

Succah,

The Secret of Remembering

By HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

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Remember! The commandment to remember is repeated in Torah numerous times. We are warned, even commanded to remember many things. Yet, the common denominator of all the things that we have to remember is that G-d is in charge of everything and not us.

Try as we do to mold and direct our destinies, Torah reminds us that great and small, rich and poor, mighty and weak, we are all subject to the Power of the Divine Hand and that there is nothing any of us can ever do about it.

We break our necks to make a living, and still, only some meet with success while others never manage to reach their goals. Some manage with great ease, others only manage with great effort; while some never seem to manage at all. Yes, there is truly is a Higher Hand that decides how much money we are going to make, and how fortunate we will or will not be.



Health, wealth and overall wellbeing; much of this may very well be in our own hands, but the ultimate achievement of our goals in life are never in our hands. We are essentially limited in what we can individually accomplish. There is only so much that we can do. We can work hard, investing all our effort in this or that deal only to see it crumble in an instant before our eyes. All our efforts and prayers seem to be of no avail. We can make every investment in personal health and still succumb to illness or disease. We can do everything right and still have an outcome where everything seems wrong.

There are no promises in life. There are no guarantees. Like it or not, bad things do happen to good people, for no apparent reasons. We become philosophical to explain these things when they happen, but we all must admit that we have too many opportunities to become philosophical these days. Like it or not, life is tough! And no matter what we seem to do, with all our observances and prayers, life does not seem to get any easier. This is because life is subject to reality and is not subject to our fantasies about how life is supposed to be.

Throughout the Torah, Bible and later Rabbinic literature we see examples of exemplary people who led amazing lives only to suffer misfortune. Are we any better today than our righteous role models of the past? Certainly not! What makes the ancients to be role models for us is exactly the fact that they

were real human beings who suffered from real human frailties, just like us. Just like us Avraham suffered with all kinds of daily problems, so too did Yitzhak, Yaakov, Yosef, David and the list goes on. Need I mention Job, Jeremiah, or Daniel; how about Nachum Ish Gamzu, Rabbi Akiva or Rabbi Shimon? The list goes on and on and continues into our own generation. If you are not familiar with the examples I have given, go do some homework. Read the Biblical accounts and follow them up with the stories and struggles of our Sages. See for yourselves how real people, just like us, faced real adversities, just like ours.

When Torah tells us to remember; this is what it wants us to remember: we are to remember that we are merely mortal human beings. We are frail in stature and limited in scope. There is only so much we can ever expect to accomplish with our limited human means. If not for the Higher Hand that guides us, none of us would ever accomplish even that which we do.

This is what we must remember. It is G-d and G-d alone that carries us through life.

Let this serve as our guiding principle: ***We must do that which we can and G-d will do that which we cannot!*** Together and only together, G-d and us, can we make it through this life. This is the ultimate remembrance that Torah requires of us never to forget.

During the holiday of Succot we are required to physically dwell in a semi-outdoor booth, the Succah. While many have turned this holiday of remembrance into a party, the real and true purpose of this time is to remind us that while we still have our own houses, we still all ultimately live in the House of G-d.

Indeed, the word Succah itself teaches us this. The word Succah (spelled Samekh Vav Kaf Hey) has the same numerical value of the two holy Names of G-d, YHVH (26) and ADONAI (65). YHVH represents G-d's hidden supernatural power and the Name ADONAI represents the Divine natural power. The word Succah also is numerically equal to the term (HaElohim, G-d), as in the statement that we recite at the end of Yom Kippur prayers *HaShem Hu HaElohim* (HaShem, He is G-d). "He is G-d" is the Succah. YHVH/ADONAI is the Succah.

G-d is the Succah and we are commanded to dwell within "Him" for the week. The Name of G-d used in the creation story is ELOHIM. The numerical value of this Name is 86, the same as the Hebrew term for "nature" (HaTeva). G-d is the author of nature, of the natural order. He created humanity and placed us to live in a Garden, not in a concrete jungle. G-d's Name is often represented by the Hebrew letter Hey, the last of the four letters of YHVH. Add the numerical value of this letter Hey (5) to HaTeva (nature) and to ELOHIM (G-d) and again we arrive at the numerical value of Succah.

G-d wants us to remember, not just as an academic exercise, but to take it to heart and to allow it to permeate our reality, that we human beings are now, have always been, and forever more always will be no more than a part of the natural world that was Divinely created. We have our places and our natural parameters, just like everything else in the natural world does. However, we also have one extra component. We have the ability to be conscious and aware of the Presence of G-d in everything. This is the letter Hey that we add to HaTeva (nature) and to ELOHIM (G-d).

When we not only say with our words, but live with our deeds the Presence of G-d; we bring holiness and Divinity into our lives. When we live daily aware of G-d's Presence in all things, we rise to the occasion of acting truly like human beings and resist all the temptations to act like animals. We fulfill our destinies to be worthy to live in the Garden, instead of acting like animals only worthy of a

concrete jungle. When we thus live up to our human destinies integrating G-d into every facet of our lives, we thus allow ourselves to become open conduits of bringing Heaven down to Earth.

What power we have! It might not make us rich by concrete jungle standards, but it can definitely provide for us the peace of mind that can only be achieved by those who live in the Garden. The Succah makes us remember to return to nature and to remember that G-d is the author of nature and the natural order. ***When we gaze upon the wonders of the Divine creation we stand in awe and amazement of just how beautiful our natural world really is and we come to realize just how ugly the concrete jungle really is.*** We come to the realization that “there’s no place like home” and there is no other home than the Garden of HaShem.

So, in the Succah we dwell, to feel the breeze of the outdoor air and to see the stars in the night sky. Go back to nature (ELOHIM). Get outdoors! See the wonders that G-d has made. Get a sense of the beautiful Garden and the ugliness of the concrete jungle. When you see ELOHIM in nature, then remember *HaShem Hu HaElohim* (HaShem is G-d). In the wonder of this reality and the heightened consciousness it gives, you will see a glimpse of the Higher Hand that guides us.

Dwell in Succah, both body and soul! Allow your body to get back into nature so that your soul can leave the concrete jungle and get back to the Garden where it rightfully and naturally belongs. “There’s no place like home” and there is no greater freedom and no greater peace. This is the union of YHVH and ADONAI, of the Holy One, blessed by He and His Shekhina. It is not a concept; it is a real state of being.

While we still will never be masters of our own destinies, once we are properly bonded with HaShem, we will finally realize why we never want to be. Bad things may still continue to happen, but when bonded with HaShem we recognize that our fundamental understandings of good and bad have radically changed. Life looks different from the Garden than it does from the concrete jungle.

This is how all our role models in ancient times were able to deal with their adversities. This is why they were all considered to be so righteous. This is why their examples serve us as role models for today. They metaphorically lived in the Succah all the time. They constantly remembered that G-d was actively present in their lives. They remembered! So must we!

Off to the Succah. We dwell in the physical one for seven (eight) days to remember that we have to dwell in the spiritual one for the remainder of the year.

May G-d bless us to remember and live these simple truths and to rebuild the fallen Succah of David.