



# SUKKOS AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEMORY AND KNOWLEDGE

Pesach and Sukos are our two holidays that celebrate the Exodus from Egypt in parallel but different ways. In the Torah, there is a subtle but significant difference in the language used to describe these commemorations: Pesach is celebrated in order to guarantee our memory of this history; it is a “zikaron”:

וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לָכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן וְחֻגְתֶּם אֹתוֹ חֹג לַה' לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם תִּחְגַּגְהוּ.  
*And this day should be a remembrance (zikaron) for you and you shall celebrate it as a holiday to Hashem for your generations it shall be an eternal law that you will celebrate.*

**Shmos 12:14**

Similarly, we are instructed to eat matzah “so that you will remember (*tizkor*) the day that you left Egypt all the days of your lives” (Devarim 16:3). In respect

to Sukos, however, we are instructed to live in the sukos:

לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

*So that your generations will know (yed'u) that I caused you to live in sukos when I took you from Egypt, I am the Lord your God.*

**Vayikra 23:43**

On Sukos we are to **know** and on Pesach we are to **remember**.

Zechira is the awareness of something that occurred in the past, but knowledge is when that memory informs a feeling or action in the present. On Pesach we remember by retelling and reliving the Exodus. We put ourselves into the past and see ourselves as if we are participating in that historic redemption. On Sukos, however, this

awareness of our past dependency on Hashem enables us to experience that feeling today. We leave our homes and live in God's protective shade to feel Him in our lives today. We do not talk much about the past; we focus on an experience of today. The sequence of our year, therefore, begins with Pesach and culminates with Sukos.

The difference between memory and knowledge is illustrated in the opening pasuk of the story of the Exodus, when a new king was established in Egypt who did not “know” Yosef. This troubled many of the commentators who questioned the possibility that a king would not be aware of Yosef, who was solely responsible for the wealth and the power of the king of Egypt, and who lived just a few years prior. Rashi suggests that we interpret it as: “he made as if he did not know.”

In other words, the king remembered Yosef, but did not live in the present with an awareness of that knowledge in a way that would impact his actions. He remembered, but did not know. On Pesach we are to develop our memory and by Sukos we are to transform that awareness into knowledge that will impact our actions.

The Mishna teaches us the halacha and minhag that we do not roast our meat on the night of Pesach, lest an onlooker think that we are offering an illegitimate Pesach sacrifice (*Pesachim* 4:4). Similarly, we are careful not to point at the shankbone, like we point to the matza and maror, for this same reason. On Pesach, the holiday dedicated to establishing our national memory, we are careful to be precise. We celebrate our past, recognize the fact that there is no Bais HaMikdash today, and are careful not to behave as if it is here. The only solution to our lack is to pray for the rebuilding of the Bais HaMikdash, as we conclude the seder, “Next year in the rebuilt Yerushalayim.” On Sukos, however, we are instructed to behave as if there is a Bais HaMikdash, as we now take the lulav on all seven days of Sukos, like we did in the Bais HaMikdash.

This is codified in the Mishna in *Maseches Sukah* (3:12), which describes two of the rulings of Raban Yochanan ben Zakai that were established at the time of the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash:

בראשונה היה לולב ניטל במקדש שבעה  
ובמדינה יום אחד משחרב בית המקדש התקין  
רבן יוחנן בן זכאי שיהא לולב ניטל במדינה  
שבעה זכר למקדש ושיהא יום הנף כולו אסור.

*In the beginning the lulav was taken in the Mikdash for seven days and outside the Mikdash for one day. When the Bais HaMikdash was destroyed Raban Yochanan ben Zakai rules that it should be taken for seven days in all places in order to remember the practice of the Bais HaMikdash. And he ruled that on the*

*entire Day of the Waving the new grain should be prohibited.*

Despite the fact that there were nine rulings that he made at the time of the Temple's destruction, two are mentioned, one related to Sukos and one related to the permissibility of the new grain on the second day of Pesach. Tosfos Yom Tov speculates that these two rulings were legislated together, despite the fact that the Mishna in *Menachos* (10:5) mentions the law of the new grain without referencing the law of Sukah. It seems that these two laws are fundamentally linked.

The Talmud (*Sukah* 41a) explains that during the time of the Bais HaMikdash, the new grain can be eaten immediately after the Omer sacrifice was brought, which would have occurred in the morning. Similarly, in a time when there is no Bais HaMikdash, the new grain is permitted immediately in the morning, as there is no sacrifice to wait for. However, we are concerned about the possibility that the Bais HaMikdash would be built overnight, and the kohanim would be delayed in the offering of the sacrifice on their first day of service. Perhaps people will not realize this and eat the new grain before the offering. Therefore, in the first century, Raban Yochanan ben Zakai established this decree to protect us from that possibility.

This rule, related to the second day of Pesach, is consistent with the Pesach-theme of *zechira*. On this day we are focused on the past, aiming for a clear awareness of the differences between the past and the present, leading to our aspiration for the future. The decree of Sukos, however, is to take the lulav for seven days like we did in the Bais HaMikdash. We behave as if the Bais HaMikdash is here now and we are not fearful that someone might “get the wrong impression.” This is consistent with the theme of Sukos as we attempt

to bask in the shade of Hashem wherever we are, and rebuild miniature Batei Mikdash in our sukos outside our own homes.

Rav Soloveitchik (*Reshimos Shiurim on Sukah*, daf 41) noted that one would say Shehecheyanu when shaking the lulav for the first time, whether it is the first, second or third day of Sukos, despite the fact that on the third day of Sukos we are merely fulfilling the rabbinic decree of “*zecher LeMikdash*.” In contrast, the *Baal HaMaor* (*Pesachim* daf 28a of the Rif) suggests that there is no bracha of Shehecheyanu on the mitzva of Sefiras HaOmer because nowadays, the obligation is based on *zecher LeMikdash*, and is a point of anguish over the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash. The difference is that the Sefiras HaOmer, rooted in the Korban Omer of Pesach, is focused on the memory of the past, and can trigger only pain when reminded of the Bais HaMikdash which is missing. On Sukos, however, we are not focused on our memory of history, but an awareness of the meaning for today. On Sukos we try to capture the experiences and power of the past and insert them into our lives today. Thus, the lulav that we shake for seven days is an attempt to draw us closer to Hashem, as if we were in the Bais HaMikdash. It is therefore a joyous experience, not a sad one.

This Mishna in Sukah merges these two particular *takanos* of Raban Yochanan ben Zakai, in order to educate us of these paradigms that are to be synthesized in our celebrations of the holidays and in the development of our spiritual identities. We must remember our history very well for the purpose of living the present to the fullest.