“Sitting in the Sukkah with flimsy walls and its fragile roof, through which we see the stars shine, better appreciate everything you have and you Lord, thank you. What we have is what we are. It gratitude, humility and sensitivity. This reveals our true selves.”

Rabino Marshall T. Meyer Z"L

As Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur conclude, we receive the festival of Sukkot, which invites us to reflect on the frailty of life. When we enter a sukkah, we enter the deepest corners of human essence, getting rid of all of those material things and physical impediments that surround us throughout the year, so we can enjoy the simple things in life. When we remove all the “extra stuff” we can concentrate on what is really important in our own life.

The Sukkah, in its simplicity, teaches us to view life in a different light; understanding that the real value of things is not in its material worth nor in its appearance, but rather in what is inside things, that is in people. When we abandon the comfort of our homes and dwell for seven days in the Sukkah, we understand that we are dependent on G-d’s mercies. And that even though we can build beautiful buildings, this does not guarantee their permanence through time, but rather all depends on our relationship with the Divine Work: on how we guard nature, understanding that as humans we will never be able to fully dominate it, but rather we should guard it and respect it, since it is wiser than us.

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On Sukkot we try to transform “dead time” into “living time”: living life fully, it falls on us to make profane time into holy one.

Lastly, on Sukkot we are mandated to fulfill the mitzvah of the Four Species which are: the etrog (a fruit similar to the lemon with a pleasant smell and taste) which represents the people who have knowledge and good deeds, the lulav (a palm frond with pleasant taste but no smell) which represents those with knowledge but no good deeds, the hadasim (the myrtle, with good smell but no taste) which represents those who perform good deeds but have no knowledge, lastly the aravot (the willow branch, devoid of taste and smell) which represents those who neither know nor do good deeds.

Notwithstanding, our Sages teach us that in order to fulfill the mitzvah of the Four Species, none of them can be missing, nor can they be replaced. We have an obligation to gather the four species in our hand, representing the Unity of the People Israel, and that, regardless of our differences, none can be missing, since every individual is special and unique. If we achieve unity we can be transformed so that we can all merit to be set on the way of Torah and good deeds.

May it be G-d’s will that this festival of Sukkot allow us to share our joy and to value people for what they are internally and not because of their appearances, coming together as ‘Am Israel, understanding that only embracing difference can we build a better society.

Chag Sameach !

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