

בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכּוֹת:
לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דַרְתֵיכֶם כִּי בַּסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (ויקרא כג:מב-מג)

You shall dwell in booths for 7 days; every citizen of Israel shall dwell in booths.
So that your generations will know that I, God, caused the children of Israel to dwell in booths
when I took them out of the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 23:42-43)

The Torah instructs us that on the holiday of *Sukkot*, we are to dwell in booths for the
duration of the 7-day festival. The Torah directs this command to “all (every) citizen of
Israel.” It is not unusual for the Torah to address “the citizen” or to command “all Israel,”
but the use of both these terms is striking.

The Rabbis of the Talmud noted this anomalous phrase and interpreted it thus:

מלמד שכל ישראל ראויים לישב בסוכה אחת.

“All (every) citizen of Israel” — this teaches us that the entire nation of Israel is
able to sit in one *sukkah*. (Babylonian Talmud, *Sukkah* 27b)

Translation of this rabbinic statement is difficult. Are the Rabbis pointing to the capacity
of the *sukkah*, it is able to hold the entire nation, or to the people who will merit dwelling
together in one *sukkah*? Additionally, what do the Rabbis mean: what would it take for all
of Israel to dwell in one *sukkah*?

The ambiguity is deliberate. When the people of Israel construct a *sukkah* that is intended
to accommodate every member of the nation, only then will we be “fit” to dwell in this
sukkah. Imagine a *sukkah* designed with everyone’s needs in mind. There are no steps or
narrow openings. The signs are written in large letters and in Braille; guides give
directions in sign and spoken languages. The *sukkah* is made of multiple rooms; some are
quiet rooms with muted lights and soft walls, and some are a sensory carnival with bright
colors, music and lots of noise. There is enough room to stand, pace, sit or lie down. All
of Israel, every single individual is welcome.

When we create a *sukkah* that is welcoming for all of Israel, only then, we will be truly
worthy of dwelling together. Let us commit to work to creating these kinds of *sukkot*,
synagogues, schools and community centers.

Hag Sukkot sameah!