



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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SUKKOT

One of the most beautiful customs associated with the *yom tov* of *Sukkot*, is welcoming the *Ushpizin* (special guests) to our *Sukkah* each night. Of course these seven *Ushpizin* represent the early generations and greatest lights of the Jewish People. Each night we welcome a new guest to our *Sukkah*, to join the other special guests who have gathered in our *Sukkah* as the *yom tov* has progressed. We welcome *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, *Yaakov*, *Moshe*, *Aharon*, *Yosef*, and *David*. Aside from the great symbolism of surrounding ourselves metaphorically with the presence and great *ruchniyut* of our ancestors, what is the significance of this beautiful custom of welcoming these *Ushpizin* into our *Sukkah*?

There is an interesting *midrash* in *Breisheet Rabbah*, which introduces us to the meaning behind the *mitzvah* of *yeshiva b'sukkah*, and sheds some light on the significance of the practice to welcome the *Ushpizin*.

The *midrash* points to the verse, where *Avraham Avinu*, greets the *melachim* who have come to visit him and share the tidings that *Sara* will finally be blessed with a child. *Avraham Avinu* invites the *melachim* to rest in the shade, under the branches of the trees. So too, our sages taught, *Avraham's* descendants will merit to sit in the shade of Divine Protection, under the branches which cover the roof of the *Sukkah*, and to welcome guests to join them! Just as our ancestors engaged in acts of

chesed, the *ushpizin* continue to remind us of the special opportunity that the *yom tov* of *Sukkot* offers each of us to welcome guests and engage in *chesed*.

The *Iturei Torah* points out that many *sefarim* suggest that *Sukkot* is called *Zman Simchateinu*- literally the time of our joy, and that the word *zman*-time, is connected to the words *zimmun*-to invite, and *hazmana*- invitation! The very essence of the *yom tov* of *Sukkot* is to extend hospitality to others, even as we leave the comfort of our home's regular dining room, and enter the temporary dwelling of our *sukkah*.

The *Netivot Shalom*, the *Slonimer Rebbe zy'a*, offers another beautiful insight related to *Sukkot* as *Zman Simchateinu*. The Rebbe likens the experience of the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkot*, to the

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experience of a marriage, in this case between *Am Yisrael* and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. The *Sukkah* itself, represents the *chupa*, standing underneath the canopy of Divine protection. The seven days of *Sukkot*, explains the Rebbe, correspond to the seven celebratory days, beginning with the wedding, where family and friends gather together to rejoice and offer the special *sheva brachot* to gladden the *chatan* and *kallah*.

Perhaps this beautiful insight of the *Netivot Shalom*, can also help us to understand the significance of the custom to welcome the *Ushpizin* as well. One of the criteria for hosting a celebratory *Sheva brachot meal*, is that each time the family and friends assemble to celebrate with the *chatan* and *kallah*, we invite *Panim Chadashot*, new faces, new guests who have not yet had the *zechut* or opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah* of rejoicing before and gladdening the *chatan* and *kallah*. Perhaps if the entire Yom Tov of *Sukkot* is indeed meant to parallel those seven days of celebration for the bride and groom, then perhaps our *Ushpizin*, our honored guests serve as our proverbial *Panim Chadashot* for each day of celebration.

As we welcome the *ushpizin* to our *Sukkah* this year, may we indeed be blessed to feel as if we have entered into the security of standing under the canopy of Divine protection that the *Sukkah* represents; to feel the joy and excitement of celebrating with a new special guest each night, and may we be blessed to experience these days with complete and utter *simcha*!

Chag Sameach! ■

Jonathan Rosenblum, DPM

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