



SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TNUA'S MACHANE AND THE HOLIDAY OF SUKKOT

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One of the most exciting moments for a youth movement is going to the movement's machane. Long before the beginning of the machane, the hanhaga gathers to schedule the specific date, Vaadat HaChinuch carefully builds the educational program and the madrichim meticulously plan the peulot and buy the necessary equipment and games for the different activities. And what about the chanichim? There is no one as excited, thrilled and maybe a little scared as the chanichim. Enthusiastic youngsters and teenagers arrive at the buses with huge luggage whose zippers surrender, at the last moment, to the pile of candy that was squeezed into it while applying a considerable amount of pressure, finally agreeing to close. After saying goodbye to their parents, they get on the buses and wait for the sound of the engine. The departure and the waving of hands to the parents symbolize the opening shot of the real thing – the machane begins!

The tnua's machane is the culminating moment of the semester. All of our hassle and efforts, working relentlessly to prepare the peulot and games for the ken, the crying and laughter, the anger and joy, the good and the difficult moments, all come down to these four or five days. During the machane, we essentially break out of our daily routine, from our familiar home and the delicious food and go to a foreign and unknown place, a place where someone we do not know cooks food that is not as good as our mother's, where the bed is not as comfortable as the one in our home. In this place, cleanliness, order and homey, pleasant scents are replaced with stinky odors and messy rooms, and who knows whether there will be hot water in the shower this time.

Every person who has ever been a part of a youth movement is probably familiar with these descriptions. But have we ever imagined how these descriptions of the tnua's machane relate to the holiday of Sukkot?

Sukkot is one of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals mentioned in the Bible, in which every Jew was commanded to go to the Temple of Jerusalem, offer an animal sacrifice and give thanks for the harvest that was gathered during the year. Therefore, Sukkot is also known as the Festival of Ingathering (Chag Ha'asif), since at the end of summer, the farmer reaps the fruits of his/her labor. This is, in fact, a reward for all his/her hassle during the year. Imagine this peak moment: An entire people, families and individuals, leave their homes and fields, their hoes and pitchforks, break away from their daily routines and everything they know and travel to somewhere else, to Jerusalem, away from their homes. Sukkot marks the end of the agricultural season after the long summer and the preparation for the rainy season. Therefore, it is a peak moment in the Hebrew calendar.

In Sukkot, we are commanded to leave our homes and sit in the Sukkah, commemorating the Israelites' period of wandering in the wilderness. What stands behind the peculiar commandment? Leaving our cozy and familiar home and our comfortable bedroom to go to a temporary, cramped and utterly unnatural dwelling is one of this holiday's main ideas.



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Our routine and day-to-day lives often cause us to feel indifferent and complacent. Our days and weeks are very fixed and have a regular and dictated schedule.

Along with the convenience that our daily routine provides, it may also cause us to be dragged or sucked into it: We might forget to pause for a moment and appreciate our everyday surroundings. The holiday of Sukkot shakes our entire leisurely existence; the most fundamental aspects of our lives. We leave our safe home for a temporary dwelling. From a warm house and a comfortable bed, we leave for an unnatural and unstable place for a whole week.

When we return to our familiar place after a few days out of the house, we learn to appreciate it genuinely. When we return home, there is a sense of closure. We understand how valuable our daily routine is. Suddenly, our belongings and surroundings become more valued. When we learn to truly appreciate our surroundings and belongings instead of taking them for granted, we become free. The tnuva's machane as well as the holiday of Sukkot allow us to break away from all the objects and devices that surround us, to detach from everything that chains us and to become free people.

And why do we love it so much? Suddenly, when we say goodbye to our parents and the buses get on their way, we traverse to a different reality, a reality that is disconnected from this world. Suddenly, for a few days, we get an opportunity to be and live in a disconnected world and to dream.

Similar to the Festival of Ingathering, when the entire people would leave their homes and fields and go to the Temple of Jerusalem to give thanks for the fruit of their labor, we go to the machane to enjoy all the hard work we invested during the semester and rejoice over the fruits of our hard labor in the tnuva.

I wish you all a happy Sukkot.