SUKKOT: Dwelling in the Sukka

לְמַ֘עַן֮ יֵדְע֣וּ דֹרֹֽתֵיכֶם֒ כִּ֣י בַסֻּכּ֗וֹת
הוֹשַׁ֙בְתִּי֙ אֶת־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל בְּהוֹצִיאִ֥י אוֹתָ֖ם
מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרָ֑יִם אֲנִ֖י ה' אֱל֙ -הֵיכֶֽם׃

“You shall dwell in sukkot for seven days. Every native in Israel shall dwell in sukkot, so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in sukkot when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am HaShem, your God” (Leviticus 23:42-43).

This Friday night, September 25, we begin the celebration of Sukkot. This year the first day falls on Shabbat. Sukkot, followed by Shemini Atseret and Simchat Torah, runs until Sunday night, October 4.

For seven days we leave our homes and settle in the Sukka. We eat there, we study there, and if the weather and our health allow it, we sleep there. Sukkot commemorates the forty-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, when God provided everything we needed and protected us from the dangers of the desert. By dwelling in the Sukka we relive that gratitude and that trust in Divine Protection, which has not stopped since.

The Sages explained that to fulfill this Mitsva we have to turn the Sukka into our main residence for the seven days of Sukkot, and our house into the temporary one. That means doing in the Sukka the ordinary things we normally do at home. Some examples:

MEALS: Except when it rains, we eat in the Sukka, above all the formal meals that include bread (hamotsi and birkat hamazon), reciting the blessing: *“…asher kiddeshanu bemitsvotav vetsivanu liysheb basukka.”*

MEZONOT: Cakes, cookies and other mezonot foods are also eaten

in the Sukka. If they are eaten as a snack between meals, the blessing for the Sukka is not recited. Some families in our community follow the old Sephardic custom, based on Maimonides, of reciting *liysheb basukka* every time they enter the Sukka to eat or drink something.

SNACKS: Light foods such as fruit or coffee may be taken outside the Sukka, although it is praiseworthy to eat and drink nothing outside it during Sukkot.

SLEEPING: Sleeping in the Sukka is part of the Mitsva, but it depends on the weather, on one's health, and on other factors such as safety or the presence of animals.

Seven days in a house without a roof teach something unexpected: almost nothing we thought we could not live without at home turned out to be necessary. That is exactly what the Sukka came to teach.