

Spiritual Healing in the Torah

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Shabbat Sukkot

Getting a Glimpse of an Elevated Perception in the Sukkah

Tapping into the Inherent Unity of Sukkot

Sukkot is one of my favorite holidays. We have gone through so much inner work and soul accounting during the last forty + days, starting with Rosh Chodesh Elul and culminating in Yom Kippur. Now it's time to rejoice as it states, "...and to the straight of heart, there is joy" (*Tehillim* 97:11). On Sukkot we can tap into the unity that is in the air. Rav Kook explains "Every resident among the Israelites shall live in Sukkot (*Vayikra* 23:42), according to the Talmudic statement "The Israelites were worthy to dwell in one Sukkah" (*Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah* 27b). The underlying reason for the special unity during Sukkot is that as long as our sins tie down our lives with shackles, we are torn apart by our individual negative impulse which prevents us from experiencing the unity of shalom. Only after the light of teshuva has appeared in our world by means of the holiness of Yom Kippur – when all Jews become purified from the crust of sin – can we hope for expanded unity consciousness. Then, the light of the purity of our soul transforms our separateness to become more and more unified. When Sukkot arrives all our separate opinions and worldviews rise to the place of complete unity, and all Jews become worthy to dwell together in one Sukkah (Rav Kook, *The Seasons of Rav Kook* p. 96). This is the essence of the mitzvah of the Sukkah, to strive for all-inclusive love and shalom together with the entire Jewish people, to the extent that it will be considered as if all of Israel dwells in one unified Sukkah (Rebbe Natan of Breslev). When we hear the sound of all the neighbors – including the wailing of a baby, or the loud voices of a heated discussion – from the thin walls of our Sukkah, the noise is transformed into the sweetest music of the unified Sukkot experience.

Elevating Ourselves to Experiencing Joy from Our Rarified Relationships in the Sukkah

I love gazing at the sparkling stars from the roof of the Sukkah palm branches. We use our own palm branches that my husband became an expert in cutting. The date palm near the entrance of our home needs to be pruned annually, and if you know me, you know how much it means to me to avoid wasting by all means. Using the garden refuse as the roof of our Sukkah reminds us that nothing goes to waste. Everything has a purpose and a time to be elevated on high.

Elevations are what bring about the greatest joy. After having elevated ourselves on Yom Kippur, the Sukkah itself is the most inviting space for experiencing such joy – especially when we celebrate together with loved ones within the Sukkah – eating beautiful foods, singing, and sharing the deepest Sukkah Torah. At times we get a taste of true joy that comes from the rarified relationships with parents, spouses, children, friends, neighbors – our relationships with our community, with our Creator, and with the scattered parts of ourselves that we elevate and gather into the Sukkah.

Gaining a Higher Perception in the Sukkah Beyond the Material Layer

The Hebrew word סֹכָה/*sukkah* – 'booth' has the same root as the word סוֹכֵחַ/*Sochah* – 'perceiving with Divine Inspiration.' Our Mother, Sarah's prophetic spirit is learned from her second name יִסְכָּה/*Yisca*, which also shares the same root. Since the Sukkah embodies the Clouds of Glory – a manifestation of the Divine Indwelling Presence – it makes sense that this

Divine presence imbues us with a higher perception. The Sukkah is also a miniature *Beit Hamikdash* - 'Temple,' and so we refer to the destroyed Temples as "the Sukkah of David that fell." The Temple has always been linked to prophecy (*Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 12a*), and likewise, we can tap into Divine Inspiration in the Sukkah. You don't need to be a psychic to fathom how the simple Sukkah gives us a glimpse of how the accumulation of stuff is far from essential. Possessions may provide a rush when first acquired, but the soul is not satiated, which is why possessions create the need, for more. According to the Talmud, human nature is such that "one who has one hundred wants two hundred... The realization that material possessions don't make us happy is the gate to gaining a higher perspective. In the Sukkah, we come to recognize that earthly matters in and of themselves are only temporary. We may also realize that this entire world is like a Sukkah - a temporary dwelling - only an antechamber to the next world. While sitting in the Sukkah, under Hashem's Clouds of Glory, we gain an understanding of the transient nature of everything connected to this world and its temporary pleasures. However, when we use worldly matters for the sake of Heaven, we make our Sukkah an abode for Divinity. When we realize that the only thing that matters is cleaving to Hashem, this world and everything in it merge with the coming world to become one permanent dwelling for G-d. Wherever we are right now, let us pray for a higher perception to dwell in Hashem's house forever.

EmunaHealing Exercise for Peeking into the Divine Inspiration Available in the Sukkah

1. Enter your Sukkah or if you don't have your own enter any Sukkah. The Sukkah is the perfect place for meditation and spiritual healing, for in the Sukkah we are enveloped by Hashem's Protecting Clouds of Glory. Make yourself comfortable as you take refuge under the shade of Hashem's protective wings. Inhale the holy air enveloping you in the Sukkah, and exhale what no longer serves you. Let's repeat this mindful breathing four more times.
2. After having been cleansed by the Days of Awe you emerge upright and whole as you take in the Sukkah energy. The word for the name of the Sukkah roof '*Sechach*' shares the root of the name of the holiday 'Sukkot.' Raise your eyes towards the *Sechach* and look for the stars in the gaps between the palm branches and between each part of the leaves. Can you get a glimpse of a twinkling star?
3. You have left the comfort zone of your home, to dwell in this flimsy, temporary structure. You have left so many of your possessions behind in your 'old home' together with your own outer shell. Now you are alone with your essence. How does it feel to be stripped of all the extras? What else can you shed together with your material possessions that you no longer need? Are there old thinking patterns that block your ability to express your kind, loving, caring empathy, and reflect the Divine Presence?
4. Breathe the Sukkah energy into your head and heart and breathe out any old and stale negative emotion that holds you back from experiencing the joy of Sukkot.
5. As you peel off the old layers of pain, hurt feelings, and past traumas, let yourself tap into the expanded consciousness available in the Sukkah. Breathe in a feeling of calmness into every part of your body: Your head with its eyes, nose, and mouth, your throat, chin, and neck, your lungs, heart, and stomach, and all of your inner organs. Allow the calm, serene feeling of the Sukkah to penetrate each part of your being.
6. The word סֻכָּה/*Sukkah* is related to סוּכָה/*Sochah* - 'perceiving with Divine Inspiration.' Imagine opening yourself to receive the Divine inspiration available in the Sukkah, right now. You may focus on a vital life question that you have pondered for a while. Breathe into this question as you relax even more in the holy Sukkah. Close your eyes and cup your hands in front of your chest, shoulder

distance apart, ready to receive. Pay attention to your breath and to any thought or feeling coming to you right now. Perhaps you sense a spiritual clue for you to decipher and apply to your life.

7. As you tap into the expanded perception of the Sukkah, open and finetune all your senses. Allow the sounds of the Sukkah to enter your awareness, can you hear your neighbors singing and celebrating? Tune into the nearness of everyone around you through the thin walls of the Sukkah. Can you feel how it is as if all our sukkots are merging to become one big Sukkah? Perhaps you can get a glimpse of the supreme Sukkah as it states, "The Israelites were worthy to dwell in one Sukkah" (*Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 27b*).