

# Living as a Sukkah

## A Devotional on Playing it Safe

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Reading a bedtime story to my daughter, Liat, the other day got me thinking about the whole issue of fear and how it unnecessarily limits our lives. In this cute little story, several ducklings hatch out of their eggs and follow their mother to the small pond. Mother duck warns her young ones about the ever present danger of the fox - a brownish creature with dark, beady eyes and a furry tail, who lives in the forest and would like nothing better than a meal of succulent young duck.



Eventually, the ducklings and their mother fly over to a larger pond nearby; but one duckling decides that she will never ever fly. She makes the decision to play it safe – walk rather than fly. Because of her self-imposed limitation, this duckling cannot join her mother and the rest of the family unless she walks through the forest.

As she ventures into the forest, it is not long before she runs smack dab into – you guessed it – a brownish creature with dark, beady eyes and a furry tail. The fox slyly lures the duckling towards its den, hiding its evil intentions; but just in time, the duckling realizes the danger she is in and takes off flying high into the air. Soon, the silly duckling is reunited with her mother and brothers and sisters in true safety and fellowship.



[riddlesbrainteasers.com](http://riddlesbrainteasers.com)

Just a silly story, yes, but how many of us live like this duckling? We have somewhere, somehow, for some reason, made a decision to ‘play it safe’. Instead of ‘rising up on eagle’s wings’ in boldness, faith, and courage; we are walking wearily through dark, scary forests and running smack dab into the enemy of our souls.

It’s time that we recognize those dark, beady eyes and furry tail and wake up to the danger we have brought upon ourselves by our feeble attempts to stay ‘safe’. In seeking security and safety by our own human methods, we are actually playing right into the hands of the enemy, since there is only one true place of shelter and refuge from all the terrors of life.

That place of safety is in the secret place of Elyon (Most High), abiding under the shadow of Shaddai (Almighty). (Psalm 91:1)

**“I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, My God, in Him I will trust. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge;”** (Psalm 91: 2-3)

I was visiting my elderly aunties one day at the seniors home where they now live and the conversation soon turned to the dreaded ‘bird flu’ that everyone said would be coming with vengeance as a plague. I mentioned this verse from the Psalms (Tehillim) that God would deliver us from this kind of pestilence as long as we trust in Him and stay under His shelter.

They were amazed and wanted to know if this was, indeed, written in the “Jewish Bible”! All I had on me was one with small print, but they insisted on looking for themselves and trying to read this verse. It is surprising that as Jewish people, most of us do not know our own Scriptures.

God promises not only to deliver us from plagues such as the bird flu, but also from terrorism and enemy attack, by day or by night, and even from destruction that comes upon us at noon. So whether we are being assaulted morning, noon, or night, God is going to be there as the Protector of our soul. The Psalmist makes a bold claim,

**“Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you...For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”** (Psalm 91: 9-11)

God does not promise us a life free of trouble, but that He will be with us in the midst of our troubles. He will guide and guard us through the storms to a place of safety. He will deliver us from evil.

But what does it mean to dwell in the ‘secret place of Elyon’; or in the ‘shadow of El Shaddai’ - under the shelter of His wings? I believe it means giving up our human efforts at securing our own safety and security.

We can do things one of two ways: either trusting in our own ways and our own understanding, or trusting in the Lord’s ways, which sometimes defy human logic:

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will bring it to pass.”** (Prov. 3:5)

**Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles or Booths)** is a time in which the children of Israel are commanded to live for seven days in a temporary shelter and rejoice in the goodness and provision of God, remembering our wanderings in the wilderness.

**“You shall dwell in booths (sukkot) for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”** (Leviticus 23:42-43)

One year, the Holy Spirit gave me a precious new revelation about the sukkah. He said, *“I want you to live as a sukkah.”* What are the characteristics of the sukkah? It is temporary, fragile, open, and relatively defenseless. So, too, does God want us to tear down the heavy, impenetrable walls that we have built up around our hearts through our own human reactions to fear, hurt, pain, and betrayal.



Sukkah built by children of Makor Hatikvah Messianic school in Jerusalem

Instead, God wants to be our defense and our refuge. Rather than taking vengeance for sins committed against us by others, we learn to allow Him to be the one to take vengeance on our behalf – in His perfect way and time. Living as a sukkah means: forgiving, blessing our enemies, and returning good for evil. This causes us to be relatively defenseless in the natural, and open to the elements; but in the Spirit, we are hiding ourselves in the refuge of the Most High God - trusting in His protection.

If we have been hurt in a relationship it means forgiving and being open to possible reconciliation. If we have thrown into a pit by someone close to us – maybe even within our own family - it means getting up, picking up our dirty mats of resentment and bitterness - and walking in love again.

Living as a sukkah means that when (not if) we have been beaten down by life, we continue to believe in God’s love; and expect to see His goodness in the Land of the living. It means trusting God enough to fly again when we come to the realization that staying grounded is too costly.

It is not a biblical commandment, but a tradition that the Sukkah be constructed in such a way that one can see the stars through the palm branches of the roof. We catch a glimpse of a heavenly vision – the same stars that our Father Abraham gazed at when God promised to cut covenant with him.

By dwelling in a sukkah for seven days, we are reminded that this world is not our home; we are only strangers and aliens, pilgrims just passing through on our journey to eternity.

With this perspective, we can gain the courage to live in obedience to whatever God calls us to do, instead of living our lives as hamsters running frantically around the endless, pointless, meaningless wheel of existence.

After moving from Canada to Israel, we soon grew accustomed to rubbing shoulders with armed guards at the entrance of every building; and young IDF soldiers on the streets packing an uzi or other large weapon over his or her shoulder.

When we first moved to Israel, our youngest son was then five years old. One day on a crowded bus, he shouted, “*Mom, look! There is a soldier – and he’s wearing a kippah!*”<sup>1</sup>

It became practically a daily event at times to be stopped by bomb threats on the road or to have to evacuate the bus because of a suspicious object. On busses, everyone is always alert to suspicious behavior, to bags left unattended. The ever present danger of the enemy surrounds and permeates daily life in Israel.



An Uzi-armed Israeli on guard duty in the [Negev](#) (1956)

And yet, in response to the many questions we would receive about whether or not we are ‘afraid’ to live here, I would have to answer “No, I don’t usually feel fear.” There have been some near misses, however: like the time our daughter Courtney was out, walking along a street when ten minutes later, at that very spot, a bomb hit. Our younger daughter should have been standing at a bus stop where a bomb exploded; but the school let them out an hour later that day so it missed her.

When Courtney planned to get married in Jerusalem at an outdoor location, a terrible storm suddenly came, along with strong winds and rain that blew down all their decorations. Even the tent covering for which they had paid a fortune, was destroyed in the tempest. Being that her husband- to-be’s parents were leaders of a Messianic congregation at the time, they marched around rebuking the storm – but to no avail.

Courtney felt devastated, thinking that the whole wedding would have to be cancelled; but miraculously, they found an alternative location (with security) and within a couple hours, they had moved the entire wedding indoors.

It was a wonderful simcha<sup>2</sup> that went off without a hitch with one exception. While we were downtown getting our hair and makeup done at the salon, we heard a loud blast go off nearby. Soon, the radios began broadcasting that a suicide bomber had just blown

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<sup>1</sup> Kippah – skullcap – head covering worn by religiously observant Jewish men

<sup>2</sup> simcha – joy, joyous occasion

himself up downtown. Thank God, there were no casualties. The hair stylist began to shout, in typical Israeli form, “*Shut that radio off! There are brides in here. They don’t want to here about bombs today!*” ☺

Later, we heard from one of the wedding guests who had connections with the Israeli Police and secret service, that they had been tracking this bomber for days. He had been positioned at the site of Courtney and Emanuel’s outdoor wedding, which happened to overlook some Arabic villages across the hills. Apparently, when he saw that the storm had blown everything down and the guests were not arriving, he instead took the bus downtown where he detonated his deadly bomb.

What is the point?! Is it just to praise God for His protection? No, it is to say, “Trust God even in the storms of life.” We never know if this ‘storm’ that devastates us; that we think in our limited human perception is the ruin of our life and happiness, may actually be the thing God is using to save us.”

**“A sound shall be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. A sound of joy and the sound of gladness; the sound of the bridegroom and the sound of the Bride.” (Jeremiah 33:11)**

The whole wedding was a prophetic picture of the soon coming reunion between our lovely Bridegroom and us, His beautiful Bride, a virgin without spot or wrinkle.<sup>3</sup>



Courtney & Emanuel at their wedding in Jerusalem

I never experienced the fear in Israel that I have felt in exile – not a physical fear – but the fear of wasting my life; or the fear of a living out a meaningless existence. This fear was that of wandering in the wilderness until I died - my carcass being stark evidence that God was not pleased with me in the end because of my unbelief. When we lost heart and left Israel to return to Canada, I felt like a bird with a broken wing. I longed to fly but had been too wounded – so I walked through the wilderness for several years until finally finding the strength and courage to return with my children, by God’s grace, to the land of my forefathers.

When we live our lives in fear of stepping out - of doing that thing that is in our hearts to do (when we try to play it safe) - the enemy can have a field day with us! By trying to place it safe we can walk right into the trap he has set for us.

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<sup>3</sup> For a copy of Courtney and Emanuel’s wedding DVD, [A Messianic Jewish Wedding in Jerusalem](#), please contact us to order or check out our website: [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

We may look at what happened when David stayed home instead of going out with his men on the battlefield – he fell into sin with Batsheva. This is what happens when we get lazy and passive – when we lose our offensive edge. We give the enemy a foothold.

Then, he can torment us with so much fear, guilt, and condemnation, that we refuse to engage fully in life and end up falling short of our divine destiny. How sad. How many lives are wasted because people want to play it safe? How many excuses do we use to live lives devoid of passion, purpose and peace?

God is calling to us in this hour, by His Spirit. The Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come!’ The shofar<sup>4</sup> has blown long and hard and loud on the Feast of Trumpets.<sup>5</sup> It shouts, ‘Wake up! Wake up out of your slumber!’ We must stop being so busy with things that don’t really matter; and instead become fruitful for the Kingdom of God.



Jewish “[Slichot](#)” prayer service with shofar during the Days of Repentance preceding [Yom Kippur](#) at the [Western Wall](#) in Jerusalem’s Old City, 2008.

We must be determined to break free from the rat race and live with passion and purpose. The time is short. Now is the time to serve God with all of our hearts in joy and gladness – to live with an eternal perspective. We must work while there is yet light to win souls; to fulfill the ministry that has been entrusted to us. Now is the time to stir up the gifts that God has placed within us and even dig them up from where we have buried them.

We don’t want to face God and have him call us a wicked and unfaithful servant. If we refuse to use the gifts and talents God has given us, then we are actually robbing the world of the blessing God intended for people to receive through us!

How many of us are working at jobs that we hate, or living lives that we despise; just out of fear of trying something new, fear of change, fear of the unknown, fear of failure? The list seems endless....

The point is, that not only is our sense of personal fulfillment and fruitfulness at stake; but we may even be endangering our very lives themselves by this kind of cowardly living. For if the Holy Spirit is calling to us - giving counsel about what we must do to survive - and if we refuse this counsel; then we cannot enjoy the peace and security of knowing that we are doing God’s will and living in the center of His will and timing.

The wisest man who ever lived, King Solomon, wrote this in the book of Proverbs, about wisdom, **“Whoever listens to me (wisdom) will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil.”** (Proverbs 1:33)

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<sup>4</sup> ram’s horn

<sup>5</sup> Yom Zikaron Tru’ah

Wisdom is calling aloud – are we listening? We must be willing to move with godly fear, but not stay stuck out of a fear that is not of God. Noah moved with Godly fear to save his entire household from the flood and was included in the register of great people of faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

But another kind of fear – cowardice - can really put our lives in danger. Cowards will not enter the Kingdom of God; only those of good courage will overcome and inherit a place in the Kingdom as Sons and Daughters of the Most High.

**“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”** (Revelation 21:7-8)

The kind of fear that just wants to play it safe is not of God: **“God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power and love and a sound mind.** (2 Timothy 1:7)

Perfect love casts out all fear. Let us fully embrace the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of all wisdom, but reject this human fear that robs us of our destiny and inheritance. Let us be strong and of good courage; let us not fear, for our God has promised, “I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Let us not shrink back in fear, but **live as a sukkah**, defenseless before man but protected in the secret place by the mighty shelter and refuge of El Elyon. May we, by the grace of God, overcome all fear, laziness and passivity that bring us directly into the snares of the enemy. Help us, Lord to get back on the offensive for Your Kingdom and do great and mighty exploits in Your name.

Amen.



About the Author:

Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She made aliyah (immigrated to Israel) and now teaches about the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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**“For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3)**

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