

Light Insight

There are only two opportunities among all the 613 *mitzvot* to physically “enter the *mitzvah*.” One is the opportunity to live in the Land of Israel, and the other is to be in the *succah* you have constructed for the Festival of Succot. When you cross the border into the Land of Israel, or walk into the *succah*, you have “entered” the *mitzvah*.

What is the connection between the *succah* and the Land of Israel? Judaism is unique to the world in that Jewish national and religious destinies are identical. The concept of a successful Jewish nation in the Land of Israel is fundamental to our religious destiny. Other nations have holy places and live elsewhere, but for us, our land is our home, our holy soil and the necessary setting for the ideal fulfillment of *mitzvot*. Accordingly, the Torah includes both civil and religious law, instructing us in our everyday behavior and our acts of worship, both of which are equally holy. The way we live in the Land is part of our service to G-d. Thus we see in the Book of Joshua, that the first decisions that Joshua made when the Jews entered the Land of Israel were for urban planning, as important to their spiritual lives as the transportation of the Holy Ark. Living in Israel gives the Jewish people the opportunity to sanctify every little act that they do, Jewishly. Merely going to the cor-

ner store to buy a carton of milk is part of the fulfillment of the Jewish destiny when it is done in the Land of Israel.

Similarly, during the festival of Succot, a Jew has a chance to make every little act he does a holy act by being in the *succah*. Eating a celebratory meal or even sleeping in the *succah* is a *mitzvah*, a symbol of the total fulfillment of G-d’s plan for the Jewish people.

A further comparison can be made between the *mitzvah* of living in the Land of Israel and the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *succah* during the festival of Succot. Both *mitzvot* require us to merit the opportunity to perform them. Many times it is written in the Torah that if the Jewish People sin they will be expelled from the Land of Israel. Similarly, the performance of the *mitzvah* of *succah* also requires special merit, as we find in the Talmud. The laws of Succot state that the *mitzvah* to sit in the *succah* is negated by heavy rain. The mishna reads: “Rain falls ... to what can this be compared? To a servant who comes to pour a drink for his master and the master throws the flask in his face.” If the Jewish People don’t follow G-d’s precepts, then He brings rain so they won’t be able to perform the *mitzvah*.

Why must one merit the opportunity to do these two *mitzvot*? The answer involves another similarity between the two. Both *mitzvot*

involve our deserving to receive the entire Torah. Thus Rashi, in the beginning of Bereishet, explains why the Torah, the book of *mitzvot*, begins with the creation of the world rather than the first *mitzvah*, the sanctification of the new moon. He answers with a Medrash, which explains that since G-d created the world, it is His right to give the Land of Israel to the Jewish People. If the Land of Israel belongs to us then so does the Torah — they go hand in hand.

As we have learned, the Land of Israel is the optimal place for the performance of all of the *mitzvot*. The Talmud relates how G-d compares the Jewish People with the other nations in their willingness to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *succah*. G-d tests the eligibility of the other nations to receive the Torah with the simple *mitzvah* of sitting in the *succah* on a hot day. Unable to withstand the heat, the nations of the world leave the *succah* and even kick it in anger upon leaving. This explains why merit is the key to both the *mitzvah* of *succah* and the Land of Israel, because they unlock for us the entire Torah. Why do the Jewish People merit receiving the Torah through their observance of the commandments to sit in the *succah* and to live in the Land of Israel? Because it is the ability of a Jew to totally immerse himself in *mitzvot* that makes him deserving of the entire Torah.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

The Bulls of Succot

A total of seventy bullocks were offered on the altar in the Holy Temple during the seven days of Succot.

These 70 sacrifices, says Rabbi Elazar in the Talmud, correspond to the 70 non-Jewish nations of the world. Since Succot is the time when the world is judged for rainfall in the coming year, Jews offer these sacrifices in their Sanctuary in the Land of Israel as atonement for

the shortcomings of these nations in order that they should gain a favorable heavenly judgment for their water needs. This unappreciated service is what led Rabbi Yochanan to exclaim: "Woe to the heathen nations who lost something and are not even aware of their loss. When there was a Holy Temple, the altar provided atonement for them, but now who will atone for them?"

Response Line

SUCCAH IN THE SUN

Name@Withheld wrote:

Can one place branches over the open sunroof of one's car in order to create a valid sukkah?

Dear Name@Withheld,

The mishna says "One who makes a sukkah on a wagon, or on a ship, it is a valid sukkah."

However, a sukkah has certain minimum dimensions of height and area. The sunroof must be at least 7 x 7 halachic handbreadths (approximately 70 X 70 cm) and the walls must be at least 10 halachic handbreadths high (approximately 100 cm). Ideally, the branches which cover the

sunroof should not sit directly on the metal of the car; but rather, they should rest on top of other wood or branches.

HOLIDAY WRAPPING

Michael Braitman wrote:

What's the significance of "isru chag" (the day after a festival)? Why is there no school (in Israel, at least) on isru-chag? A friend said it has something to do with the fact that there was an extra day for people to bring a korban (Temple offering) during the festival, in case they couldn't make it to Jerusalem on time. If so, why is this pertinent to our day, when there are no sacrifices?

Dear Michael,

Ever go jogging? When you're done, you're not supposed to stop suddenly; it's too big of a shock to the system. Rather, you "warm-down" by walking, and finally you can stop.

The same is true of a Festival. We don't go directly from a joyous festival back into everyday life. We need a day to "warm-down," or rather to "wrap-up" the joy of the Holiday. "Isru chag" is that day. "Isru chag" literally means "tie up the festival." That is, take the happiness and meaningfulness of the festival and bring it with you into the rest of the year.

In Temple times, festive offerings were brought on *isru chag* of the Succot Festival. *Isru chag* remains a semi-festive day, even today when there is no Temple.