

A Fresh Ledger in a Flimsy Hut

KLI YAKAR · VAYIKRA 23:42

Every Resident Must Leave

The pasuk says kol ha'eizrach b'Yisrael yeishvu ba'sukkos - every eizrach in Yisrael shall dwell in sukkos. Kli Yakar reads eizrach as a lashon of toshav - someone settled, established, planted exactly where he is. And Sukkos falls at precisely the moment in the year when a person is most entitled to feel that way: the crops are in, the storehouses are full, a year of work has finally paid off.

That, says Kli Yakar, is exactly why the Torah singles out the eizrach. The person most at risk of quietly deciding he built all this himself is the person sitting comfortably in a full house after a good harvest. So the Torah takes him outside his permanent home, into a dirah arai - a temporary dwelling - for seven days, not because he did anything wrong, but because feeling settled is exactly when a person most needs reminding that he isn't.

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Why the Fifteenth Is Called "First"

The Torah calls the day we take the daled minim yom harishon - the first day - though it is really the fifteenth of Tishrei. Kli Yakar cites the Midrash that Sukkos is called rishon l'cheshbon avonos - the first day of a new accounting.

After the process of kapparah that culminates on Yom Kippur, the first day of Sukkos begins a new cheshbon. In this sense, rishon is not describing its place on the calendar. It is the first day of a fresh accounting.

FOR THE TABLE

We might notice that Sukkos comes at two moments when a person could feel especially secure: after the harvest is gathered and after Yom Kippur. Perhaps that is precisely when the Torah gives us both a temporary sukkah and a fresh cheshbon.

WORTH ASKING

What's something you're holding onto tightly right now that a week in the sukkah might loosen your grip on?

IN THE MARGINS