

Parsha Ponders

Sukkos | September #, 2020 | # Tishrei 5781

*The fallen booth*¹

הרחמן הוא יקים לנו את סוכת דוד הנופלת²

May the Merciful One raise up for us the fallen³ *sukkah* of King David⁴

Sukkos is a time for rejoicing. It's one of the happiest festivals of the year. We cite Hallel. We encircle the *bima* with our Lulav and Esrog. We recite extra prayers. One such extra prayer is found at the end of *Birkas HaMazon*. In the prayer, we ask Hashem to restore the fallen *sukkah* of King David. This prayer is based off of a verse in Amos⁵, which says that on that day, presumably when the Moshiach shall appear, Hashem will raise up the fallen *sukkah* of King David. I understand we mention this prayer this time of year because it says the word *sukkah*, but what is it referring to? What *sukkah* of King David was there, and how did it fall? What does it mean that we ask Hashem to raise it up again?

One might think that it's referring to the Holy Temple. However, King David didn't build the Temple; his son did. Rather, the explanation can be gleaned from a conversation recorded in the *gemarra*⁶. Rav Nachman asked Rav Yitzchak: "Did you hear when The Fallen One will arrive?" Rav Yitzchak responded: "Who is 'The Fallen One'?" Rav Nachman told him: "Moshiach". Rav Yitzchak asked: "Is Moshiach really referred to as The Fallen One?" Rav Nachman told him yes, and cited the verse in Amos as proof. We see then that the fallen *sukkah* of King David is an allusion to the Moshiach, the future King of Israel. How is this alluded to in the word *sukkah*?

The Maharal explains that the fallen *sukkah* an allusion to the Davidic dynasty in general⁷. We know in general that a dynasty of kings is referred to as "house". We learn this from the fact that Hashem rewarded the Jewish midwives in Egypt with "houses"⁸. According to the traditional interpretation, this refers to houses of Kohanim and Kings⁹. Why does a house refer to a dynasty? Whenever we imagine something fixed, solid, and stable, we tend to think of a house. The structure denotes permanence, which is the main point of a dynasty of kings.

In contrast, the dynasty of King David is referred to as a *sukkah*. This is because his dynasty is a Divinely ordained. Mundane, Earthly dynasties, with regards to this world, are considered permanent. Since their place is within nature, they're appropriately referred to as "houses". However, a Divinely ordained dynasty doesn't really belong in this world. As such, it's existence here is fleeting. This is perfectly represented by a *sukkah*, which is not mean to be a permanent structure. Although the *mitzvah* during

¹ Based on Maharal's Netzach Yisroel Chapter 35

² Different *bentchers* vowelize it as נופֶלֶת or נופֵלֶת. The former is more grammatically correct, as this type of word would be vowelized this way when at the end of a sentence. I believe the reason for the latter version is to more closely model the verse in Amos 9:11 from which this prayer is based. However, the verse itself is unusual, as the word occurs on an *esnachta*, which means it's the end of a phrase. According to the rules of grammar, it too should be vowelized נופֶלֶת. Apparently, there are some exceptions to this rule, and this is one of them. The Radak in his Sefer Michlul Sha'ar Dikduk HaPealim § 12 notes this, and gives Ruth 4:16 and I Chronicles 7:18 as two other exceptions. I'm not sure if he gave an exhaustive list, or if there are other examples in *Tanach*

³ Literally: falling

⁴ Additional prayer found at the end of *Birkas HaMazon*, recited during the days of *Sukkos*

⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁶ Sanhedrin 96b

⁷ See Eruvin 32b, citing Nehemiah 8:17, for another allusion to the connection between King David and a *sukkah*

⁸ Exodus 1:21

⁹ Sotah 11b, brought by Rashi and Targum "Yonasan" *ad. loc.*

Sukkos is to live in the *sukkah* like one lives in their house¹⁰, the structure itself is still meant to be temporary¹¹.

Furthermore, what happens when a house falls down? It completely loses its name. If a person comes and rebuilds it, no one will call this the original house. It would become a totally new house. This isn't true with a *sukkah*. If someone builds a *sukkah*, and it falls down, it's not completely gone. Since it's not a permanent structure, it's easy to raise it back up. The owner simply has to rebuild it, and it will clearly be the same *sukkah* they started with. The same is true with the dynasty of King David. Even though the Kingship of David's descendants has ceased, it's not gone forever. It's standing by, waiting to be restarted. Just like a *sukkah*, King David's dynasty is easy to raise up.

Rav Nachman referring to Moshiach as "The Fallen One" further demonstrates this theme. The Torah says that the staff shall not be removed from Yehudah¹². This is because Moshiach is referred to as The Fallen One. One who has fallen, shall surely get back up again. So too the Davidic dynasty is called fallen, as its awaiting to be restarted. When Moshiach will come, it's simply raising up again the fallen *sukkah*. This won't be a new kingship, like when one rebuilds a house.

We can't deny that the Yehudah doesn't have any authority these days. If the Torah had said that Yehudah will always have the staff, then we would have a question. This would imply that Yehudah will always have rulership. However, since it says that the staff shall not be removed from Yehudah, there's no question. If the staff would be removed, that would imply the rulership will never return. But that is not so. Since it's only temporary that Yehudah has lost power, then in effect the staff has not been removed¹³. Therefore, the verse says that on that day Hashem will raise up the fallen *sukkah* of King David. That is what we're praying for on *Sukkos* when we ask Hashem to raise up the fallen *sukkah*.

Chag Sameach

¹⁰ Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 639:1

¹¹ Sukkah 23a, codified in Mishneh Torah Hilchos Sukkah 4:5 and Shulchan Aruch loc. cit. 628:2. See also Sukkah 2a. The Maharal explains that this is because one's dwelling in the *sukkah* should be a Divine act, making it inherently temporary in this world

¹² Genesis 49:10

¹³ The Maharal adds one more explanation for the comparison to a *sukkah*: Just like if a *sukkah* falls down, it leaves behind a remnant, namely the *sechach*, so too the dynasty of King David. *Chazal* say that even in exile, Yehuda had authority, namely in the exilarchs throughout the diaspora (Sanhedrin 5a)