



# GROWTH

## At The

# YOM TOV TABLE

## SUKKOT

*Special Holiday  
Double-Sided  
Edition!*

### Family Feud

R' YY Jacobson shared the following sentiment.

*A few years ago, in Israel, someone published a clip of an elderly man waiting for the bus at a certain stop. Near him was a youngster wearing earphones that blasted intense rap music, and although it was streaming into his ears, the volume was raised so high that everyone around him could hear it loud and clear. After several moments, the old man took out a candy and offered it to the young Israeli boy. "Achi (my brother)," he said, "would you like a candy?" The headphone-wearing adolescent was taken aback. "Why do you call me your brother?" he demanded to know. The old man reassured him that they were brothers, but the kid refused to hear of it. "You're a religious fanatic!" the kid yelled. "You're a madman! You're a nut-job! I'm an open-minded progressive, a modern human being. We are not brothers!"*

*The old man looked at the boy and responded, "We're also not wearing the same hat; brothers can wear different hats and still be brothers." The boy scoffed. "No, no, no! Did you ever eat a cheeseburger in your life?" As the old man hesitated to answer, the boy exclaimed, "Ha! I told you! I eat shrimp! I eat lobster! I eat pork! I eat cheeseburgers! If you're my brother, come eat cheeseburgers with me!" Still calm, the old man explained, "We can have disagreements, yet still be brothers." At that point, the youngster pulled up his sleeve. "No," he said, as he revealed his arm. "Some disagreements sever the relationship." He showed the old man a huge tattoo of a rifle on his arm. "I may be buried in Har Herzl with my comrades who fight for this country, but people like you don't think I deserve to be buried in a Jewish cemetery because of these tattoos on my skin!" The elderly Jew pulled up his own sleeve and replied, "I also have a tattoo..." as he showed the boy the numbers on his arm. He turned to the boy and continued, "I had a teacher... he was a very good teacher... a very skilled teacher... and he taught me that we are brothers." The kid inquired who the teacher was, to which the old man said, "His name was Adolf Hitler. He taught me in those camps, where I was given this number on my arm, that you and I are brothers." Suddenly, all the palpable tension, anxiety, and animosity melted away. Because at that moment, the Israeli boy was reminded that G-d didn't choose a specific group or sect among us; He chose all of us. And the anti-Semites throughout history, who never discriminated between different types of Jews, have made and continue to make it crystal clear.*

One of the most famous incidents involving Shlomo HaMelech was just after he had received the Divine gift of supernatural wisdom, when he judged a court-case between two women who argued

over the identity of a mystery baby's mother. These two women had each given birth at the same time, and overnight, tragically, one of them inadvertently killed her baby. The next morning, she lied and claimed that the living baby really belonged to her and that the dead baby had been born to the other mother. They brought their dispute before Shlomo HaMelech, each one claiming to be the real mother of the surviving infant and that the other was a phony. As the story is narrated, King Solomon, in his great wisdom, ruled that the baby should be sliced in half, upon which one litigant – the real mother – protested, pleading to keep the baby intact and allow the other woman to win, whereas the other litigant – the liar – found the verdict satisfactory. Shlomo, having used this wild ruling merely as a ploy, exposed the pro-splicer as the phony and the other as the real mother, factoring in the undeniable element of a true mother's compassion.

Have you ever wondered about how odd this story appears? First of all, what kind of absurd ruling is that, to kill the baby? And moreover, frankly speaking, how foolish could the phony have been to expose herself with her radical monstrosity and actually nod along to cutting the baby in half?!

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, gave a phenomenal answer. Every story in the Torah carries much symbolic and metaphoric significance. This tale is no exception; it brings out a shockingly common reality. Oftentimes, we argue and express differences of opinion with one another about a topic that is so precious to us. And what commonly takes place is that each side wants to win so badly, and what we hold so near and dear to us ("the baby") gets destroyed in the process. The arguments may be totally legitimate and important, but in the passion to emerge victorious, both parties devastate what they both love most. King Solomon, in his profound wisdom, acknowledged that the real mother never views victory as the objective, because it comes many times with a price-tag. The real mother says, "Think about the baby!" And what we need to prioritize when debating is to think about one another, and consider what is better for peace, love, and our true values to maintain a relationship.

*As the famous line goes: among 10 Jews, there are 11 opinions. We may argue and disagree, but we must never bring it to a place where the "child" gets cut, because then, everyone loses that which they love most. Of course, it's not always easy. After all, who doesn't want to be right? But at the end of the day, a difference of opinion doesn't have to come at the cost of still loving and respecting one another...*

## Priorities

I recently heard a powerful idea from R' Issamar Ginzberg.

Generally, a few weeks ahead of Sukkot, many people are involved with the various mitzvot of the holiday season – such as obtaining a *lulav* for use on sukkot. In fact, it is an auspicious practice to purchase one's personal set somewhat in advance to allow for a close inspection and scrutiny of each of the *dalet minim*<sup>1</sup> to ensure a set that is kosher and *mehudar*.<sup>2</sup>

Once, a certain *tzaddik* was asked ahead of Sukkot if he had yet conjured a personal set of *dalet minim*. "No," he responded. Somewhat surprised, the individual let his curiosity out of the bag, to which the *tzaddik* explained: "I didn't yet have a chance for my own *dalet minim*; I have been extremely busy taking care of Hashem's *dalet minim*."

The *tzaddik* explained: "Before I could worry about my personal set, how could I abandon those in dire need – G-d's 'dalet minim'? The widows, the orphans, the poor, and those with other challenges, who find themselves struggling to merely get through life? They are in desperate need of assistance – whether financial or emotional – and, as fellow children of Boreh Olam, are of immediate priority..."

This short episode stresses a fundamental principal. Yes, many of us are extremely busy, especially in this hectic holiday season. But we mustn't forget Who we are ultimately serving through all the shopping, cooking, and sukkah-building. Of course, it is very easy to get caught up with work or preparations, all of which are important, but just imagine how incredibly special it would be to show our Father that our priority is taking care of His own children...

1. *Dalet minim* (lit. "4 species") refer to the myrtle, palm, and willow branches bundled together, as well as the citron, used on Sukkot.
2. Lit. 'enhanced'; a beautification of the mitzvah using a set with halachic bonuses that exceeds the baseline obligation.

**"On Sukkot, we learn that real security comes from Above, not from the things we can gather around us." (R' Jonathan Sacks)**

## True Ecstasy

Interestingly, the description for the holiday of Sukkot is "*zman simchatenu*." Why, out of all the holidays we celebrate, is this the one to be branded "the time of our happiness"?

The Vilna Gaon writes that on Sukkot, we commemorate the return of the *ananei kavod* (Clouds of Glory), an open miracle which served to protect the Jews from the elements as well as enemy attacks in the desert. After the sin of the golden calf, they disappeared from Klal Yisrael, and only returned when the construction of the Mishkan had started – on Sukkot.

The *Meshech Chochmah* uses this to further develop the following idea. Pesach was fully a gift from HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The 10 plagues, *Kriat Yam Suf*, and all the miracles of *yetziat Mitzrayim* were solely from Hashem. The next *chag* – Shavuot – came about through both the Almighty and Bnei Yisrael. The Jews accepted the Torah with unity and observed *taharah* and *sefirah* laws (counting the amount of days to exit their impurity and making sure they remained pure), while Hashem revealed His *Shechinah* and gave us the Torah. Sukkot, however, was Bnei Yisrael's doing, as it was our *teshuvah* that brought back the *ananei kavod*, which showed that Hashem is always watching over us – and that's what makes up the *chag*. That is why Sukkot is *zman simchatenu* – the time of *OUR happiness*, because through our actions and repentance alone, we are the ones who ultimately made this impact and revealed Hashem's guard of the world for all to see. It's not just that the Clouds were brought back; it's that we were the ones to bring them back. Now, that's a reason to celebrate.

*This exhibits a powerful idea. There is nothing more gratifying than personally developing one's relationship to the Creator, and while the world may be spewing all forms of nonsense in their relentless pursuit for gratification, we've known for millennia that the truest form of simcha comes from the connection one has built with G-d with constant self-work and refinement. And there's nothing quite like doing it yourself...*

(Based on a d'var Torah shared by R' Avraham Mirsky)

## Outdoor Embrace

What is the sukkah? Is it just an outdoor, makeshift dining room for a week?

Charlie Harary shared something incredible. Have you ever wondered why the minimum requirement for the sukkah's dimensions is two panels plus a little?<sup>1</sup> The Arizal writes that these dimensions emulate those necessary for a hug, which also needs two "walls" and a bit – i.e. body, arm, and hand. In other words, the sukkah is a Divine embrace, where we are enclosed in G-d's loving hug.

There is no greater happiness than living life feeling Hashem's Presence around you; feeling like you are in the warm embrace of the Creator of the Universe. The goal of the sukkah is to experience that – to be there, connect with that reality, and recognize that we are entering a time when G-d wants to be found in the mundane. Let us utilize the time to find ways to connect to Him, talk to Him in our own language, and be with Him in every aspect of our lives...

1. According to Tractate Sukkah, the minimum requirement is two walls that are 7x7 *tefachim* each as well as a third wall, which can be just one *tefach* jutting out [1 *tefach* = 8 cm].