



Sukkot

The Ultimate Festival of Joy

Every year, thousands of people stayed up all night and no one felt sleepy. This was for the Simchat Beit HaShoeivah, the celebration of the drawing of water, which took place in temple times during the Festival of Sukkot.

In the Gemara Masechet Sukkah Daf ג'א, Rav Yehoshua Ben Chananya, says:

“לֹא רָאִינוּ שְׁנָה בְּעֵינֵינוּ”

“We didn't see sleep in our eyes.”

The Chatam Sofer asks, “What do you mean, we didn't see sleep in our eyes?” If you're asleep, you don't see anything. Why this terminology? He explains that there are some people who walk through life with their eyes open, but actually they're asleep because it's as if they are not really awake, because they're not producing anything.

They're not giving the world anything, they're not making their mark. Rather, he said, we have to make the most of the opportunities we have. And that's what Rav Yehoshua Ben Chananya was saying. During the Simchat Beit HaShoeivah, everybody maximised the opportunity and as a result, they had a most extraordinary experience.

I have a question: Why did Rav Yehoshua Ben Chananya give this teaching specifically about Sukkot? He could have

given a similar teaching about the celebration of Pesach, of family Seders. Shavuot, the Tikkun Leil, and other festive occasions. Why, Sukkot? And I think that the answer must be because Rav Yehoshua Ben Chananya is focusing on happiness, on שמחה. We need to maximise the opportunity to actually rejoice in all the blessings that Hashem has given us in our lives.

It is about Sukkot that the Torah tells us:

“וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ בְּחֻגֶךָ, וְהָיִיתָ אֶךְ שִׂמְחָה”

“You shall rejoice on your festival and be exceedingly happy.”

Sukkot is the ultimate festival of joy, and the message of Rav Yehoshua Ben Chananya is a very powerful one. Because when it comes to our Judaism in general, we need to focus on joy, on fun, on happiness, on the pleasurable aspects of a true, traditional and authentic Jewish way of life.

Because more than anything, following the words of the Torah provides us with an opportunity for daily שמחה.

So let us therefore internalise this very message and enable the joy of Sukkot to last throughout the entire year.

Chag Sameach.