

SUCCOTH



THE ETERNAL MESSAGE OF THE SUCCAH

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The seven days of the holiday of Succath have been compared by the rabbis to the seven decades of human life. Does not the psalmist pronounce ימי שנותנו בהם שבעים שנה, "The ways of our years are seventy in number!" The Succah represents humanity's attempt to protect itself against the Vicissitudes of life. Man has from dawn of creation sought to protect himself from dangers of all kinds such as sickness, poverty, hunger, war etc. Indeed when we think of all the dangers that surround us we recognize that it is only by Divine grace that we remain alive. We give expression to this thought in our daily prayers.

"We will give thanks unto Thee and declare Thy praise for our lives which are committed unto Thy hand and for our souls which are in Thy charge and for Thy miracles, which are daily with us, and for Thy wonders and Thy benefits which are wrought at all times, evening, morn and noon."

The Jews were enjoined to build tents during their sojourn in the desert to impress upon them that it is impossible for man to achieve complete security and protection with things created by his own hands. He must in the last

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analysis resort to G-d's Providence צור חיינו מנן ישענו, "Thou art the Rock of our lives, the shield of our salvation." The Torah forbids man to sit with his hands folded and rely on miracles. On the contrary, he is bidden to build an abode, but he must realize that any human abode is only adequate to protect him from a רוח מצויה, an ordinary wind. In life, however, there are many רוחות שאינן מצויה extra-ordinary winds against which mankind cannot fully protect itself; for only G-d can foresee these things. With all the scientific advances of our age can we indeed maintain that we live more securely than the generations of old. Do we have less fear in the World than ever before? I venture to say no. I firmly believe that our ancestors enjoyed greater security and peace of mind than we. The reason for this is that security cannot be achieved by external and natural things alone; it must be accompanied by internal security of the mind and the soul. A neurotic mind and soul can never achieve serenity and peace by improvements in the material surroundings. It is only by ridding a person of his fears and neurosis that he can achieve the security he so eagerly longs for. In the Talmud we have two interpretations for the word סכות. One opinion is משש actual tents; the other is ענני כבוד clouds of Divine glory. The Jews in traversing the desert had both; tents which they built for their protection but above all they were surrounded by clouds of divine glory which represented their faith in G-d and the Supremacy of things of the spirit. The prophet in this mornings' Haftarah, says,

זאת תהיה חטאת מצרים וחטאת כל הגוים אשר לא יעלו לחג את
הג הסכות

"This will be the sin of Egypt and the sin of all those nations who will not go up to celebrate the festival of Succoth." Why would Egypt and the other mighty nations refuse to go up to

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Jerusalem and celebrate Succoth with the Jewish people. This is only because they would maintain that they need not G-d's protection; they are strong enough and crafty enough to secure themselves against all possible dangers.

The Torah teaches us that only in G-d can we find real security.

ה' אורי וישעי ממי אירא ה' מעוז חיי ממי אפחד

"The L-rd is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear.
The L-rd is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid."