



## SUKKOT

Day 1

Which Type Of Sukkah Are You – Hugger, Protector, Opener?

September 24, 2018

## PERSONALITY FUSION

### WHICH TYPE SUKKAH ARE YOU – HUGGER, PROTECTOR, OPENER?

#### ABSTRACT

Diverse personalities define our societies and communities, our cultures and our lifestyles. Often, personalities clash and create divisiveness, and even wars.

What can we do to counter that, without obliterating our diversity?

Sukkot carries the answer to this question.

Sukkot is a holiday of inclusiveness. Though we are different in our dispositions, personalities and characteristics, and we may gravitate to certain types and avoid others, one of the beautiful elements of this holiday is that it celebrates and brings together people from all ends of the spectrum.

More specifically, the Sukkah represents three types of embrace:

Huggers. Protectors. Openers.

The Chida's brilliant insight into the word "sukkah," reflecting the the three ways to build a kosher sukkah – with either four complete walls, three complete walls, or two complete walls and a third abutment – offers us an extraordinary lesson in how to love each other, and how to embrace and educate our children in a way that balances love and individuality.

## 1. Personality Test (Joke)

**(Note: Feel free to choose and use only a few of the scenarios below)**

Chag Sameach!

Here is a personality test used by some to determine how to choose the right person for a job.

Pile about 100 bricks in some particular order in a closed room with an open window. Then send into the room two candidates at a time and close the door.

Leave them alone and come back after a half-hour and analyze the situation.

If the candidates are counting the bricks, put them in the accounting department.

If they are recounting them, put them in auditing.

If they have messed up the whole place with the bricks, put them in engineering.

If they are arranging the bricks in some strange order, put them in planning.

If they are throwing the bricks at each other, put them in operations.

If they are sleeping, put them in security.

If they have broken the bricks into pieces, put them in information technology.

If they are sitting idle, put them in human resources.

If they say that they have tried different combinations, yet not a brick has been moved, put them in sales.

If they have already left for the day, put them in marketing.

If they are staring out of the window, put them in strategic planning.

And then last but not least..... if they are talking to each other and not a single brick has been moved, congratulate him and put him in top management. Or send them to... Washington.

## 2. On Personalities

I'm not really sure when the whole personality craze began, maybe with Freud, maybe with Adam and Eve. Either way, today personality tests and personality types are very much en vogue.

We each have our preferences as to which personality types we gravitate and are attracted to. In our personal courtships, we date and marry certain types of people. And in our professional lives, companies seek to hire certain personality types with specific character traits.

Google is famous for the job interview and test process it implements in seeking new candidates. They try to unravel who you are with questions like “what are ten alternative uses for a pencil?”

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What can we do to counter that, without obliterating our diversity?

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### 3. Jewish Diversity

Thank G-d, the Jewish people do not lack for a wide range of personalities – from scholars to laypeople, innovators to educators, refined souls to loud noisemakers. Indeed, the tribes themselves, as well as our forefathers and foremothers, each had unique personalities. But their diversity complemented and completed each other – and the big picture.

Take the two tribes of Yissachar and Zevulun: the former consisted of Torah scholars who spent their time in study, while the latter were traders and businessmen who spent their time in the workplace. Their personalities did not clash but completed and complemented one another: “Zevulun and Yissachar entered into a partnership. Zevulun would dwell at the seashore and go out in ships, to trade and make profit. He would thereby provide food for Yissachar, who would, in turn, sit and occupy themselves with the study of Torah.”<sup>1</sup> Zevulun supported Yissachar physically, and in return received shared in the reward of Yissachar’s learning and Torah. A true partnership.<sup>2</sup>

At our core, the Jewish people are one organism, one family. Just as one body has many unique, diametrically different limbs – the heart is different than the mind, the eyes from the ears, the arms from the legs, the skin and the bones – so too the Jewish people have many personalities with unique characteristics. And just as one family has many unique family members, so too the Jewish people have many different family members. But they are all parts of one organism, one body<sup>3</sup>, one family.

### 4. Sukkot: Diversity Within Unity

This ideal is celebrated on Sukkot and embodied in the Mitzvot of Sukkot itself.

The Mitzvah of the Sukkah is, on one hand, one unifying place where all sit together. “All Israel is worthy to sit in one Sukkah,” our sages tell us<sup>4</sup>. But this unity is not at the expense of compromising individuality: each individual personality sits in the Sukkah and stands out in all

<sup>1</sup> Genesis Rabbah 99:9. Rashi Deuteronomy 33:18.

<sup>2</sup> See Ramoh glosses to Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 246:1.

<sup>3</sup> See Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 9:5. See this year’s Shabbat Shuva sermon.

<sup>4</sup> Sukkah 27b.

his or her inimitable wonder.

The same is true with the mitzvah of taking the Four Kinds. The Etrog, Lulav, Hadassim and Aravot each represent a different unique personality: The Etrog which has flavor and fragrance corresponds to those who have both Torah and good deeds. The Lulav – palm fronds – has taste but no fragrance just like those who have Torah but not good deeds. The Hadassim – myrtles – by contrast have fragrance but no taste. They reflect those who have good deeds but lack Torah. And the Aravot – willows – have neither taste nor fragrance, like those who have neither Torah nor good deeds.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, despite this diversity, the mitzvah is to bind all four species in “one bond” (*agudah achas*). Each stands out – literally – in its unique splendor. At the same time, the Mitzvah consists of binding them all together as one!

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## 5. The Hug of the Sukkah

Among the different personalities that Sukkot encompasses, I want to share with you three specific personality types that are personified in the actual Sukkah, in which we reside during this holiday.

The Sukkah is a form of an embrace – a divine and cosmic hug – that surrounds and protects us. When we sit in Sukkah, surrounded by its walls, we are being lovingly “hugged” by G-d, as one would be embraced by a loved one.

The Sukkah teaches us that each of us ought to also be a living “sukkah,” embracing and nurturing those around us.

Indeed, the Sukkah manifests three types of “embracers” – which reflect three personality types among us, and three stages in the process of our development and growth.

These three personalities and stages are hinted to in three type of Sukkot we can build – 1)with

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<sup>5</sup> Vayikra Rabbah 30:12.

two walls and a small abutment, 2) with three walls, 3) with four walls. And also alluded to in the three-letter Hebrew word Sukkah – samech, kof, hei.

## 6. Sukkah Walls

The Torah states the Mitzvah of Sukkah:

*In Sukkot you should live for a seven day period. Every resident among the Israelites shall live in Sukkot, in order that your generations should know that I had the children of Israel live in Sukkot when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God.*<sup>6</sup>

The word Sukkot, meaning “huts” or “booths,” is repeated three times, once with a *vov*, for plural, and twice without. In a Talmudic debate and complex discussion<sup>7</sup>, the Rabbis deduce from this verse that a Sukkah must have at least three walls to be kosher for performing the mitzvah of sitting in a Sukkah.

In the discussion, the Rabbis conclude that a Sukkah could potentially have either 1) four complete walls, a full enclosure; 2) three complete walls, like a square horseshoe, or 3) two walls and a small abutment for the third wall, so the Sukkah is mostly open on two sides.

All three of these types of Sukkot are kosher – completely enclosed, mostly enclosed, or fifty one percent closed and forty nine percent open.

These three Sukkah structures are indicative of three personality types.

## 7. Three Types of Sukkot Personalities

Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (1724-1806), known as the Chid”a (the acronym of his name), brilliantly explains that these three types of Sukkot are hinted to in the word “Sukkah”<sup>8</sup>:

“Sukkah” is spelled *samach, kof, hei*. The *Samach* is a completely enclosed circle – representing the four-walled Sukkah. The *Kof* is closed on three sides and open on one, representing the

<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 23:42-43.

<sup>7</sup> Sukkah 6b.

<sup>8</sup> Devash Lefi, Letter Samech, section 33 (in the name of “sefer kadmon ksav yad”). Cited in Bnei Yisachar, Maamarei Chodesh Tishrei, Maamar 10, section 12.

three-walled Sukkah. And the *Hei*, is closed on two sides, like an upside-down “L”, with a little tiny leg as the third abutment.

These three types of Sukkot – the all enclosed “samech” Sukkah, the three-walled “kof” Sukkah and the two walled with the short third wall “hei” Sukkah – reflect three types of “embracers” among us:

Huggers

Protectors

Openers

These three types also correspond to the three stages of human development.

The optimal Sukkah is, of course, the four-walled structure, which corresponds to the full encircling *Samach*. It personifies one who completely embraces another in an all-encompassing warm and comforting hug. This type of Sukkah is like being in the womb, which completely surrounds and sustains the developing child in its full embrace, like a warm and comforting hug.

This complete embrace is essential on the fetal level. When a person and personality is in its earliest stages of development, after conception, it needs to be fully submerged in the *samach* circle, which nurtures and allows it to mature and grow in the healthiest possible way until it is ready to emerge as a viable child.

The second level Sukkah is the three-sided *Kof*, a personality that protects its inhabitants from the elements, but is open on one side to allow for independent growth. This type of Sukkah reflects the second stage of human development – the period after birth, when the child still needs the three-sided protection of its parents, (like a literal shield), but now, after exiting the womb and cutting the umbilical cord, also allows the child to maneuver and grow as an independent entity. This is akin to the childhood through adolescent stages life.

The third level Sukkah, which is like the *Hei*, represents breadth and expansion, and is almost as open as it is closed. This is the third stage of development, when we mature from childhood into adulthood. We still – and always – need to be loved and embraced by the Sukkah, but at this stage the embracer (the parent or educator) needs to allow and foster far more independence and openness, to enable us to stand on our own **two** feet. But even when standing on your own **two** feet, there still remains the tiny third leg, like the letter *yud*, which is like a spark

that reminds us of G-d who gives you that freedom and empowers your individuality.

## 8. Balancing Love and Individuality

This third level – we can call the “openers” – is in some ways the most difficult to balance, because on one hand you need to provide the love and embrace, but on the other hand you need to allow the one you are embracing to breathe and spread their wings. Like the open *Hei*, you want to open them up to the possibilities of the world to see how broad and expansive they could be. You inspire them to spread their wings and soar to great heights.

At the same time, the “opener” doesn’t open you up to the point that you can lose sight of your higher calling. The opening is done with responsibility and discretion, with the goal of serving a higher purpose. The sukkah is not kosher if it has only two walls and is completely open on two sides. It needs to have an abutment for the third wall. Like the *Hei*, the goal is to be open on two sides, but not be 50% open; it still needs to have the small *yud* of the “third wall,” to remind us to remain humble (like the dot of the *yud*) as we stand before G-d who drives out freedom and empowers our infinite, divine possibilities.

This type of Sukkah personality is best utilized when one is mature. A child in the figurative womb, or metaphorical newborn or adolescent is not ready and prepared for the openness of the *hei* expansion. It’s too dangerous. Rather, the *samach* and *kof*, the hugger and protector better serve the earlier stages of development. But, done right, those stages lead to the unlimited growth and expansion of the *hei* in the third stage of maturity.

## 9. Which Personality Are You?

My friends, here we have an extraordinary lesson from the Sukkah how to embrace and be embraced, and how to do it in a balanced manner. Sukkah doesn’t just teach us about the importance of love and embracing, but also the different ways of embracing.

The Sukkah’s very name – *samech*, *kof*, *hei* – describes how all three elements and stages are found in the Sukkah.

1. The Sukkah embraces you completely.
2. The Sukkah shields you but allows you to grow and mature.

3. The Sukkah empowers your individuality, and opens you up to discover your unique voice, while always subtly and humbly reminding you of the *yud* of Hashem.

We always need the love and embrace of the Sukkah. The difference between the three stages is how encompassing is the love and how much room is there for the individual.

In our embracing one another, and especially our children, we need to identify what form of embrace is needed in each respective situation and stage.

Moreover, the three forms of embrace complement each other: There are times when we need the absolute *samach* hug. This certainly nurtures us, but does not yet empower us to stand on our own. There are *times* when we need the *kof* protection, but not to the point of stifling or smothering us, leaving the fourth side open for our independence. And there are times when we need *bei* expansiveness and even more openness, which also allows us to internalize and integrate the embrace. And yet, the *bei* needs the *yud* on its third wall to keep us honest and directed.

A kosher, complete Sukkah, a kosher, wholesome and complete Jew, has all three letters – *samach*, *kof*, *bei*. Without one letter, the Sukkah of life is incomplete.

The Jewish people are unique letters. Some are *samachs*, some *kofs*, some *beis* – and some are all three in different periods of life. This is our individuality. On Sukkot, we come together to form one, complete, wholesome and unified Sukkah. We bring together all four species into “one bond” – *agudah achas*.

This is how a “temporary dwelling” could make – and will make – a more permanently divine place of this physical world.

This is how diverse personalities join together and create, like many different musical notes, one grand cosmic symphony!

Which will be realized with the coming of Moshiach in the final redemption.

Good Yom Tov and Chag Sameach!

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