

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



HAM IN THE SUKKAH

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In honor of Succos, let's discuss a true story that relates to the mitzvah of succah.

Avi had a burger restaurant in Eretz Yisrael. The restaurant was in a strip mall that had many stores and many other food establishments.

In honor of Succos, Avi built a very large succah in his parking spots, to accommodate the customers who would eat in his restaurant. He was also happy to share his succah with the patrons of the other restaurants in the area. Since Avi made a succah, the other restaurant owners did not make their own succahs as they presumably, relied on Avi's large succah.

On Chol Hamoed Succos, many customers came to Avi's restaurant and his succah. Avi was glad to accommodate them.

Then a man walked in holding a plate of food and a sandwich. Avi recognized the plate and



RV'S OR MANSIONS

Every one of our holidays commemorates an historic event. Succos is unique in that it commemorates the duration of our travels through the desert and that HaShem placed us in huts. Alternatively, there is an opinion that Succos commemorates HaShem's protecting us with the Clouds of Glory. The question therefore is why was the 15th day of Tishrei chosen more than any other day?

According to the opinion that we commemorate the Clouds of Glory we can understand that this was the date when the Clouds first returned to us after they were taken away when we sinned with the Golden Calf. However, according to the first opinion to commemorate the huts in which we lived in the desert, what significance does this date have?

To appreciate the answer that my dear friend Reb Simcha Baer offered, we must point out that these huts were temporary structures built with the simplest of materials. In fact, the laws governing the structure of a succah are based on the principle that they must be temporary in design.

When Moshe descended from Har Sinai with the second Tablets indicating HaShem's complete forgiveness to His people, he also gave us the instructions from HaShem to build a Mishkan. The next four days there was a massive campaign during which the people raised all the gold, silver, copper and other materials necessary for the construction of the Mishkan. It was on the

food as one of the menu items of a treif restaurant in the strip mall. When Avi looked a bit closer at the sandwich, however, he blanched. It looked like a ham sandwich.

Avi turned to the man. "Excuse me, is that a ham sandwich?"

The man replied, "Yes as a matter of fact it is. You might be asking why I would want to eat a ham sandwich in a succah. Well, there are other foods on my plate that are not ham. I want to get the mitzvah of succah for those foods. In addition, you are supposed to live in a succah the way you do at home. At home, I eat ham, so I do the same in a succah".

"Is this a problem for you", the man asked? All my food is cold and I won't let the food touch any of your tables or chairs. I will also not offer my food to anyone else.

Avi wasn't sure how to reply. This was the first time such a thing happened. The man was clearly a bit knowledgeable about some halacha and it was so sad that he was eating trief.

Perhaps he made a good point, just because he was doing one aveirah does not mean that he can't eat the other food in the succah.

But on the other hand, how could Avi let someone eat ham in his succah, wasn't that a disgrace to the succah?

What do you think? Should Avi allow the man to eat in his succah or not?

See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 402



fifth day that we were ready to begin the construction.

The amount of precious metals necessary for the building of the Mishkan is astounding. From where did the people have this material? Our Sages teach us that our ancestors were fabulously wealthy from the booty they took when they left Egypt. It was from this gold and silver and other material that they contributed to the Mishkan.

Let us pause for a moment; if our ancestors were so fabulously wealthy why did they live in such simple housing? Of course, we know that they were on the move, nevertheless, there were stations along their journey where they stayed for extended periods of time. There was actually one place where they encamped for 19 years! Could they not create more permanent structures? There was no short-

age of funds.

Reb Simcha suggests that the lesson HaShem taught us by placing us in temporary structures was that life in this world is temporary in nature. We are not residents of this passing world of fleeting moments. Nobody knows for how long they are here. The only real property that the Jew owns is his connection to HaShem and His Mishkan. Just like our people who resided in Kadeish for 19 years did not know when they were moving next, we also do not know when our next move along our journey will be.

Therefore, it is on the 15th day of Tishrei after our people gave so much of their gold and silver to the Mishkan, that we celebrate how our ancestors traveled 40 years in temporary housing and did not bother spending their gold and silver on anything more permanent.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos and a very joyous Yom Tov.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

MYRTUS, HADASIM

A few weeks ago we learned about the lulav tree, and a while ago about the aravah tree. This week, in honor of Succos, let's look a bit more at the Hadas, the myrtle, a species with a beautiful smell, but no taste.

The official name for the myrtle is *Myrtus*. It is a flowering plant in the family Myrtaceae, the same plant family as the aromatic eucalyptus and clove trees.

There are three basic species of *Myrtus*, *Myrtus communis*, the *hadasim* that we are familiar with, *Myrtus nivellei*, and *Myrtus phyllireaefolia*. *Myrtus communis*, the "common myrtle", is native to the Mediterranean region, the area of Eretz Yisrael, and the Middle East, but it can be found in hot and dry areas around the world today. It does not grow well in cold and wet environments. *Myrtus communis* grows wild on Har HaCarmel and in the Upper Galilee in Eretz Yisrael.

The *Myrtus* is an evergreen tree, and it grows as much as 16 feet tall. The leaves contain fragrant essential oil. We rarely see this, but the myrtle blooms white flowers from May to June. It is a star-like flower with five petals. Its flowers are very fragrant and they attract insects that are responsible for the pollination of this plant. The crape myrtle tree (*Lagerstroemia indica*) puts on a blossoming show that lasts up to 120 days. The myrtle is a perennial plant that reaches its full size at the age of 10 to 20 years.

The *Myrtus* also produces fruit. The fruit is a round berry containing several seeds. It is most commonly blue-black in color. But there is a variety that makes yellow-amber berries. Birds eat the berries and that helps disperse its seed so that more can grow.

But do people eat these berries? In the islands of Sardinia (Italy) and Corsica (France) the berries are harvested to produce an aromatic liqueur called Mirto. Mirto comes in two varieties: mirto rosso (red) produced with the black berries, and mirto bianco produced from the less common yellow berries and the leaves. The berries, whole or ground, can be used as a pepper substitute. They are also used to make the distinctive flavor of Bologna sau-

sage and Mortadella sausage.

Myrtus was native to Italy and ancient Rome. Because of its appealing smell, the myrtle was an indispensable feature of Roman gardens. Wherever Roman elites were settled, they introduced the myrtle as a reminder of home.

The Gemara in Gittin 68b says that myrtle leaves have medicinal properties and they can be used as a remedy for pressure or pain in the head. In a similar vein, myrtle occupies a prominent place in the writings of Hippocrates, Pliny, Dioscorides, and Galen. In Sumer it has been prescribed for fever and pain by ancient physicians since at least 2,500 BCE. In China, there has been a tradition for prescribing this substance for sinus infections. Myrtle was used as an antiseptic and tonic and it was used in the treatment of sinus and eye infections and headaches.

Modern science has discovered the reason for this. Myrtle has high levels of salicylic acid. Salicylic acid is responsible for the anti-inflammatory action of aspirin and is the basis of medicines like ibuprofen.

Our Sages (Tosefta Sot. 15:8) recorded that aromatic *Hadasim* were used in Jewish wedding celebrations. It seems that this custom was copied by the Romans as well. The Romans believed that myrtle was an emblem of love so it was used in their wedding rituals. Even today it is still a European custom to use myrtle in a wedding bouquet.

In modern times, in addition to its ornamental purposes, myrtle is cultivated as a source of aromatic oils that are used in the cosmetic and medical industry.

What is fascinating is that while the aroma of *Hadasim* is pleasant to us, its smell repels insects. It therefore can be used in homes (or even a succah) against mosquitoes instead of conventional bug repellent.

TAKING ALL THE DRUGS IN THE DRUG STORE

A young man once came to visit the Slonimer Rebbe, the Beis Avraham and said the following. "I learn almost all of the books of the Chassidic greats, follow their advice, and try to incorporate into my lifestyle all of the good practices they speak of. I, therefore, see no need to have a Rebbe," he told the Beis Avraham.

The Rebbe said to him: "Let me explain your situation with a parable".

A man once felt ill. Rather than visiting a doctor, he decided to go to a pharmacy on his own. 'I'll buy all the medicines and take them, and that way I'll be cured of all diseases. There is no need to see a doctor.'

But of course, this is utter foolishness. One who uses drugs without proper supervision places himself in serious danger. Drugs that are beneficial in treating certain diseases may be fatal in treating others. Only a doctor, with his medical expertise and his knowledge of the patient's history, can properly diagnose the sickness and prescribe the appropriate medicine.

"Similarly, continued the Slonimer Rebbe, all that you learn in the books of the great Chassidic masters is like medicine. In the wrong doses or incorrectly prescribed, such 'medicines' can be fatal to your spiritual welfare. You should follow the dictum of the Sages that one should select a teacher for himself, who can serve as the doctor for your soul, diagnose your needs and prescribe the proper spiritual medicine."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question about the gabbai who worked behind the scenes to help the lower bidder win Maftir, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the gabbai does not have to pay the difference to the shul. In addition, the shul should give the poor man a discount and not require him to pay the high amount that he was forced to bid.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of our dear father, Rabbi Abraham (Abe) Pelberg
Avrohom ben Yisroel Moshe
on his 10th Yahrzeit.

He dedicated his life to showing the beauty of the Torah to Jews from all walks of life throughout North and Central America.
May the lively Torah discussions generated from this week's TableTalk be an aliyah for his neshama.

Moshe and Adeena Pelberg

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