

The Multiple Reasons for Happiness of Sukkot

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The Torah emphasizes the obligation to be happy on *Sukkot* three times. Why?

We sit in a *sukka* to remember, "I made you dwell in booths..." Rabbi Eliezer says the booths were clouds of glory that surrounded the Jewish people. Rabbi Akiva says they were actual booths. The Jews had three miraculous gifts in the desert, the mohn, the well, and the clouds. We don't have a yom tov to celebrate the mohn and the well, why the clouds? The *Sichot Mussar* explains that the mohn and the water were a must for survival. But the clouds were an act of love. The Zohar calls it, *tzila demeimenusa*, the shade of faith. Hashem invited the Jews into His domain and protected them. To remember this love, we celebrate *Sukkot*. The clouds were with them already a half year before in Nissan. Why do we celebrate in *Tishrei*? In order to be in such close proximity to Hashem, one has to be worthy of it. After the Days of Awe and repentance when we are now clean of sin, we can be invited into the chamber of Hashem.

Rabbi Akiva says we celebrate *Sukkot* to remember the booths. Why celebrate? When the Jews entered Israel and planted fields and then gathered in the harvest, there was a risk they would forget to thank Hashem. They would think it was the fruits of their own labor. Therefore, Hashem gave us the *mitzva* of *sukka* so that we would remember that in the desert we had nothing and Hashem provided for us. It's not our strength and capability. When we connect to Hashem and come close to Him, it creates tremendous joy. Therefore, *Sukkot* is at the time of the harvest.

The Mishna in Avot says, "Jealousy, desire, and the pursuit of honor take a person out of this world." On *Sukkot*, we recognize that what we have is all from Hashem and that is the key to happiness.

It says about the *mitzva* of *lulav*, "Be happy in front of Hashem." Why does this *mitzva* make us happy? The *Midrash* tells us each of the four species have some aspect that symbolize Hashem. Remembering our relationship with Hashem makes us happy. Another *Midrash*

tells us that the four species symbolize the four types of Jewish people, those with *Torah* and *mitzvot* and those without. We tie them all together so that it becomes one so that there is mutual atonement. This brings closeness to Hashem.

Physicality is limited and therefore there's room for jealousy and resentment. But if we understand that our goal should be spirituality and the things we have are only a means to fulfill our purpose, we can put all differences aside and unite with others. Good relationships are more precious than anything and are the source of happiness. Joy creates unity. Difficulties turn into challenges, an opportunity to take a world so removed from purity and bring it to holiness. This too creates happiness. We leave our comfortable homes and enter a flimsy shack, making the first step, the channel that will help us internalize what we learnt during the Days of Awe and take it with us throughout the year.

Sukkot in Our Times

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Summary by Devora Kaye

In this class we will discuss the *Shla Hakodesh's* discourse on *Sukkot*. The four days between *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkos* are days of mercy, a continuation of *Yom Kippur*. It says in the *Navi* that although *Yovel* was sounded for the slaves on the 10th of the month which is *Yom Kippur*, for the slaves it was considered like a new year, a *Rosh Hashana*, because they were beginning a new life. We learn from this, that sometimes *Yom Kippur* could be like *Rosh Hashana*, a new beginning. And if so, ten days from there takes us to *Hoshana Rabbah*. Hashem gives us till then to repent and to transform judgement to mercy.

The Days of Awe are called that way because you can't easily change things afterwards. Where Hashem is taking you is where you signed on you wanted to go. With this in mind, let's explore the backdrop of *Sukkot*. The holiday is seven days. The *Shla* divides it in two unique segments, six and one. Six relate to the six extremities on a cube, top, bottom,

and four sides. And then there's the inside. The six aspects of being that we call surface are the six days of *Sukkot*. The inside, the seventh, is the last day. On *Sukkot* we celebrate the feeling of closeness and being enveloped in Hashem's embrace which we can only sense if we went through the Days of Awe in the right way. The Gra writes that the clouds of glory in the desert departed after the sin of the golden calf. After Moshe prayed it came back. On *Sukkot* we celebrate being enveloped by Hashem. Picture a brilliant, dazzling light that you can't possibly look at. The one who created this light wanted to be known so He placed a screen with perforations. There are different ways in which Hashem lets himself be known and we will discuss seven of them. No matter where you are, whether you have an actual *sukka* or not, the holiness of the days of *Sukkot* is there. Seven spiritual guests who saw through the perforations and whose experiences could give us a sense of seeing not only the shield and the difficulties, but the light that radiates

through, visit us in our *sukka*.

There's a prayer in *selichot*, *Mi she'ana*- The One who answered. We pray, "The one who answered Avraham on the temple mount, He'll answer us." You could only answer if there's a question. What was Avraham asking at the *akeida*? Who will worship on this mountain if Yitzchak will be gone? You promised my descendant would be so numerous like the stars in heaven and the dust of the earth. How will this happen? The answer is it will happen far more than we can fathom. Hashem's chesed is greater than imaginable. The second night symbolizes Yitzchak. On the altar, Yitzchak prayed that he be worthy of his act of *mesirat nefesh*. His *middah* is gevura, being strong in the sense that Hashem is strong, holding back and giving us what we need when and how we need it. Yitzchak asked, how do I know I'm worthy? Hashem answered, you will be the one who carries on the heritage. Every one of us is capable of *mesirat nefesh*.

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Yaakov's *midda* was *tiferet*. Truth is anything permanent and inclusive. Every Jew has the *Torah* as their legacy and is obligated to know it, to see truth and not be deceived by life's challenges.

Yosef's question in prison was- How can I be the person you want me to be in this dungeon? By being a person who's human and developed enough to be sensitive to a stranger's pain, when he himself had every reason to be embittered, he answered his question. His ultimate freedom wasn't accomplished through maneuvering but by

becoming the person Hashem wanted him to be in the circumstances He placed him. Aharon stood between the living and the dead trying to stop the plague and Hashem answered him. We see ourselves as separate just as branches of a tree but in truth we all come from a single root which is Hashem. Being a man of peace means viewing people as stemming from one root and relating to their inner divine spark.

The seventh day is hinted at in the name *sukka* which comes from the word *sach* -to pour forth. Hashem pours forth something of

himself into every person mixing all of these different *middot* to express *rachamim* or in Kabbalistic terms *binah* -truly understanding the person. Hashem gives us exactly what we need and can digest. The recipient is *malchut*, letting Hashem rule and trusting in His rule. *David Hamelech* epitomized this. David and Shlomo asked Hashem, will you answer our prayers when we are confused, when we don't know what will be. And Hashem said yes. May we merit the *simcha* of *Sukkot* and the joy of being enveloped in Hashem's embrace.

Travelling Through Life Accompanied by Tehillim Part 12 Part 3

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Summary by Devora Kaye

The Alshich points out in the first part of the chapter, when we begin to praise Hashem with the words, "*Hallelu et Hashem*," we use the full name of Hashem (*yud keh vav keh*). Later on, when we speak about earth and man, we use the term *hallelukah* (*yud keh*). The Alshich explains, when we refer to man we refer to a name of Hashem that indicates to us his role. When we speak about the angels we speak about their role. The role of creation is to exist and function based on the laws Hashem established for them. They have no ability to change anything. The full name of Hashem indicates that they will reveal Him to the full capacity they are capable of. Man's mission is very different. It is to grow to be a ladder that stands here on earth with its top reaching the heavens.

Man was created with physicality but he can elevate it and reach higher than angels. Rashi explains that this world was created with the letter *heh* and the world to come with the letter *yud*. *Yud* is the smallest letter indicating the world to come where we will be

transformed to the level of angels. The letter *heh* is this world, closed on three sides and open at the bottom to tell us that in order to fulfill our mission we have to hold on very strongly in order not to fall. The *heh* has an opening indicating that if we do fail, there's an opening to come back again. There are ten words of praise in the book of *Tehillim* with *halleluka* being the highest. It tells us that through praising and appreciating Hashem, one can have a relationship with Him and connect the physical reality to the heavenly realm. Through this, the purpose of creation is fulfilled.

We praise Hashem because we recognize that He's the source of everything. It says, "*Hodu al erez v'shamayim*- For his name alone will have been exalted, His glory is above earth and heaven." We already said the heavenly creatures and the earthly creatures will praise him. Why afterwards do we add that his glory will be above earth and heavens? It sums up the main idea of this chapter.

Let's compare it to the story of creation. In *Bereishit* it says, "This is the story of earth and heavens." When they were created, it lists heaven first and then earth. After the creation of man, earth is written first and then heavens. This teaches us that there are two stages to creation. We start with heaven and it becomes lower and lower till it becomes physical reality. But then we begin the story of mankind and how he fulfills his purpose. The story of man is the connection of earth to heaven. It's going up the other half of the circle to Hashem. All of creation was made for man. This defines our role and tells us what our potential could be, how high we can reach. Though we are constantly challenged, we have free choice. Physicality is very enticing, life isn't always very easy, but we can utilize the resources we were given to fulfill our purpose. Each of us is the ladder that can reach heaven. And for this we must say *halleluka*. When we connect this world created with a *heh* with the world to come created with a *yud*, we cannot help but praise Hashem.