

Sukkos in Yerushalayim

JERUSALEM REPORT

AKIVA AARONSON

As every year, immediately on *Motzoei* Yom Kippur, here in *Eretz Yisrael* the atmosphere completely changes, a real contrast to the previous night. The quiet and solemnity of *Yom Kippur* suddenly disappears, replaced by a night of noise and activity: the sound of the hammer and drill as sukkahs go up, if not already standing. The buildings all around are stone, so everything echoes, creating quite a cacophony! As for hardware stores, its peak season, open into the early hours, pavements lit by spotlight outside with all types of material for the sukkah, together with the constant whine of the electric saw as timber is cut to size.

The usual place for the sukkah in *Eretz Yisrael* is of course on the *mirpeset* (balcony), but it might also be on the ground floor for those who live there, or even on the roof for those on the top floor. Wherever it's situated, it'll mean *shlepping* the sukkah walls and *schach* from their storage place up and down the *cheder madregot* (staircase) in the building, not a job to be entrusted to children as care and caution is required. The floor is soon covered by all types of debris, which will need a good sweep before Yom Tov. However, the first and least appealing task – before even touching the sukkah – will be to clean the *mirpeset*, open to the elements all year, dust, rain and heat.

Not to be beaten by their elders, at this time of year the

avodah of *cheder* boys is to collect every bit of wood they can find to build their own sukkah, an activity only equaled one other time in the year after Pesach by their search for material for the Lag b'Omer *medurah*. Neighbours are asked for any spare *schach* and plywood boards, crates and other packing material also making their way to where the sukkah will go up. These mini sukkahs are a true sight to behold, ten *tefachim* high (or more), with four walls. According to most opinions, they're '*Kosher l'Brachah!*' The boys call it their '*Machaneh*' (Camp), which only they are allowed to enter; anyone else at his risk! On *Chol-Hamoed* you'll find them inside, enjoying a *shmuz* and a good *nash!*

Of course, whilst busy with all this activity, we still can't get away from the war going on around us. Although things have been relatively quiet in Jerusalem, the night before Rosh Hashanah with its barrage of ballistic missiles left sirens ringing in our ears, and uncertainty what was in store for the next few days. Children are no help in this matter; one of their favourites to imitate – accurately – the wail of the siren!

In the north of the country of course, the situation is quite different, where whole regions are under constant attack, many residents away from their homes and livelihood now for a complete year. We've become accustomed to daily



A boy's 'Machaneh' in Jerusalem standing next to the sukkah of his father

news punctuated by tragedy, the loss or injury of precious *neshamas*. This is of course all apart from the pain of those still held captive.

So, we came to Sukkos this year, the tefillah of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur still remaining with us, expressing our innermost thoughts: 'May this year coming upon us, Your people Israel, be a year of abundance, of blessing, of beneficial decrees ... a year in which You will bless our going and coming...'. We breathed a sigh of relief Yom Tov night when we recited the beracha: '*Shehecheyanu v'kiyamanu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.*'

The author is an avreich in Jerusalem

Yehuda Bauer preeminent

Bauer attended high school in Haifa and served in the pre-state Jewish

in the 1948-49 War of Independence. (Welsh was one of the nine languages he was able