

Parsha Ponders

Sukkos | October 13, 2019 | 14 Tishrei 5780

Two types of sukkos¹

למען ידעו דרתיכם כי בסכות הושבתי את-בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים אני יקוק אלקיכם
In order that your generations shall know that I placed the Jewish people in **sukkos**, when I took them out of the land of Egypt; I am Hashem your G-d²

The verse explaining the purpose of dwelling in *sukkos* has an anomaly. The word סכות is written in full, instead of more the concise סכת, as it's spelled when the Torah actually commands us to dwell in them³. Why is this so⁴? This is to hint to the two opinions⁵ as to which kind of *sukkos* we are meant to recall when we dwell in our personal *sukkos*. One opinion focuses on the fact that the Jews were surrounded by Hashem's Clouds of Glory during their travels in the wilderness. We are to recall this (temporary) Divine shelter by dwelling in our temporary *sukkos*. The other opinion is that the Jews themselves dwelled in temporary huts called *sukkos*, during their battles in the land of Sichon and Og^{6 7}. If the word סכת was written concisely, it would look like it's referring to one *sukkah*. Written out in full refers to multiple *sukkos*, and thus alludes to these two opinions.

However, we still could remain skeptical. Maybe really only one of the opinions is being referred to in the verse. Is there anything forcing us to say it's referring to both opinions? Furthermore, according to the second opinion, why should we have to recall that the Jews dwelled in physical booths known as *sukkos*? The battle itself is worthy of recollection and gratitude, that we miraculously were able to defeat our enemies unscathed. Who cares what kind of shelter the Jews dwelled in at that time⁸?

We can answer these questions by answering another. A famous question that is asked⁹ during the festival of *Sukkos* is that we are taught¹⁰ that the Jews experienced three tremendous miracles during their journeys in the wilderness. Every day *munn* rained from the heavens and sustained them. There was a well of water that travelled with them. Finally, as mentioned before, they were surrounded by Hashem's Clouds of Glory. This cloud protected them from the elements, providing them a perfect

¹ Based on [Toras Moshe](#) | *parshas HaAzinu LeChag HaSukkos* s.v. למען ידעו (p. 77)

² [Leviticus](#) 23:43

³ [Ibid](#) v. 42

⁴ The [Chasam Sofer](#) writes this question from the [Chayei Adam](#) § 146

⁵ [Sukkah](#) 11b

⁶ The [Chasam Sofer](#) states this as a fact, even though the *gemarra* doesn't mention this last point. The earliest source for this I found is [Sefer Rokeach](#) § 219, citing יש מפרשים, brought by the [Eliyah Rabbah](#) 625:1. The [Chasam Sofer](#) himself cites this [Eliyah Rabbah](#) in [Derashos](#) | p. 52 col. 3 s.v. כל האזרח

⁷ I'm not entirely sure why they were dwelling in *sukkos* during this time. We are taught that when Aharon died ([Numbers](#) 20:22-29), the Clouds of Glory dissipated ([Rosh Hashanah](#) 3a (brought by [Rashi](#) to [Numbers](#) 21:1), [Ta'anis](#) 9a, [Bamidbar Rabbah](#) 19:20, and [Midrash Tanchuma Chukas](#) § 18. For other sources see [Torah Sheleimah](#) to [Numbers](#) Chapter 20 § 203, Chapter 21 § 1,6,10). However, [Ta'anis](#) teaches that the clouds returned in the merit of Moshe. Perhaps they hadn't returned yet when they fought in the lands of Sichon and Og, which began shortly after ([Numbers](#) 21:21-35), and they needed shelter. Still not clear why there would be a delay, nor what or when would be the trigger to bring them back

⁸ According to the words of the *gemarra*, which doesn't mention Sichon and Og, this is still a valid question.

See [Be'er Yosef](#) to [Leviticus](#) 23:42-43 § 3 for one explanation, and [Aruch HaShulchan](#) 625:3 for another

⁹ Although this question is asked by many, the [Chasam Sofer](#) in particular quotes this from "[Birkas Yosef](#)", but I was unable to discover who he was referring to

¹⁰ [Ta'anis](#) loc. cit.; [Bava Metzia](#) 86b

environment to live and travel in. According to the first opinion, that *Sukkos* is to commemorate the Clouds of Glory, why wasn't the festival enacted in appreciation of the other miracles? The miracles of the *mun* and the well are no less deserving of their own festival.

An answer is that the *mun* and the well were completely necessary miracles. The Jews traveled in the wilderness for forty years without any provisions. They needed food and water to survive. Hashem so to speak *had* to provide these miracles for them. However, the miracle of the Clouds of Glory was in a sense, superfluous. They could have survived without the perfect climate and protection from outside forces. This gift was solely because of Hashem's relationship with His people. This extra miracle is deserving of its own festival, and became what is today known as *Sukkos*.

Now, how do we know that the Jews could have survived without the Clouds of Glory? There were many dangerous animals in the wilderness, including snakes and scorpions. The Clouds of Glory protected them from all threats, including these. Maybe they would have been in mortal danger without the Clouds protecting them. We see from their battles in the lands of Sichon and Og that this is not so. During this time, they fought with their enemies, and lived in simple *sukkos*. They had no Divine protection in the form of the Clouds of Glory, and survived just fine. This shows that the miracle of the Clouds of Glory was an extra gift from Hashem.

Now we can definitely see how the verse writing סוכות in full can allude to both types of *sukkos*. Each one reveals something about the other, and the two cannot be separated. The Jews being surrounded by the Clouds of Glory is a unique miracle deserving of its own festival. In what way was it unique? It was totally superfluous. The Jews could have survived just fine without them. We know this from the regular *sukkos* that the Jews dwelled in during their battles against Sichon and Og. These *sukkos* show that it was possible for them to survive without the Clouds of Glory. This was not the case with the *mun* and the well of water, which gave them the necessary sustenance to survive in the wilderness.

Chag Sameach!