

# The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל  
ד"ה העושה סוכתו תחת האילן יום ב' דהג הסוכות תשכ"ח בלתי מוגה  
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## THE SUCCAH UNDER A TREE

**T**HE MISHNAH SAYS THAT 'ONE WHO MAKES HIS SUCCAH UNDER A TREE IS AS IF HE MAKES IT INSIDE THE HOUSE'<sup>2</sup>. This means it is not kosher. However, the wording of the Mishnah implies that it is obvious that a Succah inside a house is not kosher, while there is an uncertainty about a Succah under a tree. But in fact the Talmud indicates that both rules are derived from the same word in a verse<sup>3</sup>. So why is the Succah in the house obviously non kosher to the author of the Mishnah, while there is a question about a Succah under a tree?

The answer is that there is a special affinity between the Succah and a tree. The Midrash<sup>4</sup> tells us that as a reward for Abraham asking the three angels to 'rest under the tree'<sup>5</sup>, G-d granted his descendants the Mitzva of the Succah. Further, the Maggid of Mezeritch tells us that the 'tree' hints at the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, which in turn suggests the inner dimension of Torah, since the Garden, *Gan*, has the numerical value 53 like the 53 Sidrot of the Torah, and the Tree of Life is the inner meaning of the Torah.

While the exoteric aspect of Torah is encloded in finite physical existence, the inner, esoteric dimension is unlimited, relating to the kabbalistic 'World of Freedom', which links with the Sefirah Binah, Understanding. And we learn that Binah is the spiritual level of the Succah.

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<sup>1</sup> Maamar HaOseh Succato Tahat hallan, 'One who makes his Succah under a tree', 2<sup>nd</sup> Day Succot 5728 (1967), not edited by the Rebbe. This was published in Dvaramalchut for Succot 5775.

<sup>2</sup> Succah 9b.

<sup>3</sup> 'You shall dwell in Succot', Lev.23:42, Emor. The word Succot בסוכה is spelled defectively from which the Talmud (Succah 9b) learns several limitations, ie varieties of non kosher Succot, including both the Succah under a tree and a Succah within a house.

<sup>4</sup> Kohelet Rabbah 11:1.

<sup>5</sup> Gen.18:4, Vayera.

We can now answer our question about the Mishnah. Given that the source of the Succah is the tree of Abraham, according to the Midrash, and that there is an affinity between that tree and the meaning of the Succah as we see from examining the teaching of the Maggid, one might well imagine that it would be right for a Succah to be built under a tree. Hence the Mishnah has to tell us that this is not the case, according to the halachah, and it would be like building it within a house.

But we can still enquire: given the significance of Abraham's tree as the source of the concept of the Succah, and the further aspects explained by the Maggid, why does the halachah forbid a Succah to be built under a tree? The answer is that the Succah comes from a far higher spiritual level than the tree, as will be explained below.

There is a verse in the Song of Songs (1:5) 'I am dark and beautiful, o daughters of Jerusalem'. The Midrash<sup>6</sup> presents this as a combination of negative and positive qualities. 'I am dark at Sinai, because of the Golden Calf. I am beautiful at Sinai, because of saying we will do and we will hear. I am dark on the weekdays, but beautiful on Shabbat. I am dark during the year, but beautiful on Yom Kippur.'

Who is saying this, and who are the daughters of Jerusalem?

It is the soul as it is here in this world, speaking to higher levels of soul which are still in the world of Atzilut. Basically it is saying I am dark, because I exist in this finite world, and yet I am beautiful, because this descent is for the sake of an ascent.

Being in the world, one is assailed by sin, on various levels. Even a total Zaddik feels separate from G-d by virtue of 'existing'. But on Yom Kippur there is the ultimate expression of the beauty of the soul in this world, and indeed Yom Kippur is the fulfilment of Sinai as well, because on that day, the tenth of Tishrei, the second Tablets were given to Moses, marking the true giving of the Torah.

Now the important quality of the Succah is that its covering is an expression of the cloud of incense of the High priest on Yom Kippur. The Succah is thus the product of intense Repentance which reaches beyond the world, to the level of 'one', just as Yom Kippur expresses the singularities of one day in the year, the

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<sup>6</sup> Shir Hashirim Rabbah on the verse.

unique person of the High priest, and the unique spot of the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem.

This oneness reaches the Ein Sof, the Infinite, far beyond the levels expressed by Abraham's tree, exalted as they are. It is higher than the Tree of Life, the Torah, and that is why Yom Kippur grants atonement when a person has transgressed the Laws of the Torah.

Further, Abraham's tree was from the time before the Giving of the Torah. We have the benefit of the laws of the Torah defining what is a kosher Succah. Hence, standing on a higher level, despite the beautiful teaching about Abraham's tree, we learn in the Mishnah and the Code of Law that a Succah cannot be made inside a house, and nor can it be made under a tree....

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