



# The Miracle of the Sukkah

We are all familiar with the three large-scale, miraculous phenomena that occurred for the Jewish people in the desert. They were nourished by the Manna, the heavenly food that fell daily, their water was provided by the ever-present Well, and they were protected by the Clouds of Glory. The Slonimer Rebbe in *Netivot Shalom* asks the obvious question. Why do we have little or no tribute to the first two miracles, yet the “*Ananei Hakhavod*”, the Clouds of Glory, form the motif of an entire chag?

The Rebbe explains that Jewish holidays do not simply recall past events. Every year we are meant to relive the past experiences and draw on the unique energies embedded therein. We achieve an aspect of redemption on Pesach and we receive the Torah anew each Shavuot. The Manna and the Well were miracles particularly suited for the generation that wandered in the desert. The Clouds of Glory, however, represent Hashem’s Divine Providence which is eternal. Indeed, the midrash in *parashat Beha’alotcha* notes that “following the clouds” is a mitzvah for all generations. Rav Wachtfogel, the late Mashgiach of Lakewood, notes in his *Sefer Reshimos* that one fulfills this mandate when he opens his eyes to the Divine Providence that pervades

his life. Further, one who looks for this Providence will see it at all times and in all places. If we don’t see it, it is only because our vision is limited. As Rabbi Nachman of Breslov was known to say, “The world is full of the light of G-d, but to see it we must learn to open our eyes.”

“*Lema’an yeid’u doroteichem ki be’sukot hoshavti et benei Yisrael*, so that future generations will know that I had the Children of Israel live in huts.” (*Vayikra* 23:43) *Eemunah* is the knowledge of Hashem’s continuous protection and constant care. The prophet Hoshea teaches, “And I will betroth you to Me with faith, and you will know Hashem.” (*Hoshea* 2:21) The *chag* of Sukkot infuses us with this knowledge. The word “*sukkah*” is related to Sara Imeinu’s other name, *Yiska*, which means to ‘gaze’ or to ‘see.’ Sukkot is a time for us to concretize the notion that Hashem is watching over us, always, at all times. As we sit in the sukkah, we feel enveloped by Hashem’s Presence and saturated with the joy that Hashem is not only protecting us, His attentiveness and benevolence is unceasing.

Rabbi Imanuel Bernstein in *Sukkos: A Symphony of Joy*, quotes a fascinating idea from the *Aruch La’Ner* that takes this idea one step further. The opening mishnah in

*Masechet Sukkah* rules that a sukkah taller than 20 *amot* is invalid. One explanation offered for this ruling is that from such a great height one is in the shade of the walls, as opposed to being in the shade of the *schach*. The *Aruch La'Ner* explains how this is so incredibly relevant to our lives. The sukkah is a physical manifestation of complete trust in Hashem. Having this trust means that although one can try and do his *hishtadlut*, one ultimately knows that even his efforts must be blessed through Hashem's Will. Yosef Hatzadik is critiqued for placing his trust in the *Sar Hamashkim*, seeing him as his only recourse to freedom, not as an emissary of Hashem's Will. The walls of the sukkah symbolize one's *hishtadlut*, the *Schach* represents Hashem's supervision.

Clearly one needs both walls and *Schach* to have a kosher sukkah. But which is seen as providing the shade? Sitting in a sukkah who's walls are taller than 20 *amot* symbolizes that one feels the shade of the walls, not the *schach*, meaning, he sees his efforts as the bearer of his success. When we sit in a proper sukkah, in the shade of the *schach*, we are reminded that we are completely ensconced in Hashem's embrace and wholly reliant on Him for our every need. ■

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