

## One Sukkah, One Nation: Knowledge

Faith Leads to Knowledge

There is another answer to the question of why the sages chose the language they did in respect to all Jews sitting under the same *sukkah*. The Alter Rebbe ruled that when we eat the first *kezayit*—the minimal portion of food requiring a blessing—of *challah* in the *sukkah* on the first night of Sukkot, it is obligatory to think that the *sukkah* with the thatched roof called *s'chach* is a remembrance for the Clouds of Glory in the desert. We must focus our thoughts on the meaning of this *mitzvah*—so much so that there is an opinion in the sages that if a person does not actively remember, he has not performed the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *sukkah*. There is an opinion in the Talmud that knowledge or awareness is the determining factor: The *sukkah* cannot be too tall, for then we will not even realize that we are sitting in a *sukkah*. We see that the Torah is explicitly telling us to transform our faith into Knowledge.

On one hand, faith and knowledge seem to contradict each other. By definition, faith is in the super-consciousness, above knowledge. But on the other hand, we have to know that which is above knowledge. Knowledge is the ultimate goal of a trial. The trial itself is a trial of faith. But why is God trying us? The Torah explains that, "*Havayah* your God is testing you to know if you love *Havayah* your God with all your hearts and with all your souls."<sup>1</sup> It is not so that God needs the test in order to discover if we know Him or not, but rather, whether we, those facing the trial, know God. The faith must transform into knowledge, and then you will know, by means of revealing and manifesting the faith in your heart. This means that not only does the Nation of Israel share faith, but it also shares knowledge, about which it says, "so that your generations shall know."

Unite at the Point of Separation

The main differences between Jews exist in the realm of knowledge. As is written, "Just as their facial features are different, so are their opinions different."<sup>2</sup> The saying goes that where there are two Jews, there are three opinions. Every Jew has a different opinion and a different perspective. Each one thinks that things should be done in a different way. This multitude of opinions is typical of Jews much more than of non-Jews.

How can we unite in our faculty of knowledge despite this Jewish predisposition to hold differing opinions? The most Jewish challenge is to unite the Jews at the source of the differences between them.

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 13:4.

<sup>2</sup> Sanhedrin 89a.

There is a short prayer that says: “The needs of Your nation Israel are many and their faculty of knowledge is short.”<sup>3</sup> Chassidut explains that the multitude of needs stems from the fact that “their faculty of knowledge is short.”

Wanting Only Mashiach

One of the explanations for “short” in Kabbalah is that it refers to the left axis of the *sefirot*, which is described in the Patach Eliyahu (part of the introduction to the Tikunnei Zohar) as being “short.”<sup>4</sup> The left axis is called short because it severs, it divides, contracts and separates between people. If we would truly have one opinion, we would not need a multitude of different things. We would have one need only: Mashiach.

If a group of people would wish to agree on the fact that they need nothing in their personal lives and that everyone needs only one thing to solve all our problems – what would that one thing be? Mashiach. If he would come, we would need nothing else. We would not ask need to ask for blessing specific blessings: a blessing from God in this area and another one in that area. We would reach a united, broad opinion that in truth, the need is for Mashiach and that this is a need common to all. We all need only one thing, which is the solution for all problems: Mashiach. But to recognize this fact, we need the faculty of knowledge.

This united faculty of knowledge can be attained despite the many individual and opposing opinions. This is relevant to the holiday of *Sukkot*. On *Sukkot*, we can achieve a united faculty of knowledge and know that there is only one thing in the world that we need: Mashiach and redemption. If we all cry out to God from the depths of our hearts, “Until when?” then Mashiach will come. This is the faculty of knowledge that connects all Jews on the holiday of *Sukkot*. This is the meaning of the sages’ statement, “All of Israel are worthy of sitting in one *sukkah*” that corresponds with the sefirah of knowledge: we should have have one focused awareness, one unified consciousness, and not with a shattered and split one.

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<sup>3</sup> Brachot 4:4.

<sup>4</sup> Patach Eliyahu.