

KOL TODA



Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem

THE TRUE JOY OF SUCCOS

Someone once put great effort into building a Succah that met the most stringent halachic opinions. It was a truly beautiful structure. A friend came to visit him and brought to his attention that it was possible to build the finest Succah, and even recite the blessing with the utmost kavanah and still not fulfill the mitzvah appropriately. How come?

The Mishnah Brurah (625) writes that the mitzvah of sitting in the succah is different from other mitzvot. It



requires one to remember the reason for the institution of the mitzvah. Hashem asks us to sit in the succah in order to reflect on the kindness of the

ananei hakavod – the Clouds of Glory in which Hashem enveloped us, when He took us out of Egypt. As the Torah describes: "You should dwell in succot for seven days In order that your [ensuing] generations should know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in 'succot' when I took them out of the land of Egypt." (Vayikra 23:43). The Bach writes that we see from this passuk that the fulfillment of the mitzvah requires that the person recall consciously, while sitting in the succah, what it is intended to signify.

Many mitzvot have reasons behind them, but we are not obligated to remember the reason as part of fulfilling the mitzvah. Why is the mitzvah of Succah different?

Special Love

The Bnei Yissachar asks an additional question regarding the festival of Succos: Hashem gave the Jewish nation three unique gifts when they were in the wilderness – the manna, the well and the Clouds of Glory. Of those three, the only gift that we are required to commemorate is the Clouds of Glory. Why?

The Bnei Yissachar answers that this is because the clouds revealed Hashem's exceptional love for us. Bread and water are basic necessities, without which life is impossible; but the clouds

were extras ... additional touches of love.



This is the essence of Succos – to feel Hashem's outstanding love for us and to thank Him for it. This is why it is important to remember Hashem's chessed every time we enter the succah, to arouse within ourselves thankfulness and love for Hashem.

This could perhaps be the reason that people invest so much effort in decorating the succah – more than other mitzvahs. This is not a mitzvah in which we do the bare minimum. Our succah is an expression of our overflowing reciprocal love toward Hashem, our response to His tremendous love for us.

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The Festival of Ingathering

In the Torah, the holiday of Succos is called "The Festival of Ingathering" because it is during this season that the farmer finishes gathering into his house the produce of the fields and vineyards. His granary and storehouses are bursting with the land's bounty and his heart is overflowing with thanks to Hashem.

What's the connection between appreciating Hashem's kindness when gathering the produce and the Clouds of Glory?

In the Holiday of Ingathering we thank Hashem not only for the grain that was harvested earlier in the year, but for the many delicious summer fruits that we collected during the course of the past few months (Rashi Devarim 16, 13) - the delectable taste of the plum, peach and apricot, and the cool crunchiness of a watermelon. These fruits that are not essential for our well-being, but exist in Creation only for our pleasure. They demonstrate Hashem's exceptional love for us.

The Clouds of Glory and summer-fruits carry the same message:

recognize Hashem's incredible love and kindness, and feel wholehearted appreciation for them. This will bring you to the unending joy of closeness to Hashem.

The four species we take during this festival, are also an expression of our gratitude for the heart-warming variety Hashem created in our world for our pleasure: attractive fruits – the esrog; perfumes – the hadas; leafy grandeur – the lulav; the freshness of plants – the aravah (Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim, 3:43).

Ingathering the Kindness

The holiday of Succos, is not only a festival of ingathering of the fruits but also of ingathering within ourselves - within our mind, consciousness and feelings - what these fruits reveal of the Creator. This is the true "ingathering" that the Torah requires from us. When we bring the fruits into our houses, we must reflect on what they reveal of the amazing kindness and love of Hashem. Similarly, we must do the same for all the many kindnesses we enjoy during

the course of our life. Any kindness we benefit from that we did not make use of to come closer to Hashem, is like a fruit left on the tree - uncollected. When a person appreciates his gifts, thanks Hashem for them and feels His great love for him, this arouses within him an exhilarating joy, the joy that is found in the depth of the being of every Jew. This is the elevating joy of the holiday of Succos!



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TZADDIKIM THANK HASHEM

Rabbi Boruch of Mezibuz was at one time a very wealthy man, but afterward became extremely poor. He became so poor that he didn't even have a solitary piece of bread in the house. Nevertheless, he would dance and sing in thanks to Hashem for His many kindnesses.

His wife, seeing him so happy, could not hide her surprise. "What's there to be so happy about?" she asked. "We don't even have bread in the house. Why are you so elated?"

"There is an angel in charge of poverty," explained Rabbi Boruch,

"whose exclusive nourishment is depression and despondency. When he comes to a house and sees its residents sad and dejected he is fulfilled and satisfied, makes himself at home and stays. But when he sees that people are happy and full of joy, he is left hungry and frustrated and has no choice but to leave the house as soon as possible."

And so it was, a short time later he was blessed with newfound wealth. Joy and gratitude are the secret formula for relief from all of life's difficulties.



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A Word of Gratitude

"When you open your eyes in the morning, and feel refreshed and revitalized like a new person, you should sing and dance with gratitude to Hashem for this wonderful gift alone"
(Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Rimanov)

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