

The Month of Tishrei:

The Sukkah – An Emunah Recharging Structure

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

In the Shade of Emunah

As an EmunaHealer women frequently come to me seeking to be strengthened in their emunah. Many of us grew up with a critical mother or experienced some kind of trauma in early childhood that made us feel abandoned and consequently disconnected and far from Hashem. We may become hard on ourselves doubting that we ever will deserve Hashem's love and protection. With lack of self-love it is hard to love others and allow ourselves to experience Hashem's eternal love for us. The holiday of Sukkot comes to repair our lack of emunah in ourselves, in each other and in Hashem. During Sukkot Hashem brings us close into His inner chamber where He showers us with love. "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me (*Song of Songs* 8:3). This verse describes the Clouds of Glory represented by the Sukkah (*Midrash Zuta Shir Hashirim* 2).

They are compared to a loving hug by Hashem, as we know that the minimum halachic walls necessary for a kosher Sukkah is two complete walls and a *tefach* (handbreadth) of a wall. The two complete walls can be compared to the two parts of the arm above and below the elbow, and the handbreadth of a wall represents the hand turning perpendicular to the arm in the shape of a hug. When we sit in the Sukkah we are receiving the most loving hug from our eternal Mother – the Shechinah (Feminine Indwelling Presence). Whatever love we didn't get from our biological Mom, we can now replace by taking in the deepest unconditional love in the shade of the Sukkah. When we meditate in the Sukkah on letting the love of the Shechinah fill us and penetrate all our emotional hurts, then our capacity for emunah is heightened. Likewise, the original Sukkah in which Hashem protected the children of Israel in the desert also recharged their emunah. The Jewish people emerging from Egypt had just undergone 210 years of the national emotional and spiritual trauma. The pain of slavery had taken its toll on our emunah. Egypt, our critical mother caused us self-doubt and distrust. Therefore, Hashem protected Israel in His Clouds of Glory in order to recharge our emunah.

In the Divine Embrace

The Torah emphasizes the mitzvah to live in the Sukkah during the seven days of Sukkot in order to recall how Hashem protected the children of Israel in Sukkot when He delivered us from Egypt. The word for Sukkot is written three times in the following Torah verses. You may notice that twice the word Sukkah is lacking the *vav*, and once it is written with the *vav*.

בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכּוֹת: לְמַעַן יָדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַּסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (ספר ויקרא פרק כג פסוק מב-מג)

You shall dwell in the Sukkah for seven days, all the inhabitants of Israel shall dwell in Sukkot, in order that your generations shall know that I made the children of Israel dwell in Sukkot when I took them out of Egypt, I am Hashem your G-d (*Vayikra* 23:42-43).



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B'erot Bat Ayin

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info@berotbatayin.org

www.berotbatayin.org

The walls of the Sukkah representing the Clouds of Glory correspond to the Surrounding Lights (*Ohr Makif*). Our Surrounding Light effects our protection. Having powerful and high quality Surrounding Lights will assure us to always be in the right place at the right time. B'nai Yissaschar explains that according to Arizal there exist a Surrounding Light which only surrounds the influencer (masculine) and another kind of Surrounding Light which surrounds the receiver (feminine) alone. These two Surrounding Lights correspond to the two times Sukkot is spelled without the *vav*. Yet, there is also a Surrounding Light which surrounds both the masculine and feminine together, this is the secret of "His right hand embraces me" (*Shir Hashirim* 2:6), which corresponds to the one time when Sukkot is spelled complete with the *vav*. When the word סוכה/Sukkah is spelled with the *vav*, its *gematria* (numerical value) is 91, which correspond to the unification of the masculine name of Hashem (*yud/kei/vav/kei*) (26), and the feminine name of Hashem *Adnut* (*alef/dalet/nun/yud*) (65), (26+65=91). The unification of these two aspects of Hashem is the secret of the embrace. Following the Divine hug there is a cleaving of spirits one to the other. Therefore, establishing the mitzvah of Sukkah fully (with the *vav*) offers the ability to receive *Ruach Hakodesh* (Divine Inspiration). It is known that the spirit of prophesy comes only to someone who is filled with *simchah* (happiness) (Rambam, *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 7:4). This fits in with the great happiness attributed to the holiday of Sukkot more than any other holiday, as there is no greater happiness than the unification of male and female.

The Third Eye of the Sukkah

Sukkot is the most spiritual healing holiday abundant with lights of emunah and Divine Inspiration. This is even alluded in the name for the Sukkah which means to see with Divine Inspiration.

... (מדרש ילקות שמעוני יא:סב).

Rabbi Yitzchak said, Yiskah that is Sarah. Why was her name called Yiskah because she would see (סוכה/*socha*) with Divine Inspiration (*Yalkut Shimoni Bereishit* 11:62).

Also the Hebrew name of the roof of the Sukkah – which is not really a roof at all is סכך/*sechach*, from the same root of סוכה/*socha* – see with Divine Inspiration. When we remove the physical security of a solid roof over our head, we open ourselves to spiritual security and emunah in the One Above Who watches over us perpetually.

Whereas the Sukkah endow us with Surrounding Lights, we shake the *Lulav* with its bunch in order to imbue ourselves with Inner Light (*Ohr Penimi*). The *Lulav* transmits Inner Lights into our spine, the *Etrog* into our heart, the *Aravot* (willow branches) into our lips, this is why there are two *Aravot*. Likewise, the *Hadassim* (myrtle) conveys inner lights into our eyes. Rabbi Fanger asks, "Why are there three Hadassim? Do we have three eyes?" Yes, indeed during Sukkot we learn to see with our third eye of Divine Inspiration.

Shaking Us Back to Life

Emerging out of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur alive and kicking, we shake the *Lulav* three times in each of the six directions, altogether 18 shakings according to the numerical value of ח/chi – life. The *Lulav* is the catalyst to actualize our Inner Light, which determines our sense of achievement,



our financial state, our health and life-force for the year to come. Actually, the לולב/*Lulav* itself has the numerical value of 68, which equals the *gematria* of חיים/*chaim* – life. Hashem is the source of our life, the more we cleave to Him, the more alive we will be. The *Lulav* with its bunch represents the Name of Hashem *Havayah*, which means existence. Each of the Four Species correspond to a letter in Hashem's four lettered name and thus imbues us with His life energy. The *yud* corresponds to the myrtle branches of our eyes. The first *hei* corresponds to the willows of our lips. The *vav* corresponds the straight *lulav* spine, and the final *hei* to the *etrog* of our heart. As women, who are exempt from shaking the *Lulav*, we can enliven our spine in jubilant dance, open our third eye in contemplative meditation and break into joyful song with our lips, allowing the love to pour out of our heart. When we are in love and nurture our relationships with family and friends, we feel the most alive.

The Vapor of Shalom

And in the merit of Aharon I surrounded you within the Clouds of Glory as it says: "He spreads a cloud for a covering; and a fire to give light in the night" (*Tehillim* 105:39). There were seven clouds, above, below, at the four sides, and one before them which would kill snakes and scorpions, straighten the mountains and the valleys for them, and burn the thorns. They would bring up smoke and all the kings of the east and the west would see it, and the nations of the world would say "Who is this coming out of the wilderness like columns of smoke..." (*Shir Hashirim* 3:6), (*Midrash Tanchuma, Bamidbar*, Chapter 2).

What is the connection between Aharon and the Clouds of Glory, why are they in his merit? Aharon is known for his love of the Jewish people, he would love shalom and pursue shalom (*Pirkei Avot* 1:12). On Yom Kippur Aharon would enter the Holy of Holies and burn the incense. From this incense rose the Clouds of Glory that protected the children of Israel. In Siberia, tells the Rabbi of Ruzsin, when two people hated one another the vapor from their mouth would never mix, each one would take off in a different direction. However, when two people love one another the vapor of their breath mix together to become one. When Aharon was alive, people loved each other so much and gave so much כבוד/*kavod* (respect) to one another, so that the vapor of their breath mixed together and became ענני כבוד/*Ananei Kavod* – Clouds of Glory. This is why there is so much love in the air on Sukkot (Rav Shlomo Carlibach, *Lev Hashamayim* pp. 278-279).

The Clouds of Emunah

In the wilderness Hashem bestowed us with three good gifts, the manna in the merit of Moshe, the well in the merit of Miriam and the Clouds of Glory in the merit of Aharon (*Midrash Vayikra Rabbah* 27:6). Why do we not have a holiday celebrating the manna or the well? Why do we only commemorate the Clouds of Glory during the Festival of Sukkot? Perhaps it is because the protecting Clouds of Glory, representing Hashem's embrace express Hashem's great love for us. The holiday of Sukkot thus celebrates tuning in to the perpetual steadfast love of Hashem. Being permeated with Hashem's love in the Sukkah, strengthens our faith in ourselves, in other people and amplifies our emunah. The Clouds of Glory not only teach us to believe how we are always surrounded by Hashem's love and protection, they moreover strengthen our emunah in the final redemption.

שמאלו תחת לראשי זו סוכה וימינו תחבקני זה ענן שכינה לעתיד לבא: (מדרש רבה שיר השירים פרשה ב פסקה יט)
"His left hand below my head" (*Shir Hashirim* 2:6) –This is the Sukkah. "And his right hand embraces me." This is the cloud of the *Shechina* in the future (*Midrash Rabah Shir Hashirim* 2:19).

May we merit to experience the Divine Embrace this Sukkot and during the Final Redemption!



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