

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 29

Chag HaSukkos

The Previous Rebbe's Practice:

Halacha dictates that one eat, drink, and sleep in the Sukkah. The laws surrounding food and drink, however, are more flexible than those of sleep. One may drink or eat a snack outside the Sukkah, but there is no explicit halachic exemption for sleeping in Sukkah. There is one general exemption that applies to all the Sukkah activities. If there is discomfort in eating, drinking, or sleeping in the Sukkah, such as severe cold or heat or rain, then one is exempt from doing so.

Yet we find that the Previous Rebbe observed a paradoxical practice: He was scrupulous about eating and drinking in the Sukkah beyond the letter of the law — he would not drink or eat even small amounts outside the Sukkah, even in the rain and cold. But he would not sleep in the Sukkah.

We can safely say that it was not the cold that discouraged him from doing so,

because he endured much harsher elements in his fulfillment of mitzvos in general, and it did not dissuade from even drinking in the Sukkah which is not obligatory in the first place.

What, then, is the reason behind the Previous Rebbe's behavior?

The Mittler Rebbe's Adage:

The Mittler Rebbe also did not sleep in the Sukkah, and explained himself as follows: "How can one sleep within the *makifim of Bina*." (The transcendent Divine light associated with the attribute of Bina, Divine comprehension. Kabbalah identifies the Sukkah as representing this form of Divine light). Implied is that when a person is sensitive to this revelation that takes place within the Sukkah, they would be pained by having to sleep in its presence. Being that the Mittler Rebbe was discomfited by this prospect, he was exempt from sleeping in the Sukkah, just as if there were material conditions that made sleep in the Sukkah painful.

The Dissonance:

A glaring issue remains. How is it possible that the deeper, mystical understanding of the mitzvah of Sukkah should lead to a practice that is not ideal in the literal, halachic definition of the mitzvah? The ideal form of fulfilling the mitzvah seems to be eating, drinking, and sleeping in the Sukkah. Even if there is a mystical justification for not sleeping in it, it is just that, a justification for a non-deal practice. How is the tenable?

The Explanation:

Eating, drinking, and sleeping in the Sukkah are not separate, individual obligations. There is one Biblical command to “dwell” in the Sukkah as one dwells in their home. Therefore, we must eat, drink, conduct business, relax, and sleep in the Sukkah. However, the fundamental act of dwelling from a halachic perspective is eating. This is evident from the laws of eiruv, where one’s place of dwelling is established by placing a meal in a given location. Therefore, even if one does not sleep in the Sukkah because he is genuinely disturbed by sleeping in a place where he feels the intensity of the Divine revelation, he is not lacking in his fulfillment of “dwelling” in the Sukkah, since he does do the fundamental act of dwelling, eating in the Sukkah.

This is why the Tannaim, the sages of the Mishnah, testified that during the celebrations of the drawing of the water on Sukkos, they “did not experience the sense of actual sleep, because they would merely

doze on each other’s shoulders.” This means that they did not sleep in the Sukkah, they dozed in the courtyard of the Beis Hamikdash in the midst of the celebrations. Obviously, they fulfilled the essence of dwelling by eating in the Sukkah, and sleeping in the Sukkah was not essential for this purpose.

What About the Everyman:

This explanation applies to select individuals who are sensitive to the Divine light within the Sukkah and are unable to sleep within that space of revelation. Yet there are many chassidim who follow the Rebbeim in this practice, who do not possess this level of spiritual sensitivity. What is their justification?

Firstly, chassidim are so attached to their Rebbe that they will follow their practice even if that entails a halachic leniency that they are not technically eligible for. As we find in tractate Sukkah, the students of Rav Kahana would deliberately choose a myrtle branch that he sanctioned as kosher even if was only accepted as so after the fact. (Sukkah 32b)

Furthermore, even if the person does not palpably feel the Divine light of the Sukkah, they would be pained at not being able to fulfill the practice of the Rebbe. Thus, sleeping in the Sukkah would indirectly be painful for them. This is especially true since the Mittler Rebbe said this statement as a demand from his chassidim, “how could you sleep in the Sukkah....” Meaning, he

expected this level of sensitivity from his chassidim. Therefore, when the chassid is not sensitive to this, it exacerbates his pain. If he would sleep in the Sukkah he would be constantly reminded that he is not eligible to not sleep in the Sukkah because he is

insufficiently sensitive to the makif of Bina in the Sukkah! Therefore, he is ultimately exempt from sleeping in the Sukkah because of the pain he would have from doing so.
