

Torah Talk – מאמרי תורה



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Chol HaMoed Sukkot
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חול המועד סוכות
י"ז בתשרי תשע"ח

Torah Reading: *Shmot* (Exodus) 33:12-34:26
Maftir: Bemidbar (Numbers) 38:18-39:16

As many of us know, *Sukkot* is about showing our faith in Hashem by replicating and living in the flimsy structures used by the *Bnei Yisrael* in the wilderness. This provides a tangible reminder of the fragility of our homes. ([Learn more about Sukkot here.](#))

Given this theme, it is interesting that the dedication of the first *Beit HaMikdash*, the Temple in Jerusalem – literally “The House of [Creating] Holiness” – occurred specifically on the holiday of *Sukkot*. We read of the dedication, taken from *Melachim Aleph* (I Kings), Chapter 8, as the *Haftarah* for the holiday.

The word בית – *Bayit*, “house” – conveys a different concept in Hebrew than in English. It indicates not only a physical structure, but a gathering place for specific individuals or tasks. Some examples follow, with their literal translations and their English meanings:

בית ספר – *Beit Sefer* – House of the Book – School

בית חולים – *Beit Cholim* – House of the Sick – Hospital

בית כנסת – *Beit Knesset* – House of Assembly – Synagogue

בית אבות – *Beit Avot* – House of the Ancestors – Old Age Home

בית עולם – *Beit Olam* – Eternal House – Cemetery

בית ישראל – *Beit Yisrael* – House of Israel – Jewish People

בית דוד – *Beit Daveed* – House of David – the Davidic Line

בית המלך – *Beit HaMelech* – House of the King – Palace

בית הכלא – *Beit HaKeleh* – House of the Restraint – Prison

בית הכסא – *Beit HaKisay* – House of the Chair – Bathroom

בית אהרן – *Beit Aharon* – House of Aaron – the Priestly Line

In addition, *Beit HaMikdash* is only one of the names for the Temple. It is also referred to as:

בית הבחירה – *Beit HaB'chirah* – The Chosen House (Tractate Sanhedrin 20B)

בית תפילה – *Beit Tefillah* – House of Prayer (Isaiah 56:7)

בית א-דני – *Beit A-donai* – House of God (II Kings 12:5)

בית א-להי יעקב – *Beit E-lohai Yaakov* – House of the God of Jacob (Isaiah 2:3)

All of these examples underscore that in Hebrew, the word *bayit* encompasses social “structures” along with physical ones. When we sit in our *Sukkot* this week, let us think not only of the fragility of the physical structure we call our home, but also of the fragility of our societal and religious institutions and the need for positive human input and resources to keep them all functioning.

Chag Sameach and Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- Look up some of the sources for the Temple’s different names in your *TaNakh* (Bible). What is the context in which each phrase is used?
- Why might the Temple have so many different names? What does each name signify?
- Choose one example of “*beit*” above. What can you personally do to strengthen that place?