he-manuta’* – the protective shade of faith, as represented by the s’chach (see Zohar Emor 103a).

Finally, it should be pointed out that our Sages (see Bava Batra 75a) speak of a time at the end of days when ‘the Holy One, Blessed be He, will make a sukkah for the righteous from the hide of the Leviathan’ (i.e. a huge fish). Significantly, while some understand this literally, many understand this metaphorically. But what could this mean?

Based on what we have explained above, I would like to suggest that it means that the ultimate spiritual reality is when we are fully tapped into the flow of the entire universe, such that what we physically do is representative of what we spiritually experience – at which time we will truly understand the meaning behind every detail of Jewish law and comprehend how each enables us to exist beneath the *‘tziluta dim’he-manuta’* - the protective shade of faith.



## Basic Requirements of S'chach<sup>11</sup>

---

1. There are three conditions for Schach to be valid. It must be made from a material that grows from the ground, is detached from the ground, and is impervious to impurity (see further for examples).<sup>[2]</sup> All of these examples are biblical invalidations.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Grow from the Ground

1. In order for Schach to be kosher it must grow from the ground.<sup>[4]</sup>
2. Metal, dirt, and animal hides are unfit for S'chach as they do not grow from the ground.<sup>[5]</sup>
3. Nylon or plastic curtains are not kosher for sechach because they do not grow from the ground.<sup>[6]</sup> Neither is glass for the same reason.<sup>[7]</sup>
4. Fresh plants that will dry up and fall down in the middle of Sukkot are unfit even for the beginning of Sukkot.<sup>[8]</sup> Similarly, if the plants cover a majority while they are fresh and they will dry up in the middle of Sukkot and cover a minority of the Sukkah that is also an issue even for the beginning of Sukkot.<sup>[9]</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> [https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Materials\\_to\\_use\\_for\\_S%27chach](https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Materials_to_use_for_S%27chach)

## Completely Changed Form,

1. Material that is grown from the ground but is completely changed from its original form is unfit. <sup>[10]</sup> For example, paper and cardboard are unfit for Schach. <sup>[11]</sup> This is a rabbinic invalidation. <sup>[12]</sup> One may however use paper for decorating the sechach. <sup>[13]</sup>
2. One is permitted to paint or color the sechach to make it look more beautiful. <sup>[14]</sup>

## Attached to the Ground

1. Branches attached to a tree which is still attached to the ground is not fit for schach. Therefore, if one builds a Sukkah underneath a tree, using the branches as sechach and then decided to detach them from the tree, one must shake each branch by lifting and placing back down. Otherwise it is not kosher, as this is a problem of taaseh vilo min ha'asuy. <sup>[15]</sup>

## Impervious to Impurity

1. One may not use food as Schach since it is susceptible to impurity. <sup>[16]</sup>
2. One may use spices which are only meant to be smelled or flowers which are only meant as decoration as Schach since they are impervious to impurity. <sup>[17]</sup>
3. Even things that only can become tameh midirabanan are not kosher for sechach. <sup>[18]</sup>

## Bamboo Mats

1. Bamboo mats made for S'chach, which are 3x2 meters, are fit for S'chach according to most poskim. <sup>[19]</sup>
2. Regarding the use of hemp string to tie the bamboo for the schach together, most poskim are lenient. <sup>[20]</sup> Some are concerned when the strings used to tie the mats are spun and others aren't. <sup>[21]</sup>

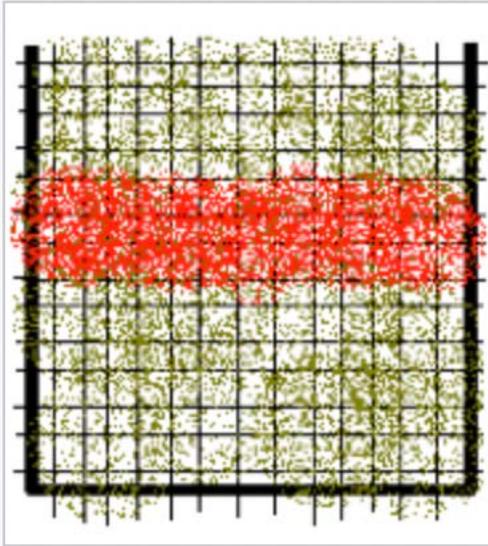
## Thickness of the Schach

---

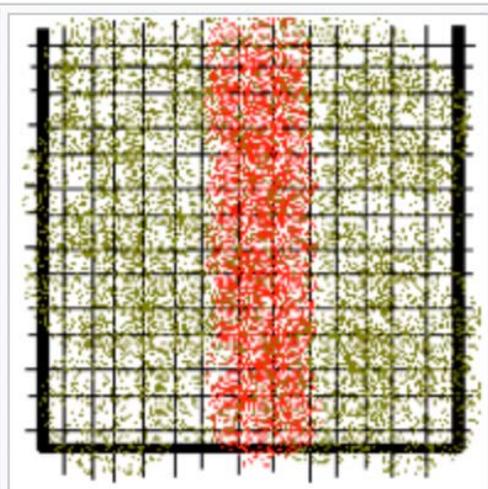
1. The S'chach should be made so that there is a majority of shade and minority of sunlight that's let through the S'chach. If there's an equal amount of shade and sun in the actual S'chach it's unfit but if there's an equal amount of shade to light that shines on the floor of the Sukkah it's fit. <sup>[22]</sup>
2. The S'chach should be thin enough that one can see the large stars through the S'chach. <sup>[23]</sup>
3. If one made the S'chach very thick so that one can't see the stars nonetheless it's fit. However, if it's so thick that when it rains a lot water won't come in then some poskim hold that it's unfit, unless there's no way to remove some S'chach in which case one may rely on the lenient opinions. <sup>[24]</sup> If one does remove some sechach, he does not need to shake the rest of the sechach in order of avoid taaseh vilo min haasuy. <sup>[25]</sup>

4. If one made the S'chach very thin so that there's patches of empty space it's fit only if (1) there's no area of empty space larger than 3 Tefachim and (2) there is a majority of shade and minority of sunlight (counting the entire area of the S'chach). Even if it's an acceptable Sukkah, nonetheless, if there's a patch of 7x7 Tefachim which has more sunlight than shade one may not sit in that area. <sup>[26]</sup>

### Invalid Schach and Airspaces



area beneath invalid schach is valid<sup>[27]</sup>



invalid<sup>[28]</sup>

1. If there are less than 3 tefachim of invalid schach in middle of the sukkah, the sukkah is valid and one may sit underneath that invalid schach. If there are between 3 and 4 tefachim of invalid schach, the sukkah is valid, but one shouldn't sit underneath that schach.<sup>[29]</sup>
2. 3 tefachim of airspace or 4 tefachim of invalid schach may invalidate the sukkah (see pictures on side). Anything less will not.<sup>[30]</sup>
3. One can't sit underneath an airspace the size of one's head or body<sup>[31]</sup> even if it is less than 3 tefachim. Also, one can't sit underneath an airspace that goes across the entire length of the sukkah even if it is less than 3 tefachim.<sup>[32]</sup>
4. If there is an airspace of 3 tefachim along a wall of the sukkah that wall isn't considered part of the sukkah. If less than two and a half walls remain, the sukkah is invalid.<sup>[33]</sup>

### Schach Held Up by Unfit Items

---

1. It's preferable not to put the S'chach directly on top of walls which are made out of material that's unfit for S'chach.<sup>[34]</sup> According to most leading authorities, however, it's permissible to place S'chach on top of a material that's fit for S'chach which is in turn held up by something that's unfit for S'chach. Therefore, if one has a metal frame one should place wooden planks on the frame and then S'chach on top of it.<sup>[35]</sup> After the fact, if the schach was placed directly on metal, it is kosher.<sup>[36]</sup>
2. One should ideally avoid tying the schach down with a material that would not serve as kosher schach if the schach would be unable to withstand regular wind independently.<sup>[37]</sup> However, many poskim always permit one to tie down schach with material that is only invalid as schach mi'derabanan (such as natural materials).<sup>[38]</sup>
3. One shouldn't use schach with a foul odor or whose leaves are falling off because there is a concern that the person may come to leave his sukkah because of the smell or the leaves falling on him.<sup>[39]</sup> After the fact, it is valid.<sup>[40]</sup>

### Sukkah Built Underneath a Tree or House

---

1. One must ensure that one's Sukkah is under the open sky and not beneath a tree, roof of a house, or a porch. (For details about after the fact see the footnote.)<sup>[41]</sup>
2. If one built a sukkah under a tree or a house which would render it unfit, and then removed the branches or the roof to make it kosher, this isn't a problem of taaseh vilo min ha'asuy as the problem was never in the schach itself.<sup>[42]</sup>
3. Branches near one's sukkah but not directly above it don't impact the validity of the sukkah even if they provide it shade.<sup>[43]</sup>
4. A sukkah built under clothes-lines or electric/phone lines, even if there isn't a space of 3 Tefachim between each one, is still kosher, even if clothing is on the lines.<sup>[44]</sup>
5. One may hang lights from the S'chach even if they hang below 4 Tefachim from the S'chach.<sup>[45]</sup>

## S'chach Moved Due to Inclement Weather

---

1. If a strong wind blew the schach higher than 3 Tefachim above the sukkah and then fell back down, even though since it happened automatically it wasn't put down for the sake of shade, the sukkah is kosher since it was originally placed in a kosher manner. <sup>[46]</sup>
2. If snow falls and solidifies on top the schach the sukkah is still kosher and one can recite a bracha of leshev basukkah. <sup>[47]</sup>

## Positioning of the S'chach

---

1. If the schach of the sukkah was placed on a slant, the sukkah is still kosher. <sup>[48]</sup>

## Sources

---

1. Rashi (Sukkah 2a s.v. delo) writes that the word Sukkah is derived from the word Schach which is the primary part of the Sukkah.
2. The Mishna (Sukkah 11a) indicates that Schach must be grown from the ground, detached from the ground, and impervious to impurity. The source for these requirements according to the gemara (Sukkah 12a) is the pasuk (Devarim 16:13) which says that the Schach should be made from the materials of the granary and winery. See also Rashi (Sukkah 11a s.v. pesula). Rambam (Sukkah 5:1) and Shulchan Aruch 629:1 codify this as halacha. Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 123 and Chazon Ovadia Sukkot page 14 concur.
3. Biur Halacha 629 s.v. Tzomech
4. S"A 629:1
5. Shulchan Aruch and Rama 629:1, Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 123, Chazon Ovadia Sukkot page 14
6. Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 15, Shu"t Shevet Halevi 4:57
7. Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 15, Bikkurei Yaakov 632:7
8. Rama 639:12, Magen Avraham 629:13
9. The Levush 629:12 writes that if the fresh plants cover a majority only while they are fresh and they will dry up and cover a minority of the Sukkah that is an issue. However, the Pri Megadim (E"A 629:13) questions him and points out that perhaps this is only a rabbinic concern. Kaf Hachaim 629:73 is concerned for the Levush.
10. Rambam (Sukkah 5:4)
11. Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 16, Yalkut Yosef 629:14. Minchat Shlomo 112 entertains both the possibility that paper is unfit because it is changed from its original form and because perhaps it is susceptible to impurity.
12. Mishna Brurah 629:12
13. Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 16 Shu"t Minchat Shlomo 3:151
14. Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 32, Halichot Shlomo pg. 130
15. Shulchan Aruch 626:2, Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 123, Chazon Ovadia Sukkotpage 33.
16. Rambam (Sukkah 5:3), Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 19
17. Rav Ovadyah Yosef in Chazon Ovadia (Sukkot, p. 23)
18. Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 21
19. Chazon Ovadyah (Sukkot pg 25-6). Halichot Shlomo (pg 128) and Rav Herschel Schachter (min 78-79:30) are also lenient unlike Rav Elyashiv (quoted by Sh"t Shevet HaLevi 6:74) who is strict.
  - Chazon Ovadia (p. 23) writes that bamboo mats that are strung together with organic materials or cotton are valid schach. He reasons that it is similar to the case of the mat which is used only for schach and is recognizable for that purpose. Therefore, the mats aren't susceptible to impurity. Also, it isn't similar to a roof as there are spaces between the planks and can be folded up. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Halichot Shlomo p. 128) and Rav Hershel Schachter (עניני יישוב וסוכות, min 78-79:30) agreed.

- Tzitz Eliezer 10:29 writes that one shouldn't use reed or straw mats for Schach. The reasoning is that the mats are sometimes used for sitting, sleeping, or containing items in which case they are impure. This would be a biblical invalidation. He adds that even if its designated to be used for schach there would be a rabbinic prohibition lest it be confused with those that are unfit. Additionally, sometimes it is used as for roofing in which case they would be unfit as it looks like a real roof.
- 20. Regarding the hemp string used to tie the bamboos together, Rav Ovadia (Chazon Ovadia p. 30) writes that using string made from organic material for schach is only invalid rabbinically according to the Rambam if it is altered from its natural form (or according to the Raavad because it is useable for clothing). Since it is only a rabbinic issue, Rav Ovadia reasons that it is permitted to use it in order to hold up or hold together the schach. See the next footnote regarding maamid regarding items that are rabbinically invalid. Accordingly, Rav Schachter (“Inyonei Sukkos” on Yutorah.org min 60-4) permitted using hemp or cotton strings to hold together the bamboo mats.
- 21. Rashi Shabbat 64a s.v. yachol holds that any string that the fibers of which are spun by themselves are mekabel tumah. The Rambam (Sukkah 5:4, Kelim 22:1) disagrees and the Meiri 64a s.v. kilki explains the dispute in how to learn the gemara. The Shulchan Aruch (Bet Yosef 629:5) follows the Rambam as does the Mishna Brurah, but the Shaar Hatziyun 629:20 notes Rashi. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe 1:177) in discussing venetian blinds also seems to be strict for Rashi. Rav Heinemann is strict for Rashi. Rav Hershel Schachter is not concerned for Rashi since the Shulchan Aruch followed the Rambam.
- 22. Shulchan Aruch 631:1 and 4
- 23. Shulchan Aruch 631:3, Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 24. The Pri Megadim E”A 631:11 writes that it is sufficient as long as the stars are visible from one point in the sukkah.
- 24. Shulchan Aruch 631:3, Mishna Brurah 631:6.
  - The Mordechai Sukkah 1:732 writes that a sukkah that is so thick that it doesn't allow rain to fall in, according to Rashi is kosher, but not according to Rabbenu Tam.
  - Shulchan Aruch HaRav 631:5 holds that it is not kosher.
  - Birkei Yosef 631:2 holds that although it is not ideal, it is still kosher. Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 24 writes that we can rely on the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch and even recite a beracha in such a sukkah but it is preferable to remove some sechach in such a scenario (and if it is shabbat or yom tov to ask a non-Jew to do so for you).
  - Mishna Brurah 631:6 concludes that if there's no way to remove some S'chachone may rely on the lenient opinions.
- 25. Chazon Ovadia Sukkot pg. 37, Shaar Hatziyun 631:5, Eliya Rabba 631:4, Mateh Ephraim 626:17
- 26. Shulchan Aruch 631:2 and 4 rules that if altogether there's a majority of shade and minority of sunlight and there's no open space of 3 Tefachim it's fit. Rama 631:2 adds that some are strict if there's an area of 7x7 Tefachim which has more sunlight than shade. The Aruch HaShulchan 631:5 and Mishna Brurah 631:4 writes that in such an area one may not sit. Mishna Brurah adds that if there's such a patch that breaks up one of the walls so that there's only 2 walls left then it puts the whole sukkah into question.
- 27. The invalid schach invalidates the entire area above the invalid schach. However, the area below is valid as long as there are 3 walls surrounding 7x7 tefachim of valid schach (Mishna Brurah 632:14-5).
- 28. This sukkah is invalid because the invalid schach in the middle splits the sukkah in two. Therefore, each half only has 2 walls which is insufficient (Mishna Brurah 632:2).
- 29. S”A 632:1, Rama 632:2, Mishna Brurah 632:3
- 30. S”A and Rama 632:2
- 31. While the Rama 632:2 writes “rosho ve’rubo” the Mishna Brurah 632:12 quotes the Ran and Ritva who hold either “rosho” or “rubo.”
- 32. S”A 632:2, Mishna Brurah 632:12
- 33. S”A 632:2, Biur Halacha 632 s.v. avir
- 34. Mishna Brurah 630:59, Chazon Ovadyah (Sukkot pg 44)
  - The Mishna (Sukkah 21b) cites Rabbi Yehuda who holds that one may not use bed boards for sukkah walls unless the schach is held up by something else. The Gemara records a dispute regarding Rabbi Yehuda’s reason; either it is because the sukkah isn’t considered a suitable dwelling without additional poles for support or because the schach is being held up by something that is susceptible to tumah. The Raavad (Sukkah 10a), Ramban (Milchamot Sukkah 10a), and Ran (Sukkah 10a s.v. Matnitin) understand that the primary reason for Rabbi Yehuda is that one may use items that are susceptible to tumah to hold up the schach as a gezerah that one may come to use it as schach itself.
  - The Rosh (Sukkah 2:1) writes that the halacha follows Rabbi Yehuda and his reasoning is that when the schach is placed on top of a bed, there is only a small area between the schach and

- the bed, which isn't suitable for use. The Trumat HaDeshen (responsa 91), Tur and S'A 630:13 agree.
- Lastly, the Baal HaMeor (Sukkah 10a) holds like the rabbanan and we shouldn't be concerned with either reason above.
  - Even according to the first group of rishonim there are two limitations. The Ran writes that it is permitted to place schach on top of stone walls because no one uses stones for schach and no one will make a mistake to think that it is kosher. Additionally, the Ramban writes that placing schach on top of poles on top of a bed is permitted since the bed is acting as a ground for the sukkah and isn't directly supporting the schach.
  - What's the halacha? Since Shulchan Aruch O.C. 630:13 holds like the Rosh, it would seem to be clear that is permitted to use items that are susceptible to tumah to hold up the schach. However, Shulchan Aruch O.C. 629:7 has a doubt whether it is permitted to place a ladder on top of schach. The Magen Avraham 629:9 suggests an explanation in which he forbids using a ladder that is susceptible to tumah lechatchila and would only permit it after the fact. Mishna Brurah 630:59 writes that it is permitted, but it is proper to be concerned for the opinions who are strict.
35. Mishna Brurah 629:26, BeYitzchak Yikra (Rav Nevinsal) on that Mishna Brurah quoting Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Yabia Omer 10:46 and Chazon Ovadyah (Sukkot pg 44) are lenient unlike the Chazon Ish 143:2-3. Rav Hershel Schachter (62:30-66:15) also seems to be lenient (listen for exact language). See Chelkat Yaakov 3:127, Minchat Shlomo 2:55 and Moadim U'zmanim 1:82.
- The Magen Avraham 629:9 permits using metal nails to support the poles of the sukkah since they don't directly support the schach. For example, the Bikkurei Yacov 629:15 writes that it is permitted to place schach on top of wooden poles on top of walls which are susceptible to impurity. The Chazon Ish (O.C. 143:2) argues since we can't distinguish between different layers of schach and simply state the top layer of kosher schach is supported by another layer that is in turn supported by an item that is susceptible to tumah. Rav Schachter ("Inyonei Sukkah", min 44-6, 62-4) noted that although the Chazon Ish's argument is reasonable, the minhag follows the Magen Avraham and allows placing schach on top of planks on top of a metal frame.
36. Mishna Brurah 629:22 and 630:58
37. Be'tzel Ha'Chochma 5:44
38. Rav Vosner cited in the Beit Levi Cheilek 4, pg. 23. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Chazon Ovadia p. 24-5) writes that it is permitted to use a material that is only rabbinically invalid in order to hold up the schach since the entire issue of maamid is only a gezerah, so the rabbis would never have instituted a gezerah l'gezerah. This is based on the opinion of the Ritva (Sukkah 11b). Rav Schachter ("Inyonei Sukkah", min 44-6, 62-4) agreed, though he questioned it because this seems to fall into the category of a double d'rabbanan and not a gezerah l'gezerah. This is reiterated in another shiur ("Inyonei Succos 5781" min 22-28).
39. Rambam (Sukkah 5:1), Shulchan Aruch O.C. 629:14, Chazon Ovadia pg. 30, Magen Avraham 629:15, Kaf Hachaim 639:81
40. Rambam (Sukkah 5:1)
41. Rama 626:1 writes that in all cases one should avoid building one's sukkah under a tree or roof. Mishna Brurah 626:1 and Aruch HaShulchan 626:1 explain that it's best to build the Sukkah under the open sky. This is also the opinion of Chazon Ovadyah (Sukkot pg 11) and Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 125. However, after the fact, Aruch HaShulchan 626:1 writes if it's built under a roofed area it's unfit, but if it's built under a tree there is a discussion about when it is fit. Shulchan Aruch 626:1 (according to Beiur Halacha s.v. VeYesh, Mishna Brurah 626:10 and 11) rules that a sukkah under branches of a tree is fit only if it fits three requirements (See Shulchan Aruch with Mishna Brurah 626:10 and 11). (1) Among the branches of the tree there is majority of sun and minority shade (2) there is less than four Tefachim of tree branches over the schach, and (3) there is a majority of shade from the kosher schach and a minority of shade even without the tree branches (and even so the schach under the tree branches itself is unfit but the rest of the sukkah is fit).
42. Chazon Ovadia page 33.
43. Biur Halacha 626:1 s.v. tachat ha'ilan
44. Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 125, Chazon Ovadia Sukkot page 69.
45. Chaye Adam 146, Mishna Brurah 627:15, Nitei Gavriel (Sukkot 26:4)
46. Sh"t Shevet Halevi 10:100
47. Sh"t Ginat Veradim 4:7, Shaarei Teshuva 626:1, Moed Likol Chai 21:20, Bikkurei Yaakov 626:7, Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 125 and Chazon Ovadia Sukkot page 37. Aruch Hashulchan 629:2 however only permits saying a beracha if the schach is still greater than the snow.
48. Shulchan Aruch 631:10



## Letting Go of the Roof

### The Kabbalah of Sukkot

Shifra Hendrie writes:<sup>12</sup>

**“You shall dwell in sukkot [huts] for seven days ... so that you will know, for all generations, that I had the Children of Israel dwell in sukkot, when I took them out of the Land of Egypt; I am God, your God.”** (Leviticus 23:42-43)

We live in a world of time and space, a world made of countless, ever-changing and often conflicting details. However, this endless diversity hides the truth—that in essence, everything is one.

Kabbalah explains that there is absolutely nothing outside of God. But, in order to allow us the *experience* of personal existence, God conceals this fundamental truth. He contracts and hides His infinite presence, and in doing so allows us to be.

---

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/5044/jewish/Letting-Go-of-the-Roof.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5044/jewish/Letting-Go-of-the-Roof.htm)

Like Alice in Wonderland, we live our lives in a “through the looking glass” world, trapped within the illusion that we are the true reality and that God, if He exists at all, is somewhere outside of us, separate and not entirely real.

But on Sukkot, this illusion begins to break down. As we sit inside the *sukkah*, we experience an existential joy. This joy stems from a soul-awareness of the truth—that we exist not separate from God, but within Him. As we sit within the *sukkah*, we are sitting inside God.

### **The Illusion of Certainty**

One evening, a couple of years ago, I had an oddly powerful experience. I was in my room, getting ready for bed. I was going through the usual routine, brushing my teeth, washing my face, all the while looking forward to getting into my snug and safe bed and really relaxing.

But suddenly, for a moment, my perspective shifted. I realized that the feeling of security I was experiencing wasn't about simply being released from the pressures and demands of the day. It was the repetitiveness and predictability of my regular nighttime routine that was making me feel safe.

At that moment, my four walls didn't seem so solid anymore. I saw that my safety, my invulnerability, was an illusion. That in reality, the solid structure that allowed me to feel safe and secure was anything but solid.

What I saw then was this: Although preparing for sleep *felt* like being in a safe, protective space, safety doesn't come from routine. No matter what we pretend, life is never entirely certain. Rather than being solid, defined and predictable, it is actually fluid, unpredictable and always new.

### **Continuous Creation**

According to Kabbalah, this is a core principle of Creation. Our universe is actually not a solid, immutable reality at all. It exists in a fluid and dynamic state known as *continuous creation*.

The world exists at this moment only because God is consciously and deliberately choosing to bring it into existence. In fact, Kabbalah explains that *the natural state of the universe is non-existence*. If God were to stop “speaking” the words of Creation for even an instant, the whole universe would disappear as if it had never been. This makes it, despite the evidence of our senses, as far from a solid reality as anything could be.

However, in concealing His infinite presence, God allows us to exist as limited and defined personalities in a physical world. Without this concealment, we would exist—but only like light within the body of the sun. There, but not as a defined or separate reality at all.

However, this concealment is only a starting point. It is not meant to remain in force forever. Our task, especially in these unprecedented and transformational times, is to seek out and perceive the truth—to remain human, yes, but in a way that allows us to relate to reality as it really is.

## **Living on Miracles**

After the Exodus from Egypt, the Jews wandered for 40 years in the desert, an arid and inhospitable environment that did not support life. Nevertheless, they survived. They lived through continuous miracles—the manna that fell from heaven each day, and the “clouds of glory” that protected them from the blazing sun and heat. Their survival, on a moment-to-moment basis, was so clearly dependent on God that it was impossible to sustain the illusion that it was natural in any way.

Over those 40 years, the awareness of God’s real, constant and protective presence was implanted deep within the Jewish psyche. Although this tangible awareness has since been challenged by thousands of years of exile, it remains imprinted in our spiritual DNA. It awaits only the right circumstances to rise to the surface once again.

## **The War at the End of Days**

The prophets describe a final war—the war of Gog and Magog—that will take place immediately before the messianic redemption. After this war, the world will forever recognize and embrace the truth of God and the Torah.

The Hebrew word *gog* means “roof.” It alludes to the sense of protection and security we get from physical things. As the world approaches its ultimate destiny, humankind must undergo a transformation in its consciousness. Part of this transformation involves the awareness that our security and protection come not from physical possessions, but from God.

### **Expressing Infinity Within the Finite**

Each of us is a walking paradox, an unlikely marriage of a finite and physical body with an infinite soul. Our bodies, and the perceptions that go with them, are subject to the limiting parameters of time and space, including our past-based failures and fears. But the soul is free of these constrictions. From the soul’s perspective, there are no limits at all.

The soul enters the confines of the body with a mission—to transform the limitations of the physical universe, to change the very nature of what it means to be physical. Ultimately, instead of concealing its infinite divine source, this finite and physical world is destined to become a full and open expression of it.

Since the physical world is being created anew at every single moment, at each present moment there is infinite divine potential. Although it is concealed, it is accessible. As part of our mission, we are empowered to use it to create a transformed reality, unfettered by the limitations of the past.

### **The Sukkah Tells the Truth**

Unlike our everyday environment, the *sukkah* doesn’t tell us any lies. It reflects reality as it actually is. Its roof is a simple canopy of leaves and branches, open to the sky. Insubstantial in its

physical structure, the *sukkah* invites us to abandon the illusion that physical things—a “roof”—can either protect or limit us.

In addition to being insubstantial, the *sukkah* is temporary. This fact encourages us to step out of the limiting boundaries of a past- and future-based perspective, and embrace the truly unlimited potential that is only available in the present.

The *sukkah* calls us to the truth. And as we listen to God’s command, remember the miracles with which we left Egypt, and enter the insubstantial, impermanent and intensely powerful embrace of the *sukkah*, we acknowledge this truth. We acknowledge it not only with our minds, but with our bodies as well. We let go of the illusions with which we surround ourselves, and embrace the essence of what life is.

The *sukkah* makes us vulnerable. But, paradoxically, this vulnerability is our greatest power. We were vulnerable when we began our journey out of exile, and we will be vulnerable when we conclude it. But far from making us weak, this vulnerability allows to embrace our unlimited source and unique destiny. In letting go of our dependence on the physical, on the “roof,” we embrace our own true nature. We are partners in creation, Divine beings made in the image of God.

## **The Final Transformation**

The prophets tell us that at the end of days, the Jewish nation will be threatened by powerful hostile forces. This threat will be so great that our human strength will not be enough to overcome it.

At that point, the prophets say, we will at long last abandon the core illusions of creation. The elusive security of physical things will lose its power to deceive us. We will remember the truth. We will turn to God wholeheartedly, and in doing so, will allow the divinity concealed within creation and within ourselves to shine forth in its full brightness. We will elicit the Divine revelation and protection that is our destiny.

As we move our lives into the *sukkah*, we are doing far more than fulfilling a commandment or commemorating the past. On some essential level, we are living the future. We are embracing reality. We are embracing our destiny.

We are embracing God.

## Symbolism and Rationale of Sukkot

**RABBI MORDECHAI BECHER** writes:<sup>13</sup>

Five days after the solemnity and intensity of Yom Kippur, Sukkot, the festival of joy and happiness, begins. The Torah describes the festival as follows:

*On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the festival of Sukkot, a seven-day period for G-d: On the first day shall be a sacred holy day when you shall not do any laborious work... On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the harvest of the land, you shall celebrate G-d's festival for a seven-day period; the first day is a rest day and the eighth day is a rest day:..[1]*

This festival is also known in the Torah as “*Chag HeAsif*,” the Festival of Gathering,[2] because it is celebrated at the time of year when the harvested produce is brought from the fields into storehouses and homes. When a person gathers in the bounty of his land, he is naturally filled with tremendous joy and happiness. This happiness could easily turn into arrogance; it could make a person full of himself and his accomplishments and distance him from G-d and from others.[3] As Rashbam[4] comments:

*In order that your generations shall know – The simple explanation is in accordance with those in Tractate Sukkah who say that the sukkot, were actual booths (and not the clouds of glory) and this is the reasoning behind this matter. You shall make the festival of Sukkot when you gather in from your granaries and your winepresses and when you gather in the produce of your land and your houses are full of all good things, grain, wine and olive oil, so that you shall remember that I (G-d) sustained Israel in sukkot in the desert for forty years without civilization or a permanent residence. And as a result of remembering this you will give thanks to He who gave you an inheritance and houses full of all manner of goodness. And don't say in your hearts, “It was my strength and the power of my hands that provided me with all these possessions.[5]”*

Rashbam points out a similarity to the verses in the Torah that obligate us to bless G-d after eating, where the context clearly indicates that this blessing is designed to introduce some humility when there is a strong chance of pride and arrogance. Rav Meir Simcha of

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gatewaysonline.org/symbolism-and-rationale-of-sukkot-2/>

Dvinsk[6] explains that this is why the Torah only obligates a blessing after eating but not before eating (a rabbinic obligation). There is a greater chance of someone feeling independent of G-d when that person is full, satiated and content, than when someone is feeling hungry, weak and unsatisfied. Since the primary purpose of the blessing is to counteract the feeling of independence from G-d, the Torah obligated the blessing at the moment of greatest risk, after eating. Similarly, the festival of Sukkot, according to the Rashbam is very much like a Grace after Meals for the entire year and all its produce.

These ideas may lead one to think that that the appropriate antidote would be a period of fasting and repentance, however that would directly contradict a person's natural inclinations. It is a time of year when people are full of joy and Judaism, generally, does not seek to deny or suppress human nature and instincts, but rather seeks to apply them in positive directions. The Torah wants us to celebrate and be happy and to channel that joy toward our relationship with the Creator and with other people. We should use this opportunity to appreciate G-d's benevolence as well as to share our good fortune with others. Through the *sukkah*, the *lulav* and the other species, the Torah directs us to use the products of the harvest in the fulfillment of *mitzvot*. Thus we neither deny the physical world nor wallow in it rather we elevate it towards a higher purpose.[7] This is similar to an idea mentioned by the Maharal in explaining why Yaakov was, according to Rashi, saying the *Shma*, while embracing Yosef: "This is characteristic of the pious, that when something good happens to them, they cleave to the Holy One, blessed be He, for the good and the truth that He has done for them." [8] Sukkot is a time when the Jewish people are naturally "in a good mood." The Torah does not want to dampen that mood, but seeks to utilize it so that the Jewish people as a whole "cleave to G-d for the good that He has done for them."

The gathering of the agricultural harvest also serves as a metaphor for the spiritual harvest. The Jewish people have just been through an intense period of introspection, repentance and prayer; the month of repentance, Ellul, followed by the Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. During this time we labor in the fields of spiritual growth. On Sukkot, we harvest the inspiration, the joy and the closeness to G-d that is produced by this period of repentance. The intense feeling of joy on Sukkot is the feeling of one who hears good news – forgiveness, when he was expecting the worst – punishment; of one who has been given a fresh start in life after making many serious mistakes. Sukkot thus reflects the joy of completing a difficult job and celebrates both the conclusion of the physical harvest and the culmination of the spiritual harvest.

Traditionally, Sukkot is associated with happiness more than any other festival. In our prayers, it is called "the time of our happiness" while in the Mishnah, it is referred to simply as "the festival." [9] Rav Yitzchak Hutner understands this joy as part of the cycle of the creation of the Jewish people. On Pesach, when we were taken out of Egypt, we were designated as G-d's agents. On Shavuot, when we were given the Torah, we were told exactly what He wanted us to do. On Sukkot we come back to G-d and declare "We have accomplished our task; we have brought in the harvest from the fields." [10]

Maimonides offers the following rationale in his Guide for the Perplexed:[11]

*The two festivals, Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, imply also the teaching of certain truths and certain moral lessons. Passover teaches us to remember the miracles which G-d wrought in Egypt, and to perpetuate their memory; the Feast of Tabernacles reminds us of the miracles wrought in the wilderness. The moral lesson derived from these feasts is this: man ought to remember his evil days in his days of prosperity. He will thereby be induced to thank G-d repeatedly, and to lead a modest and humble life. We eat, therefore, unleavened bread and bitter herbs on Passover in memory of what has happened unto us, and leave [on Succoth] our houses in order to dwell in tabernacles, as inhabitants of deserts do that are in want of comfort. We shall thereby remember that this has once been our condition; "I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths" (Lev. xxiii. 43); although we dwell now in elegant houses, in the best and most fertile land, by the kindness of G-d, and because of His promises to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were perfect in their opinions and in their conduct. This idea is likewise an important element in our religion; that whatever good we have received and ever will receive of G-d, is owing to the merits of the Patriarchs, who "kept the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment" (Gen. xviii. 19). We join to the Feast of Tabernacles the Feast of the Eighth Day, in order to complete our rejoicings, which cannot be perfect in booths, but in comfortable and well-built houses....*

*I believe that the four species are a symbolical expression of our rejoicing that the Israelites exchanged the wilderness, "a place of no seed, nor of figs, or vines, or of pomegranates, or of water to drink" (Num. xx. 5), with a country full of fruit-trees and rivers. In order to remember this we take the fruit which is the most pleasant of the fruit of the land, branches which smell best, most beautiful leaves, and also the best of herbs, i.e., the willows of the brook. These four kinds have also those three purposes: First, they were plentiful in those days in Palestine, so that everyone could easily get them. Secondly, they have a good appearance, they are green; some of them, viz., the citron and the myrtle, are also excellent as regards their smell, the branches of the palm-tree and the willow having neither good nor bad smell. Thirdly, they keep fresh and green for seven days,<sup>[12]</sup> which is not the case with peaches, pomegranates, asparagus, nuts, and the like.*

Maimonides emphasizes gratitude to G-d for our present good fortune by contrasting it with our condition in Egypt and later in the desert. In this way, he continues, we will be encouraged to thank G-d continuously and to lead a modest and humble life. In addition the festival reminds us of our connection and debt to our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and also directs us to appreciate the beautiful gift of the Land of Israel.

On the simplest level this *mitzvah* reminds us that G-d protected and preserved the Jewish people in the desert after He took them out of Egypt. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch<sup>[13]</sup> sees Sukkot and the other festivals as reflecting a broader historical perspective, and understands the "desert" as a metaphor for exile. Passover celebrates the Exodus, which was the physical creation of the Jewish people. Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah, our spiritual creation. Sukkot celebrates the remarkable physical survival and continuity of the Jewish people, the result of ongoing and all-encompassing Divine Providence. Considering Sukkot in this light, we can understand the opinion in the Talmud<sup>[14]</sup> that the booths represent not the Jews physical dwellings in the desert, but rather, G-d's clouds of glory<sup>[15]</sup> which surrounded and protected the Jewish people from the time of the Exodus until they reached the Land of Israel. Sukkot is thus understood, not simply as a reminder of a specific historical period, but rather, as an experience that renews our awareness of G-d's relationship to the Jewish people

throughout history. The desert symbolizes our exile, diaspora and wandering, while the clouds represent G-d's unceasing protection, care and Divine providence. Similarly, the Zohar, calls the *sukkah* "the shade of faith"[16] because sitting under the shade of the Sukkah, the Jewish people understand that they must not place their faith solely in the walls and roofs of their houses, or in any physical protection they might construct, but rather in G-d. We have learned through many years of bitter exile, that although we are obligated to pursue material efforts for our protection – medicine, self-defense, political lobbying and so on – it is only when they are accompanied and blessed by G-d's Divine Providence that they are able to protect us. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook writes that one lesson of Sukkot is that in building our national home "we must recognize the absolute truth that the spiritual law of nature, which is the word of G-d, Who decreed that the house of Israel will be built,[17] that is our primary wall of fortification, despite the fact that the feeble human eye cannot discern its impenetrability and its power." [18]

The Gaon of Vilna, notes that the clouds of glory left the Jewish people when they sinned at Mt. Sinai and built the Golden Calf. They did not return until after the Jews repented and were forgiven on Yom Kippur. The date on which the clouds of glory once again encircled the nation was the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Tishrei, which is the first day of Sukkot.[19] This explains why Sukkot is celebrated right after Yom Kippur even though it is related to the Exodus and might be expected to occur soon after Passover. Sukkot demonstrates that G-d's love for the Jewish people is just as strong after they have sinned as it was before the sin.[20] The clouds of glory were returned to us, even though our own actions had caused them to be removed, because the bond between G-d and the Jewish people is eternal.[21] The Gaon saw this idea hinted at in the verse in the Song of Songs, "His left hand is under my head and His right arm embraces me." [22] "His left hand" which symbolizes justice and judgement "is under my head" – the head of the year, Rosh Hashanah. "His right arm" which symbolizes lovingkindness, "embraces me" on Sukkot. The minimalist Sukkah according to halachic guidelines consists of two complete walls and the third wall which only has to be a hand's-breadth (*tefach*) long.[23] The Gaon of Vilna points out that the two walls and the hand's-breadth are suggestive of an embracing arm and hand, symbolizing G-d's embrace of the Jews.

In a similar vein, Rav Moshe DiTrani, (*Mabit*) author of the book, Beit Elokim, sees the Sukkah as a symbol of G-d's love for the Jewish people. He asks why the Torah does not designate a festival in commemoration of the miracles of the Manna and of the miraculous well of Miriam, and only celebrates the miracle of the clouds of glory (*Ananei HaKavod*)?[24] My revered teacher, Rav Shlomo Fischer maintains that indeed the well of Miriam is commemorated by the ceremony of water libation (*Nisuch HaMayim*) on Sukkot and the Manna is commemorated by the *mitzvot* of *Challah* and *Omer*. [25] However, the question of the *Mabit* still stands, since neither of these miracles has an entire festival dedicated to them, as does the miracle of the clouds of glory. The *Mabit* explains that supplying the Jews with food and water was a necessity and for G-d to take them into the desert without those supplies would be tantamount to mass murder. In a sense, G-d had to perform the miracles of the manna and the water out of sheer necessity. However, the climate controlled embrace of the clouds of glory was a luxury, not a necessity, and therefore, an expression of G-d's love for His people. It is that Divine love that we are celebrating on Sukkot. According to Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner, (the Ishbitzer), [26] it is this embrace of G-d, the feeling of security, and His promise that He will never abandon us,

that gives us such a special feeling of joy on Sukkot, so that this festival alone is known as “the time of our joy.”

Rav Eliyahu Dessler, in a classical *mussar* perspective on Sukkot, notes that Jewish law describes the Sukkah as a temporary dwelling,[27] a status which informs many of the legal specifications for the Sukkah’s construction.[28] Leaving our permanent houses with solid walls and roofs to live in a flimsy booth with a roof of branches is a dramatic and unequivocal statement that the material world is not what life is all about. By living in the Sukkah, we are declaring that the entire physical world is really temporary, and that the only things we truly possess forever are the soul and its spiritual accomplishments. It was certainly within G-d’s power to build five-star hotels and villas for the Jews in the Sinai Desert; why then did he put them in thatched huts? Because he wanted them, and us, to understand that there is no permanence to the physical world, and that focusing all aspirations and hopes on material attainments; a house, a car, another house, another car — is pointless. By living in the Sukkah, we are bringing this message home to ourselves, not just as intellectual knowledge, but as a transformative experience that will impact our lives.[29]

Rav Moshe Sofer, the Chatam Sofer,[30] relates the festivals to the different realms of existence that are discussed in the Sefer Yetzirah[31] – *olam* – space, *shanah* – time and *nefesh* – life or soul.[32] Pesach is the sanctity of life, *nefesh*, symbolized by the *mitzvot* of eating (*matzah, maror, korban Pesach*), which sustains the soul and life. Shavuot, preceded by and dependent upon, a *mitzvah* of counting time (*Sefirat HaOmer*), and named for that *mitzvah* (*Shavuot* means “weeks”), is the sanctity of time; and Sukkot is the sanctity of place (*olam*) sanctifying the very space in which we live. This is why the Beit HaMikdash is called, *Sukkat David*, the Sukkah of David, because it also is the sanctification of place, and like the Sukkah, is a *mitzvah* into which one can immerse oneself entirely. It is our hope and prayer that, as we fulfill the *mitzvah* of Sukkah with all its beautiful lessons and rationale, we all merit seeing the ultimate Sukkah of the Beit HaMikdash in Jerusalem.

[1] Exodus 13:21-22

[2] Exodus 32:22

[3] Deuteronomy 8:12-18

[4] Rashbam, Commentary on Leviticus 23:43

[5] Deuteronomy 5:17

[6] Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, *Meshech Hochmah*, Commentary on Deuteronomy 8:10

[7] Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb*, II Edot, Chapter 31, Par. 223

[8] Rav Yehudah Loewe, Maharal, *Gur Aryeh*, Commentary on Genesis 45:29

[9] Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 1:2

[10] Rav Yitzchak Hutner, *Pachad Yitzchak*, Rosh Hashanah (*Hemshech Tishrei*), 9

[11] Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:43, M. Friedlander translation.

[12] This statement of Maimonides is always particularly painful to me as I regularly witness my *hadassim* and *aravot* drying up, shriveling and otherwise deteriorating by the second or third day of Sukkot.

[13] Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb*, II Edoth, Chapter 23, Par. 169-170

[14] B. Sukkah 11b

[16] Zohar, Parshat Emor, 103a

[17] Based on Job 22:28

[18] Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, *Ma'amarei Ha-Reiyah*, 1:149-150

[19] Rav Eliyahu Kramer, GRA, Commentary on Song of Songs 2:6 (in *Kol Eliyahu*) cf. Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah 2:19 where "His left hand" refers to Sukkot.

[20] Rav Yitzchak Hutner, *Pachad Yitzchak*, Rosh Hashanah (*Hemshech Tishrei*), 10:8

[21] Ibid.

[22] Song of Songs 2:6

[23] B. Sukkah 6b

[24] Rav Moshe ben Yosef DiTrani, *Sefer Beit Elokim*, Sha'ar HaYesodot, Ch. 36

[25] Rav Shlomo Fischer, *Drushei Beit Yishai*, Drush 23, p. 181 Footnote 5

[26] Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner of Ishbitz, *Mei Ha-Shiloach*, Vol. 1, Parshat Emor

[27] B. Sukkah 2a

[28] Ibid 2a, 21b

[29] Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, *Michtav MeEliyahu*, Vol. 2, p. 106

[30] Rav Moshe Sofer, *Torat Moshe*, Shavuot. For a different interpretation of the cycle of the festivals as they relate to these categories, see Rav Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchak of Alexander, *Yismach Yisrael*, Vol 2, Sukkot, Paragraph 7

[31] *Sefer Yetzirah*, Ch. 3, Mishnah 7

[32] Forming the acronym of *ash"n* – smoke, as these are the smokescreen through which we see existence – Commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah*

# *The Symbolism of the Sukkah*

JEFFREY L. RUBENSTEIN

THE SUKKAH STANDS OUT AMONG ALL MITZVOT. IT IS the only commandment that involves a ritual dwelling. One is totally surrounded by the *mitzvah* for an extended period of time. For seven days, eating, sleeping, reading, relaxing, studying and almost all activities are performed within the *sukkah*. Yet the *mitzvah* is not only to eat, sleep, read, relax or study—but *to be*, to be within the *sukkah*. One simply enters the *sukkah*-space and the *mitzvah* is performed. One need not really do anything. No action, no gesture, no exertion, no effort is required. There is no real commandment to *build a sukkah* (although this is certainly a meritorious act), but only to stay in one. Surely a singular *mitzvah*.

What is the meaning of this ritual? What are we supposed to experience within the *sukkah*? What is the point of this extended stay? What does the *sukkah* symbolize? The answer to these questions is long and complex, for rituals and symbols operate on many levels, and have many meanings. This study explores one dimension of the symbolism of the *sukkah* and the accompanying religious experience: the *sukkah* as symbol of the clouds of glory and the experience of dwelling in its shade.<sup>1</sup>

## I. The *Sukkah* and the Clouds of Glory

The typical explanation for the *sukkah* is that it symbolizes the booths in which the Israelites dwelled during their journey through the desert. On Passover we eat matzah because our ancestors ate matzah when they left Egypt, and on *Sukkot* we reside in booths to commemorate those in which they lived for forty years. This explanation follows from Lev 23:42–43, the source of the commandment:

You shall live in *sukkot* seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in *sukkot*, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in *sukkot* when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God.

Yet this understanding is not as simple as it seems at first glance. We should not immediately picture the Israelites actually dwelling in the type of booths that we build today. Leviticus relates that they dwelled in *sukkot*, but does not say what those *sukkot* were. The rabbis debated exactly what this meant. In the *Sifra*, the halakhic midrash to Leviticus, we find the following dispute:

DR. JEFFREY L. RUBENSTEIN is Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University.

protection against drenching rain.<sup>8</sup> Thus a cloud can be described as a "sukkah"; the terms can be used synonymously. Second, while booths are never mentioned in the exodus narratives, clouds are always found around the Israelite camp. God provided a pillar of cloud to lead the Israelites in the desert<sup>9</sup> and speaks to Moses from the midst of the cloud.<sup>10</sup> God also appears above the tent of meeting in the form of a cloud.<sup>11</sup> Now it turns out that the pillar of cloud first appears at a place called *Sukkot*! Exod 12:5 relates that the Israelites "journeyed from Raamses to *Sukkot*." They soon depart with a wondrous escort:

(Exod 13:20) They set out from Sukkot and encamped at Etham, at the edge of the wilderness. (13:21) The Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, to guide them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light.

R. Akiba interpreted the term *sukkot* not as a place, but in light of the following verse. The Israelites "set out from *sukkot*," from the clouds within which they had camped, and which thereafter led the way in the desert.

We now have all the clues to appreciate R. Akiba's interpretation. Given the considerations above, R. Akiba found it difficult to interpret *sukkot* of Lev 23:42 as real booths. On the other hand, he noted that the term *sukkah* in poetic biblical passages sometimes referred to a cloud-*sukkah*. Moreover, the only appearance of the term *sukkot* in the Exodus narrative occurs just before the first description of the pillar of cloud. He reasoned that the term *sukkot* in Lev 23:42, in which God "made the Israelites dwell," must refer to that divine cloud.<sup>12</sup> The Israelites never resided in leafy huts, but among divine *sukkah*-clouds, the "clouds of glory."<sup>13</sup>

## II. The Nature of the Clouds of Glory

Since the *sukkah* symbolizes the clouds of glory in which the exodus generation lived, it is necessary to investigate how the rabbis conceived of the clouds. The clearest description is provided by Tosefta Sotah 4:2

God gave to [Abraham's] children seven clouds of glory in the desert, one to their right, and one to their left, one before them, and one after them, and one above their heads, and one as the *shekhina* that was in their midst. And the pillar of cloud would precede them, killing snakes and scorpions, burning brush, thorns and bramble, reducing mounds and raising low places, and making a straight path for them, a continuous, ongoing highway, as it is said, *The ark of the covenant of the Lord traveled in front of them (Num 10:33).*<sup>14</sup>

The clouds of glory envelop the Israelites on all four sides and form a type of force field around the camp. The seventh cloud obliterates dangers that lie before them and smooths the rough desert terrain so that the journey would be manageable. One of the clouds is called the *shekhina*, the divine

R. Eliezer says: They were real sukkot. R. Akiba says: The sukkot were the clouds of glory.<sup>2</sup>

For R. Eliezer the Israelites dwelled in real booths in the desert. For R. Akiba, however, the Israelites did not reside in booths at all! They dwelled amidst the “clouds of glory,” within the clouds that marked the presence and radiance of God. R. Akiba’s opinion became the majority rabbinic interpretation. It is found in the targums (the Aramaic translations of the Torah), in later midrashim, and in medieval codes.<sup>3</sup> Thus the dominant trend in Jewish thought never pictured the exodus generation dwelling in leafy huts but rather in glorious clouds. The leafy *sukkot* we build symbolize those clouds.<sup>4</sup>

Why did R. Akiba interpret the exodus *sukkot* as clouds?

First, *sukkot* are generally not found in the desert. They are built in fields for the protection of watchmen, workers or animals and constructed from the products of the field—leaves, branches, reeds, foliage, wood and hay. Where would the Israelites have found such materials in the desert wasteland? Desert travelers stay in tents, not booths.

Second, outside of this lone verse in Leviticus, the Bible never claims that the Israelites stayed in booths. There are several descriptions of the camp of the Israelites in the desert, but not one pictures the tribes dwelling in *sukkot*. Tents are occasionally mentioned, but never booths.<sup>5</sup> Why does Lev 23:42 suddenly assume that the Israelites dwelled in *sukkot*, while the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy know nothing about it?

Third, Leviticus relates that God “made the Israelite people dwell in *sukkot*,” not that “the Israelite people built *sukkot* for themselves.” This implies that God provided the *sukkot*.<sup>6</sup> But if God made the *sukkot*, we might expect them to be miraculous and supernatural. A God who brought ten plagues, signs, and wonders can certainly be expected to provide more than simple shacks. Moreover, it is more likely that we are commanded to reside in booths to commemorate a miracle than a routine and ordinary mode of dwelling. If there is nothing special about the exodus *sukkot*, why make a religious institution out of it?<sup>7</sup>

Two other considerations influenced R. Akiba. First, the word *sukkah* in the Bible sometimes refers to a cloud-covering. The Psalmist describes the celestial manifestation of God in vivid imagery: “He made darkness His screen; dark thunderheads, dense clouds of the sky were His *sukkah* round about him (Ps 18:11–12).” Likewise Job 36:29 relates: “Can one, indeed, contemplate the expanse of clouds, the thunderings from His *sukkah*?” The storm-cloud from which God thunders is pictured as the divine pavilion or *sukkah*. Note that the language “His *sukkah*” might hint at the type of *sukkot* in which God “made the Israelite people live.” God made them live in “His *sukkot*,” in clouds. Isaiah prophesies that a cloud will hover above Mt. Zion and “shall serve as a *sukkah* for shade from heat by day and for shelter and

departed.<sup>26</sup> The mosaic of the Beit Alpha synagogue and the paintings of the Dura synagogue also symbolize the presence of God by a cloud.<sup>27</sup>

Third, divine love. The midrash describes the initial appearance of the clouds of glory in terms of a wedding:

*And the children of Israel went from Raamses towards Sukkot (Exod 12:37). . . . Sukkot of clouds of glory came and settled upon the roofs of Raamses. They made a parable: What is this like? To a groom who brought a canopy ('apiryon) to the entrance of the house of his wife in order that she would come to him immediately.<sup>28</sup>*

Above we noted that R. Akiba interpreted the term *sukkot* not as a place but as the clouds of glory. The advent of these *sukkah*-clouds is compared to the arrival of the wedding canopy, the huppa or *apiryon*, at the home of the bride. God, as it were, signaled his love for the Israelites, his readiness to consummate a marriage, by sending his canopy, the *sukkah*-clouds. When they entered the clouds of glory the Israelites entered the domain of a loving husband. A later midrash insists that although the Israelites worshipped the molten calf, God "did not cease loving them. The clouds of glory accompanied them, and the well and the Manna did not cease."<sup>29</sup> The clouds of glory, the mythical well, and the Manna thus serve as outstanding symbols of God's love.

In other passages the clouds of glory represent paternal love.

*And the pillar of cloud moved from before them and went behind them (Exod 14:19).* R. Yehuda said: Here is a verse made rich in meanings by many passages. He made of it a parable; to what is the matter similar? To a king who was going on the way, and his son went before him. Brigands came to kidnap him from in front. He took him from in front and placed him behind him. A wolf came behind him. He took him from behind and placed him in front. Brigands in front and the wolf in back, he took him and placed him in His arms, for it says, *I have pampered Ephraim, taking them on My arms (Hos 11:3).*

The son began to suffer; He took him on his shoulders, for it is said, *In the desert which you saw, where the Lord, your God carried you (Deut 1:31).*

The son began to suffer from the sun; He spread on him His cloak, for it is said, *He has spread a cloud as a curtain (Ps 105:39).*

He became hungry; He fed him. . . . He became thirsty, He gave him drink. . . .<sup>30</sup>

The parable compares the relationship of the cloud and the Israelites in the desert to that of a king and his son on a journey. When dangers arise the king takes precautions to protect his son. The analogy suggests that the clouds of glory are not simply an impersonal screen, shield, or barrier, but are associated with love and nurture. This sentiment also emerges from the Hosean prooftext where God holds Ephraim (= Israel) in His arms like a father dotting upon his son. Two verses earlier in Hosea God relates how he

presence, and stands in the middle of the camp as symbol of God's nearness. Already we sense the three main characteristics of the clouds of glory that appear in rabbinic traditions: protection, presence, and love.

First, protection. The Tosefta describes how the clouds destroyed snakes and scorpions, ensuring that the Israelites would not be harmed as they marched through the wilderness. The clouds naturally sheltered the Israelites from the hot sun overhead and, more miraculously, insulated them from the hot sand below their feet.<sup>15</sup> Yet the clouds not only provided protection against natural dangers, but they protected Israel from their enemies. According to the *Mekhilla*, when the Egyptians tried to attack the Israelites on the shores of the Sea of Reeds, they "would shoot at them arrows and stones from their catapults, which the angel and the cloud intercepted."<sup>16</sup> The clouds also protect Moses and Aaron from stones thrown at them during the incidents of the murmurings of the people.<sup>17</sup> The clouds even provided personal protection for the individual Israelite wherever he or she went: "If one of the Israelites was drawn away from the wings of the cloud, the cloud would be drawn with him, behind him, until he returned [to the camp]."<sup>18</sup> Given this absolute protective shield, the rabbis are pressed hard to explain how the Israelites could have been vulnerable to attack. Commenting on the Amalekite assault upon the "stragglers" at the rear of the camp (Deut 25:18), the midrash explains that the enemy could harm only those "who 'straggled' from [obeying] God's ways and found themselves cast out from under the wings of the cloud."<sup>19</sup> Only when the Israelite sinned and lost the protection of the cloud was he exposed to attack. In a later version of the midrash, the Amalekites must trick the Israelites into leaving the enclosure of the clouds of glory.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the rabbis explain that the Canaanite King of Arad was only able to attack the Israelites because the clouds of glory temporarily disappeared following the death of Aaron (Num 21:1-2).<sup>21</sup> While the clouds covered the camp, the Israelites were inviolable. And they possessed the ability to heal. When the Israelites were scorched by fire following the revelation on Mt. Sinai, God sent the clouds of glory to discharge a therapeutic dew over the people.<sup>22</sup>

Second, the presence of God. As a miraculous guide and escort through the desert, the clouds clearly symbolize the continual presence of God among the Israelites. The "glory" is of course "God's glory," the *kavod*, with which the biblical authors depict God's tangible presence.<sup>23</sup> Tosefta Sotah calls one of the clouds the "*shekhina* in their midst," and other sources employ the term *'anan shekhina*, the "cloud of the presence."<sup>24</sup> Several midrashim identify the *shekhina* with the clouds: "When Israel saw the pillar of cloud they knew that the *shekhina* revealed itself to Moses."<sup>25</sup> Num 12:10 relates that the cloud rose from the tent after Aaron and Miriam murmured against Moses, and the midrash comments that "immediately the *shekhina*

### III. Religious Experience, the *Sukkah*, and Shade

The *sukkah* thus symbolizes the clouds of glory, protection, the divine presence, and love. The ritual dwelling in the *sukkah* should cause the occupant to experience these sentiments. But how? Of course knowledge of what the *sukkah* symbolizes might call the symbolism to mind and invite one to appreciate it. On the other hand, intellectual knowledge does not always translate into experience, and it is the living experience of divine protection, presence, and love, not these concepts in the abstract, that makes the ritual work. To understand the religious experience of dwelling in the *sukkah*—to grasp how the symbolism is actually experienced—it is necessary to investigate the rabbinic conception of the *sukkah*. And to do so we must turn to the halakhic sources that define the rabbinic *sukkah* rather than aggadic traditions about its symbolism.

The defining characteristic of the *sukkah* in rabbinic sources is that it produce shade. The first Mishna in the tractate rules that a *sukkah* must produce more shade than sun, and much of the following legislation governs how the shade may and may not be produced. *Skhakh*, the thatched roofing that casts the shade, is the major requirement of the *sukkah*. Few laws relate to the walls of the *sukkah*, other than establishing a minimum number and maximum and minimum height.<sup>34</sup> That four posts of a mere handbreadth in diameter may serve as “walls” and that the walls may be made from almost any substance suggest that they are of secondary import.<sup>35</sup> The *skhakh*, on the other hand, is meticulously regulated.<sup>36</sup> In elucidating these and other laws the talmudic commentaries conclude that *skhakh* and shade are the essence of the *sukkah*. Thus the Tosafot comment:

Granted that we do not worry about the walls, whether one makes them permanent, nevertheless, with the *skhakh*—because the essence of the [term] ‘*sukka*’ is on account of [its having] *skhakh*—it is not fit. . . .<sup>37</sup>

Rashi observes, “It is called a *sukkah* on account of the shade, since it provides shelter (*mesukakh*) from the heat.”<sup>38</sup>

Several other laws demonstrate the importance of shade. A *sukkah* constructed within a house is not valid.<sup>39</sup> In this case the *sukkah* does not provide shade. It does not screen the occupant from the sun or provide protection against the elements, for the whole structure is contained under the solid ceiling of the house.

Likewise one who sleeps under the bed in a *sukkah*, or eats beneath a sheet or some other barrier, has not fulfilled his obligation.<sup>40</sup> In this case he does not directly experience the shade produced by the *sukkah*. The requirement is not simply that there be shade, but that the shade be experienced by the occupant. This law illustrates that symbolism alone is insufficient. The rabbis are concerned that a religious experience take place.

“fell in love with Israel when he was still a child, and have called [him] My son ever since Egypt” (Hos 11:1). The clouds in the desert enveloping the Israelites on all sides are understood as the embrace of God’s arms and his paternal love. That the king supplies the needs of his son, providing him food, water, and shade, also expresses love in addition to mere protection.

The clouds of glory are therefore associated with the protection, presence, and love of God. The *sukkah*, which symbolized the clouds, should likewise be associated with these ideas. Several sources indeed link divine protection and love directly to the *sukkah*. Consider *Shir HaShirim Rabba* 2:6:

*His left hand is under my head—that means the sukkaḥ. And his right hand embraces me (Song 2:6)—that means the cloud of the shekhina in the world to come.<sup>31</sup>*

The Song of Songs was understood by the rabbis as an allegory of God’s relationship to Israel. The midrash regularly translates the poetic biblical imagery into more concrete terms which derive from Jewish historical and ritual experience. The tender embrace of the two lovers narrated in the Song of Songs, interpreted in terms of God’s love for Israel, is coordinated with the *sukkah* and the “cloud of the *shekhina*.” Thus the *sukkah* was a sign of divine embrace and symbolized divine love. The midrash also reveals that the rabbis expected the clouds of glory to return in the world to come and to guide the people as they had during the exodus.<sup>32</sup> In this world the clouds of glory, which embody God’s presence and love, are symbolized by the *sukkah*, but in the next world *sukkot* will not be needed—the clouds will reappear and permanently manifest the divine presence.

A fascinating tradition relates divine protection directly to the *sukkah*:

*You [Israel] are a vineyard, as it says, For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel (Isa 5:7). Make a sukkaḥ for the guard so that He may guard you.<sup>33</sup>*

This midrash picks up on the original function of the *sukkaḥ* as a protective shelter for guards or workers in the fields. Isaiah compares Israel to a vineyard and God to the owner or guard. The midrash extends the metaphor by enjoining that Israel build *sukkot* for its guard. Just as the guard dwells in the *sukkaḥ* and watches over the field, so God will dwell in the *sukkaḥ* and protect its occupant. There is some irony in this interpretation in that the *sukkaḥ* typically shelters the guard, who in turn watches over the field, yet God obviously needs no shelter from the *sukkaḥ*. Rather the *sukkaḥ* becomes a symbolic space for God to dwell among his people. One can see that this tradition is related to the conception of the *sukkaḥ* as a symbol of the clouds of glory, the manifestation of the presence and protection of God. Here the symbolism is reified: God—not his glory or cloud—actually enters the festival *sukkaḥ*.

“natural” or “inevitable.” The Bible only commands that one reside in a *sukkah*; it gives no instructions as to how it should be built.<sup>50</sup> The Samaritans, for example, build *sukkot* within their houses.<sup>51</sup> Their exegetes relied exclusively on the written Torah and arrived at that practice. The rabbis, on the other hand, with the oral law, defined the *sukkah* in terms of *skhakh* and shade. These are characteristic of the rabbinic conception of the *sukkah*, and create the religious experience the rabbis intended.

#### IV. The Shade of God

To dwell in the *sukkah* is to experience shade. The resulting *religious* experience derives from the meanings of shade in Jewish tradition. Shade represents protection, the divine presence, and love—the main characteristics of the clouds of glory!

In the most basic terms shade provides protection from the blazing sun. Recall that Jonah was extremely happy in the shade of his *sukkah* and so uncomfortable when the gourd withered that he wished for death.<sup>52</sup> Shade therefore became a metaphor for general protection. Lot beseeches the Sodomites not to harm the strangers who have come under the “shade of my [roof-]beam,” that is, the protection of his domain.<sup>53</sup> This metaphor is widely applied to the protection that a leader or king provides. Isaiah prophesies doom for those who dare: “To seek refuge with Pharaoh, To seek shelter under the shade (protection) of Egypt. The refuge with Pharaoh shall result in your shame; the shelter under Pharaoh’s shade in your chagrin.”<sup>54</sup> The same metaphor is regularly applied to the protection provided by God: “The Lord is your guardian, the Lord is your shade (shadow) at your right hand. . . . The Lord will guard you from all harm, He will guard your life.”<sup>55</sup> The most profound biblical expression of this symbolism appears in Ps 91:

- (1) O you who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, and abide in the shade (*set*) of Shaddai—
- (2) I say of the Lord, my refuge and stronghold, my God in whom I trust,
- (3) That he will save you from the fowler’s trap, from destructive plagues
- (4) He will cover (*yaseki*) you with His pinions; you will find refuge under his wings; His fidelity is an encircling shield.

To reside in the shade of God is to be within a divine “shelter,” “refuge,” “stronghold,” and “shield.” He who does so is protected from snares, diseases, and plagues described in the rest of the Psalm. The psalmist uses the metaphor of the sheltering wings of a bird, an image which evokes a sense of maternal love in addition to protection. The Bible often expresses

The Mishna rules that a *sukkah* may not be constructed under a tree.<sup>41</sup> This law is extremely significant. In this case the resident experiences shade. The environment created within the *sukkah* is identical to that of a *sukkah* that does not stand beneath a tree—shade produced by leaves, branches, or foliage. But this *sukkah* is not valid because the resident does not experience the shade *from the skhakh*. Rabbinic law insists that the *sukkah*—the *skhakh*—produce shade and that the occupant experience the shade of the *sukkah*.

A telling exception to the laws of *skhakh* also emphasizes the centrality of shade. The Mishna rules that wooden beams of a certain size may not be used for *skhakh*, and that if a single beam of sufficient size is placed on the *sukkah*, the resident may not sleep under it.<sup>42</sup> Wooden beams, however, meet the demands the rabbis established for *skhakh*: they derive from organic matter and they are not presently growing in the ground.<sup>43</sup> The Talmud explains that the reason beams are disqualified is that they begin to resemble a normal ceiling.<sup>44</sup> Like plaster, bricks or large boards, wooden beams create the inside of the abode, not a shaded place. Shade is a comparative concept; it is the lesser brightness or heat caused by an object intercepting rays of light. To recognize shade involves an awareness of an area in which light is absent even as the sun is perceived in the environs. The rabbis disqualified beams to ensure that a *sukkah* produce shade that could be experienced.<sup>45</sup>

Several laws concerning the structure of the *sukkah* are justified by considerations of shade. Mishna *Sukkah* 1:1 rules that a *sukkah* may not be more than twenty cubits high. R. Zera and R. Abahu in the name of R. Yohanan explain that when the roof reaches such a height, its shade does not extend to the ground, and hence one does not reside in the shade of the *sukkah*.<sup>46</sup> In this case the shade comes from the walls, which are not considered the essence of the *sukkah*.<sup>47</sup> Rabba, on the other hand, explains that if the roof is higher than twenty cubits, one does not “know” that he is inside a *sukkah*.<sup>48</sup> At such a height the resident is unaware of the *skhakh* above him, although he may be well aware of the nearby walls. These amoraic explanations presuppose the necessity that the resident experience the shade produced by the *skhakh*.

The desire to create shade seems to be primarily responsible for the laws that define *skhakh* as foliage. *Skhakh* must come from materials that “had roots in the soil,” from vegetation of various sorts. The Mishna’s examples of materials used for *skhakh* are all substances that provide shade: cut foliage, such as straw, wood or brushwood; vines, gourds, and ivy; sheaves of grain, stalks, and bundles of stubble.<sup>49</sup> The laws makes sense if we understand that shade is generally associated with trees and other vegetation, as in the hot summers of the Middle East.

One should not think that the concept of *skhakh* or the requirement to experience shade is an inherent aspect of the *sukkah*, as if these laws are

the World Came into Being. That is the meaning of the verse, *How precious your faithful care, O God! Mankind shelters in the shade of your wings (Ps 36:8).*<sup>63</sup>

The midrash turns on the metaphoric meaning of shade as protection, and postulates many levels of shelter corresponding to the different providers of shade. It promises, however, that those who perform good deeds are not simply protected in this metaphoric shade but in the very “shade of God,” the highest form of protection.

The pieces of the puzzle are now complete. Shade is an expression of the sheltering divine presence,<sup>64</sup> while the clouds of glory represent the tangible form of the presence. A close parallel between the halakha and the aggada emerges. *Shade in the halakha parallels the clouds of glory in the aggada.* The laws deeming a *sukkah* valid only if there is more shade than sunlight parallel the symbolism of the *sukkah* as a divine cloud. The laws that define the nature of *skhakh* and require that the resident dwell under its shade reflect the aggadic conception that the clouds enveloped the Israelites on all sides.<sup>65</sup> Shade therefore links the associations of the clouds of glory with the annual commandment to reside in the *sukkah*. Jews dwell directly beneath the shade of the *sukkah* just as their ancestors dwelled within the protective shelter and the shade of the clouds. At a deeper level, both the halakhic and aggadic traditions are reflections and expressions of the religious experience of dwelling in the *sukkah*. Residing in the shade of the *sukkah* is to experience divine protection, love, and intimacy. The laws that require *skhakh* and that govern the nature of the *sukkah* create the environment where that experience takes place, while the clouds of glory which the *sukkah* symbolizes convey the same cluster of emotions.

#### V. Shade and the *Sukkah* in Jewish Thought

The symbolism we have been exploring occasionally found clear expression in medieval and modern Jewish thinkers. Meir ben Gedaliah of Lublin (Maharam) in his commentary to Tractate *Sukkah* explains:

This is what the verse (Lev 23:42) means: *You shall live in sukkot* in order that *future generations* will remember the surrounding clouds of glory that were in the desert. By what means will they remember the surrounding clouds of glory? When they see and perceive that they dwell in the shade of the *skhakh* of the *sukkah*.<sup>66</sup>

A clear and succinct expression of this symbolism! Surrounded by the shade of the *sukkah*, the occupant is moved to recall the clouds of glory that surrounded the Israelites in the desert, providing shade and protection. Note that the Maharam specifies that the symbolism is experienced by actually dwelling in the shade. Simply to look at a *sukkah*, even if one knows that it symbolizes the clouds of glory, is not sufficient. Rabbi Yeḥiel Mekhiel

this metaphor more graphically as the “shade of God’s wings,”<sup>56</sup> which also evokes a sense of love: “How precious is Your faithful care, O God! Mankind shelters in the shade of your wings.”<sup>57</sup>

Rabbinic traditions display similar associations with shade. R. Abahu interprets Hos 14:8, “Those who sit in his shade shall be revived,” in terms of gentiles “who come and take refuge in the shade of the Holy One, Blessed be He.”<sup>58</sup> Thus the image for conversion, for “drawing near” and seeking refuge with God, is that of entering under God’s shade. Potential converts find God’s presence manifested as shade. The following parable expresses a related idea:

Whoever learns the Torah, Prophets and Writings, Mishna and midrash, halakhot and aggadot and serves the sages- God Himself guards him. They made a parable. To what is it similar? To a king who was walking with his son in the desert. When they encountered the sun and the burning heat, the father stood up in the sun and made shade for his son, so that he should not be touched by the sun and burning heat. Thus it is written, *The Lord is your guardian, the Lord is your shade at your right hand (Ps 121:5).*<sup>59</sup>

The biblical verse, which describes God as shade (or shadow), is interpreted in terms of God guarding the individual. One merits that protection by studying Torah. The parable of the king and his son again goes beyond protection and introduces a sense of paternal love. Indeed, this parable should call to mind the parable related to the clouds of glory, cited above, which also compared the protection of clouds to that which the king provides for his son. Note that when the boy suffers from the heat of the sun, the king interposes his body to protect him. Thus the kings in the two parables, and the cloud and God in the applications, all provide shade. The qualities of the clouds of glory and those of the shade produced by the *sukkah* are strikingly similar.<sup>60</sup>

A development of this imagery appears in the concept of the “shade of God” in rabbinic sources. This notion goes beyond the metaphoric use of shade and postulates a concrete manifestation of the divine protective presence. According to the midrash, “were it not for the shade of God that protects a human being, the demons (*mezigin*) would kill him.”<sup>61</sup> The Palestinian Talmud promises that “whoever engages in [the study] of Torah and acts of loving-kindness will sit in the shade of God.”<sup>62</sup> The “shade of God” thus relates to a substantive realm that bestows God’s special care. That shade is the most perfect protection:

How great is the power of those who are righteous and those who do good deeds! They do not find shelter [merely] in the shade of dawn, nor the shade of the wings of the earth, nor the shade of the wings of the sun, nor the shade of the wings of animals, nor the shade of the wings of the Cherubim, nor the shade of the wings of the Serafim, but in the shade of Him Who Spoke and

“will illuminate him, cover him and shield him when he requires it.”<sup>73</sup> The *sukkah* thus represents the high spiritual level—complete trust, faith, and knowledge of God—to which the qabbalist aspires. The Zohar even identifies the “shade of faith” and the *sukkah* itself directly with the *shekhina*, one of the ten divine hypostases (sefirot) in the qabbalistic conception of God.<sup>74</sup> Those who dwell in the *sukkah* are surrounded by God and inviolable. The *shekhina-sukkah* “is the supernal mother who shelters you like a mother [shelters] her children.”<sup>75</sup> In this way maternal love and intimacy are also connected with the dwelling in the *sukkah*.

The well-known custom of *ushpizin*, of inviting “guests” in the *sukkah*, reflects yet another transformation of this symbolism into mystical terms: “When one sits in this dwelling, the shade of faith, the *shekhina* spreads her wings over him from above, and Abraham and five other righteous heroes come to dwell with him.”<sup>76</sup> The seven “guests” or “heroes”—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joseph, Aaron, and David (= the *shekhina*)—are seven sefirot. These were identified with the seven clouds of glory and the seven days of the festival. Each day of *Sukkot* the qabbalists invited these seven sefirot to abide with them in the *sukkah*. Just as the Israelites in the desert were accompanied by the seven sefirot (the clouds), so the qabbalists summoned the sefirot to surround them in their *sukkot*, which symbolized the clouds. Above we cited a midrash which enjoined that one make a *sukkah* for God so that he can guard Israel. The qabbalists translated this idea into mystical terms, calling upon the seven sefirot to join the resident in his *sukkah*. God resides in the shade of the *sukkah* together with the Jew who fulfills the commandment.

It is fitting to close with a selection from the liturgy. The prayer *hashkiveinu*, the second blessing following the *shema* in the evening service, invokes the idea of a “*sukkah* of peace”:

Cause us, our God, to lie down in peace, and awaken us to life, our King. Spread over us the *sukkah* of your peace, guide us with your good counsel. Save us for the sake of your name. Protect us, shield us from enemies, pestilence, sword, starvation and sorrow. Remove the the evil forces that surround us. Hide us in the shadow (shade) of your wings, for you, our God, are our guardian and deliverer; you are a gracious and merciful king. Guard our coming and our going for life and peace, now and always. Praised are you, Lord who spreads his *sukkah* of peace over us, over all his people Israel and over Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup>

The prayer asks God for protection at night and especially during sleep, when evil forces are most prone to act. At this vulnerable time God should spread a protective *sukkah* over the individual and shield him from all harmful forces. Safe in the shade of this “*sukkah* of peace,” also called the shade of God’s wings, he will not be harmed. God seems to inhabit the

Epstein, in his code *'Arukh HaShulhan* develops this trend of thought by connecting the protective shade of the *sukkah* to the aftermath of Yom Kippur:

On Yom Kippur, when we repent, God forgives our sins. The proof of this is that immediately after Yom Kippur he commands us to make a *sukkah*, so that we dwell in the shade of the Holy Blessed One, as it says, "I love to sit in his shade (*Song 2:3*)—this is the commandment of the *sukkah*. . . ." This teaches that despite all our sins, God still loves us and watches over us to protect us from all sorrow and harm. He causes us to dwell in his holy and pure shade, and he shelters (*sokek*) us.<sup>67</sup>

The proximity of *Sukkot* to Yom Kippur stimulates Rabbi Epstein to attribute a special assurance or reassurance to the meaning of the ritual dwelling.<sup>68</sup> The Days of Awe and the process of repentance—recounting sin, resolving to improve, asking for forgiveness—creates a psychological distance between the people and God. The High Holiday liturgy indeed pictures God more as an imposing judge and powerful king than a loving parent. And despite the promise of forgiveness, the penitent cannot help but worry that the judge has rejected his repentance and consigned him to suffer for his sins. The *sukkah* restores the harmonious and loving relationship between God and the people. By entering in the "holy and pure shade" of God, the Jew is welcomed back into the divine presence. She experiences the proximity and love of God, and internalizes the fact that sin has been forgiven and the relationship restored. The shelter provided by *skhakh* is the (almost) tangible sign that God again shelters—*sokek*—the occupant.<sup>69</sup>

Medieval Qabbala refracted this symbolism through a mystical lens so as to attach mystical importance to dwelling in the *sukkah*.<sup>70</sup>

*It shall serve as a sukkah for shade by day (Isa 4:6). Thus [a sukkah] requires skhakh. The purpose of skhakh is to provide shade, as it says He abides in the shade of Shaddai (Ps 91:1). Not in the shade of an ordinary sukkah (sukkat hediot) which protects one's body from the sun. But in shade that protects his soul.*<sup>71</sup>

The Zohar invokes the notion of the shade of God (Shaddai), and explains that this divine shade provides a mystical protection of the soul, rather than physical protection from the elements. The shade of the ritual *sukkah*, unlike the shade of an ordinary *sukkah*, has this crucial power. The idea of the "shade of faith," a prominent idea in the Zohar, is naturally associated with the *sukkah*, and seems to be a development of the "shade of God" found in rabbinic sources. The exodus generation dwelled under the clouds of glory in the "shade of faith," and those who now dwell in *sukkot* dwell in that same shade and merit divine blessing: "He who dwells beneath the shade of faith gains freedom both for himself and for his descendants forever and is blessed from the blessings from on High."<sup>72</sup> The shade of faith found in the *sukkah*

- On re-enactment and commemoration see Joseph Stern, "Reference Modes in the Rituals of Judaism," *Religious Studies* 23 (1987), 109-28.
5. Exod 16:16; 33:8,10; Num 11:10, 16:27, 24:5; Deut 1:27, 5:27.
  6. See Eliczer Mizrahi's supercommentary to Rashi's commentary to the Torah, Lev 23:43.
  7. See *Beit Yosef*, comment to Tur, 'Orah H'ayyim, §625.
  8. Isa 4:5-6.
  9. Exod 13:21-2, 14:19, 33:9-10, 40:34-38; Num 12:5, 14:14; Deut 31:15; Ps 78:14, 99:7; Neh 9:12, 19.
  10. Exod 33:9-11; 34:5; Num 9:15-23, 11:25; 12:5-6, 14:14, 17:7; Deut 1:33, 31:15.
  11. Lev 16:2; Num 11:25, 14:14. On Mt. Sinai God revealed himself to Moses in a cloud; Exod 34:5.
  12. In other words, R. Akiba's interpretive method was *peshat*, not *derash*. Note that Rashi, in his commentary to the Torah, explains the term *sukkot* here as the clouds of glory, following R. Akiba. And Rashi's intention was to explain the "plain sense of the text" (*peshuto shel migra*; see Rashi's comment to Gen 3:8.) See too Ramban's explanation of Rashi in his commentary to Lev 23:43. (This is not to say that this interpretation actually *is* the *peshat*, but that medieval commentators thought it was the *peshat*.)
  13. On the "glory," see n. 22.
  14. tSot 4:2 (Vienna manuscript). Cf. *Sifre Num.* §83 (79); *SZ* 10:33 (266); *Mekhilta RSBY*, 47 to Exod 13:20; *Mekhilta Beshalah*, *petihta* §81, the clouds are termed "clouds of glory" in line 17); *Bar* 19:22.
  15. *SZ* 10:33 (266); *Tanhuma*, *Beshalah* §3 (110a).
  16. *Mekhilta Beshalah* §4 (102); *Mekhilta RSBY*, 60-61. This idea may derive, in part, from Ps 105:39, "He spread a cloud for a screen" (*masakh*).
  17. Exod 16:1-10 and Num 14:1-10 as interpreted in *Mekhilta Vayasa* §2 (163) and *Mekhilta RSBY*, 108 to Exod 16:10. And see *Bar* 16:21; *Yalqut Shimoni* §743; *TanB* 4:69; bSot 35a and L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909-38), 6:96, n. 538.
  18. *Sifre Num.* §83 (79). See too *Mekhilta RSBY*, 135 to Exod 18:27.
  19. *Sifre Deut.* §296 (314). Cf. *PIRK* 3:12 (49-50); *Mekhilta RSBY*, 119 to Exod 17:8; targum to Song 2:15 and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:24.
  20. *TanB* 5:41.
  21. tSot 11:1. Cf. bRH 3a; *Bar* 19:20.
  22. *Mekhilta Bahodesh* §9 (236). Cf. tAr 1:10. *DR* 7:11 relates that the garments of the Israelites never wore out in the desert (Deut 8:4) because the cloud rubbed and whitened them.
  23. The Bible does not use the term "clouds of glory," although the glory sometimes appears as a cloud: "the priests were not able to stand and perform the service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the House of the Lord" (1 Kgs 8:11). See Cf. Exod 24:15-16; 40:34; 1 Kgs 8:12-13 and 2 Chr 5:13-6:2. Rabbinic literature conflated these images into the "clouds of glory."
  24. *Baraita D-Meleket Ha-Mishkan: Critical Edition with Introduction*, ed. R. Kirchner (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1989), 14.5 (218), *SZ* 10:33 (266), *TanB* 4:12-13, targum to Song 1:4. On the *shekhina*, see A.M. Goldberg, *Untersuchungen über die Vorstellung von der Shekhina in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), and especially pp. 91-99.
  25. *SR* 45:4; see bSuk 5a, *TanB* 2:124, and targum to Song 3:1-2, where the Israelites search for the *shekhina* after the clouds of glory disappear.
  26. *SZ* 11:10 (276).
  27. E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols of the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953-68), 1:247 (see also 10:135).
  28. *Mekhilta RSBY*, 33; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Exod 13:20 and Num 33:5.
  29. *Bar* 20:19, following Neh 9:18-20. In the targum to Song 2:6, the cloud that protected the people from below is compared to a nurse who carries a baby at her breast.
  30. *Mekhilta Beshalah* §4 (101). The translation follows D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 28 based on his forthcoming edition.

“*sukkah* of peace” and watch over his people, just as the watchman inhabits the *sukkah* found in fields and watches over the crops. It is significant that the symbolism and experience of the ritual *sukkah* has been appropriated by the liturgy to serve as a general metaphor for divine protection.<sup>78</sup> Each night one prays to lie down in a “*sukkah* of peace,” that the divine protection not be limited to the festival of *Sukkot* when actually sleeping in a *sukkah*. This use of the symbolism testifies to the power of the *sukkah* ritual. The shade of the *sukkah* provided such a consummate sense of God’s protection, love, and presence that one hopes to have that experience each night of one’s life.

#### NOTES

1. A longer and more technical version of this article can be found in my forthcoming book, *The History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods* (Brown Judaica Series; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press), chapter 6. The following abbreviations and editions of rabbinic sources are used in the notes: m = Mishna; t = Tosefta; b = Babylonian Talmud; y = Palestinian Talmud; BaR = *Bamidbar Rabba* (traditional printing); BR = *Bereishit Rabba*, ed. J. Theodor and H. Albeck (Jerusalem, 1965 [1903–29]); DR = *Devarim Rabba*, ed. S. Lieberman (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1964); ER = *Seder Eliahu Rabba und Seder Eliahu Zuta (Tanna Debe Eliahu)*, ed. M. Ish-Shalom (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1969 [1904]); Mekhilta = *Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael*, ed. H. Horowitz (Jerusalem, 1960); Mekhilta RSBY = *Mekhilta d’Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai*, ed. J.N. Epstein and E.Z. Melamed (Jerusalem, 1955); MT’ch = *Midrash Tehillim*, ed. S. Buber (Jerusalem, 1966 [Vilna, 1891]); PRK = *Pesiqta DeRav Kahana*, ed. B. Mandelbaum (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1987); ShR = *Shir HaShirim Rabba* (traditional printing); Sifra, ed. I. Weiss (New York, 1946 [Vienna, 1862]); Sifre Deut. = *Sifre Devarim*, ed. L. Finkelstein (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1979 [Berlin, 1940]); Sifre Num. = *Sifre ‘al sefer bamidbar veSifre Zuta*, ed. H.S. Horowitz (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1966 [Leipzig, 1917]); SR = *Shmot Rabba*; SZ = *Sifre Zuta*—see *Sifre Num.*; Tan = *Tanhuma* (Berlin, 1927); TanB = *Tanhuma*, ed. S. Buber (Jerusalem, 1964); VR = *Midrash Vayiqra Rabba*, ed. M. Margoliot (Jerusalem, 1953–60).

2. *Sifra Emor* 17:11 (103a–b). This tradition appears several times in rabbinic literature, and some versions reverse the attributions such that R. Akiba advocates real *sukkot* and R. Eliezer the clouds of glory. Reversed attributions appear in bSuk 11b and *Mekhilta RSBY*, 33. Parallels to the Sifra appear in *Mekhilta Pisha* §14 (48), *Mekhilta Beshalah*, *petihta* (80), and *Mekhilta RSBY*, 47. The Sifra version is more reliable for several reasons. First, R. Eliezer often uses the term *mamash* (“real”) in his interpretations. See *Sifre Deut.* §213 (246); *Mekhilta Neziqin* §8 (277) and bBQ 84a. And see Y. Gilat, *R. Eliezer Ben Hyrcanus—A Scholar Outcast* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1984), 68–82 on R. Eliezer’s tendency toward literal interpretation. Second, Targum Onkelos and the other Aramaic targums translate *sukkot* as the clouds of glory. Targum Onkelos is generally consistent with Akiba’s hermeneutics, which suggests that this was R. Akiba’s interpretation. Most medieval writers slavishly follow the Babylonian Talmud and attribute the clouds of glory interpretation to R. Eliezer.

3. *Tan Bo* §9 (210); *ShR* 1:7; *PRK*, “Alternative Parsha,” 457; Tur, *‘Orah Hayyim*, §625; Mordechai Jaffee, *Levush haLur*, §625.

4. In more technical language: For R. Eliezer the annual ritual *re-enacts* the exodus from Egypt. Just as the biblical Israelites resided in rudimentary shelters as they fled from Egypt, so subsequent generations re-enact that event and occupy a similar shelter. For R. Akiba the annual ritual does not *re-enact*, but rather *commemorates*, the exodus *sukkot*, the clouds of glory.

61. *MTeh* 104:24 (447).
62. *yMeg* 3:7, 74b. The prooftext is Ps 36:8: "How precious is Your faithful care, O God! Mankind shelters in the shadow of your wings." Cf. *PRK* 16:1 (264); *RR*5:4; *yTa* 4:1, 68a (=ySot 7:4, 21d).
63. *Ruth Rabba* 5:4. The midrash comments on Ruth 2:12: "May the Lord reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge."
64. Shade unambiguously symbolizes the presence of God in *Tan Vayaqhel* §7 (337). The midrash explains that Exod 37:1 specifies that Bezalel himself fashioned the ark (rather than delegating the task to another) because "there [in the ark] resides the shade of God, who contracts his presence (*shekhina*) there. On this account he was named *bezael* (*bezel 'el* = in the shade of God), since he made the shade of God between the *keruvim*, as it says, *Then I will meet with you, and I will impart to you—from above the cover, from between the two keruvim that are on top of the Ark of the Pact—all that I will command you concerning the Israelite people (Exod 25:22).*" The most concentrated locus of God's presence, that which dwells in the ark, manifests itself as shade. In another version of the midrash, cited in M. Kasher, *Torah shelema* (Jerusalem: Hachiyah, 1964), 21:51, Bezalel makes the shade of God, "in order that all Israel can dwell in his shade." Cf. *bBer* 55a, *Tan Vayaqhel* §3 (332–33).
65. The parallel between the laws of the *sukkah* and the clouds of glory periodically appears in medieval Jewish thought. For example, Mordechai Jaffee, *Levush ha'Jur*, §626:1 explains that the *sukkah* must be built directly beneath the sky because the clouds were directly beneath the sky. And see *Bayit Hadash* to Tur, 'Orah H'ayyim, §625, who explains why we are not commanded to build seven *sukkot* corresponding to the seven clouds. He was troubled by the lack of *perfect* parallel between the halakha and the aggada, between the ritual object and its symbolism.
66. Comment to *bSuk* 2a, s.v. *amar*.
67. 'Arukh HaShulhan, 'Orah H'ayyim, §695:5. The midrash he quotes is found in *ShR*2:3.
68. *Sukkot* occurs but four days after the conclusion of Yom Kippur. It is also customary to begin building the *sukkah* immediately after Yom Kippur. See Isserles to *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Orah H'ayyim, §624.
69. See too Bahya ben Asher (d. 1310), *Kad HaKemakh*, in *Kitvei Rabenu Bahye* ed. C. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1969), p. 279: "Thus, whoever fulfills the commandment of the *sukkah* and enters it and turns his eyes toward the *skhakh* made for shade, he realizes that God is the shade of the people of Israel, and that He protects them as shade protects against the sun, as it is written, *The Lord is your guardian, the Lord is your shade at your right hand (Ps 121:5)* and it is further written, *I loved to sit in his shade (Song 2:3).*"
70. On the Zohar's conception of *Sukkot*, see I. Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, trans. David Goldstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 1248–1253.
71. Zohar, 3:255b.
72. Zohar 103a. See too Zohar 1:103b, 1:172b, 1:257b, 2:186b.
73. Zohar 2:186b. See too 3:256a.
74. Zohar 2:135a. See Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1249. In Zohar 3:256a the *shekhina* is identified directly with the *sukkah*: "The *shekhina*: that is the *sukkah*."
75. Zohar 3:255b. See too 3:103b.
76. Zohar 3:103b–104a. For translations and commentary see Lawrence Fine, "Kabbalistic Texts," *Back to the Sources*, ed. Barry Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 330–40; Daniel C. Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 148–52, 268–271 and Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 1305–1308.
77. The current liturgical custom concludes with this form of the blessing on Sabbaths and Festivals. On weekdays the ending is "Praised are you, Lord, eternal guardian of your people Israel."
78. Cf. *Bayit Hadash* to Tur, 'Orah H'ayyim, §625.

31. *ShR* 2:6. *Yalqut Shimoni, Shir Hashirim* §986 relates the verse to the clouds of glory: *its left hand is under my head (Song 2:6)*—that means the clouds that surrounded Israel from above and below.” Thus one source relates the verse to the *sukkah*, and a variant tradition to the clouds of glory.

32. The return of the clouds of glory in the world to come is a widespread motif. See *Mekhilta Pisha* §14 (48); *Mekhilta Beshalah, petihta* (80). Cf. *Mekhilta RSBY*, 47 to Exod 13:20; *BR* 1:10 (487). Clouds also carry eschatological overtones in the Bible through their connection with the Day of Judgment: Ezek 30:3, 38:9, Joel 2:2, Zeph 1:15, Isa 45:8.

33. *SR* 34:3.

34. *tSuk* 1:12–13; *mSuk* 1:9.

35. *tSuk* 1:12–13; *bSuk* 4b; *baraita*, *ySuk* 1:1, 51c. *mSuk* 1:5 and *tSuk* 1:2 explicitly state that the laws of *skhakh* do not pertain to the walls. Only R. Yoshia rules that the walls must provide more shade than sun, *bSuk* 7b.

36. *mSuk* chapters 1 and 2.

37. *Tosafot*, *bSuk* 2a, s.v. *ki*.

38. *Rashi*, *b8b*, s.v. *'amar*. That shade is the essence of the *sukkah* is clear from its Aramaic translation, *metalalta*, the regular term in the targums, which comes from the root *L*, shade.

39. *mSuk* 1:2; *Sifra 'Emor* 17:4 (102d).

40. *mSuk* 1:3, 2:1; *bSuk* 10b, 21b.

41. *mSuk* 1:2, *Sifra 'Emor* 17:4 (102d).

42. *mSuk* 1:6–7. Cf. the *baraitot*, *tSuk* 1:7, *bSuk* 14a–b and *bSuk* 14b which debate the maximal size of beams.

43. *mSuk* 1:4. Several formulations of this principle appear in the manuscripts.

44. This explanation follows Rav, *bSuk* 14a and *ySuk* 1:7, 52b.

45. For the same reason the *skhakh* should not be so thick that no light whatsoever can be perceived through it. See *Levush ha'fur*, §631:3.

46. *bSuk* 2a (R. Zera); *ySuk* 1:1, 51d (R. Yohanan).

47. *tSuk* 1:2; *bSuk* 7b.

48. *bSuk* 2a.

49. *mSuk* 1:4–5, *tSuk* 1:4–6.

50. Nehemiah 8:15 provides a partial description of the building of a *sukkah*. The people went to the mountainside and gather “leafy branches of olive trees, pine trees, myrtles, palms and other leafy trees to make booths.” However, it is not stated exactly how these branches were used, whether for *skhakh* or for the walls or both. Moreover, the rabbis did not treat this verse as authoritative or they would have required that all five substances be used. See, however, R. Huda's opinion, *Sifra 'Emor* 17:10 (103a); *ySuk* 3:4, 53d and *Tosafot*, *bSuk* 37a, s.v. *vehavi'u*.

51. See Sylvia Powels, “The Samaritan Calendar and the Roots of Samaritan Chronology,” *The Samaritans*, ed. Alan D. Crown (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988), p. 732 and Reinhard G. Krüger, *The Samaritans* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 23 and the photographs of such *sukkot*, plates 41–42. The Samaritans thus dwell within a *sukkah*, but not in its shade.

52. Jon 4:5–9. Indeed, the ritual *sukkah* probably derives from the original function of *bot* as shelters in which guards of fields found respite from the hot sun.

53. Gen 19:8. Cf. Isa 16:3–4, Jer 48:45. See too Herbert Levine, “The Symbolic *Sukkah* and the Psalms,” *Prooftexts* 7 (1987), pp. 259–267.

54. Isa 30:2–3.

55. Ps 121:5–7.

56. Ps 17:8, 36:8, 57:2, 63:8; Isa 31:5, 49:2.

57. Ps 36:8. See too Ps 17:8, 57:2.

58. *VR* 1:2 (6), *Bar* 8:1. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan translates Deut 23:16, the prohibition against returning a runaway slave, as a prohibition against delivering a gentile who desires “to dwell under the shade of My *shekhina*” back to idolatry. According to *yTa* 3:2, 68a (= *ySot* 7:4, 21d), whoever performs good deeds merits to sit in the shade of God. See too *bAr* 32b.

59. *ER* §18 (100). Cf. Deut 1:31 and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.

60. Of course clouds provide shade, and the clouds of glory protected the Israelites from the sun.