

The Israelite's “Motorcade” in the desert

The Jewish people have been led by single leaders and by pairs. But in the desert, they were led by a trio, Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. Aharon, and his special contribution to the Israelites in the desert, has a unique connection to Sukkot.

Singles, Pairs and Trios

There is a unique element to the United States presidential elections that is often overlooked. Instead of choosing one individual to lead the country, you choose two — the president and the vice president — on a single ticket.

There have been periods when the Jewish people also had two leaders at the same time; that period is known as the era of the *zugot*, literally, “pairs.” One leader would serve as *Nasi*, the national leader, while directly under him served the *Av Bet Din*, the head of the High Court. The final and most famous “couple” were the great Hillel and Shamai.

But there was one unique period when the Jewish people were led by three individuals — when they left Egypt on their way to the Promised Land. Obviously, the unattested leader was Moshe Rabeinu, but alongside him served his sister and brother, Miriam and Aharon, in leadership positions. Indeed, one verse in Micah speaks of them as a group: “For I brought you out of Egypt and sent before you, Moshe, Aharon and Miriam” (Micah

6:4).

The Three Elements

While modern-day politicians talk much and do little, this trio took full responsibility for the wellbeing of the people they led into the desert.

The Jewish people survived in merit of three primary miracles: the Manna, the Well and the Clouds of Glory. The Manna fell six days a week, providing sustenance. The Well provided water, and the Clouds of Glory protected them.

Our Sages tell us that these three blessings correspond with these three leaders. The Manna was granted in Moshe's merit, the Clouds of Glory were due to Aharon, and the Water was in the merit of Miriam — and even became known as Miriam's Well. These connections are evident in the sequence of the stories in the Torah; after Miriam passes, there is suddenly no water available; after Moshe dies, the Manna ceases to fall; and after the passing of Aharon, the Clouds of Glory are no longer present.

The Presidential Entourage

We can all understand the necessity of water and food. But what exactly was the purpose of the Clouds of Glory? What exactly did they accomplish?

Rashi writes that there were seven clouds; four on each side, one on top and one on bottom, and a final one which traveled before them; it would "flatten the high land, raise the hollows and destroy snakes and scorpions." (*Bihaalotecha* 10:34)

The Rebbe pointed out that only one of those clouds served a specific purpose — to protect them from the elements and so on. The other six had no such task. Their purpose was purely to serve as clouds of “glory” - to add glory and honor to the Jewish people. It was their “presidential entourage.” Just as a world leader is honored with a motorcade of motorcycles and vehicles, so too, Hashem honored the Jewish people with an entourage — and all in Aharon’s merit.

Aharon’s Holiday

Today, we celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. There are three holidays in the Torah, and each represents one of these three leaders.

Which holiday represents Moshe? Some might say that Pesach is Moshe’s holiday, because he led the people out of Egypt, but in truth, his holiday is Shavuot. Moshe is most remembered for giving us the Torah, to the point that Torah is even called Toras Moshe, Moshe’s Torah. On the other hand, Moshe isn’t even mentioned in the Haggadah.

Miriam is most connected to Pesach. It was Miriam who watched baby Moshe in the river, thereby ensuring that he would be able to redeem the Jewish people. She is also remembered in the Torah after the Crossing of the Sea, where she led the Israelite women with songs and tambourines - and this occurred on the seventh day of Pesach.

And then there is Sukkot.

Why do we sit in the Sukkah? The Torah says, “So that your

progeny will know that I settled you in Sukkot when I took you out of Egypt.” In a literal sense, it commemorates the dwelling huts of the Jewish people in the desert.

But Rashi interprets it differently. He interprets Sukkot to mean the Clouds of Glory. In other words, on Sukkot we commemorate the Clouds of Glory which we were granted in Aharon’s merit. In the above-mentioned talk, the Rebbe says that the preferred Sukkah is one that has four walls, a roof (schach) and a floor. These six sides, symbolize the six Clouds of Glory that we were granted because of Aharon.

Sukkot suites Aharon well. The Sukkah is called *Sukkat shelomecha*, the Sukkah of your peace. The Sukkah is a place of unity; in the words of the Talmud, “All of Israel are worthy of sitting in one Sukkah.”

The Mitzvah of Lulav is also one that represents unity. The Four Species represent all kinds of Jews, from a Jew with Torah and Mitzvot represented by the Etrog to a Jew without any, represented by the Aravah. We bind all four types of Jews together and only then we fulfill the Mitzvah of Lulav.

Sukkot gives us the power to live in peace with one another. Let’s learn from Aharon, “the lover of peace and pursuer of peace,” and we will merit to sit within the protection of G-d’s Clouds of Glory all year round.