



Our  
Ushpizin



## YOSEF

# Spiritual Guarantor

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According to the Midrash, the *sukkah* represents the protection G-d provided the Jewish people in the desert in the form of miraculous pillars of clouds that surrounded the Israelite camp. At the same time, the people also required physical huts to protect their bodies from the extreme weather of the desert.

During their forty years of wandering, these safe barriers shielded them from the dangerous spiritual environment they encountered among the surrounding nations. This heavenly assistance gave the people strength to persevere and ascend to Eretz Yisrael.

The Netziv writes that Bilaam's description of Israel's social isolation in the desert conforms with Yaakov's desire that his offspring be separated from intellectual and social interaction with alien cultures: "I see them atop rocky crags, and from cliffs I behold them; a nation that lives alone and is oblivious to the other nations" (Bamidbar 23:9).

Similarly, Yosef wisely kept the Jews apart from the Egyptians in Egypt. It was Yosef who suggested that they live in Goshen. He guided his brothers on how to speak with Pharaoh to ensure the Egyptian king would grant them this land. He built a "*sukkah*" around them to protect them from the decadent Egyptian culture. More than anyone, Yosef fulfilled Yaakov's wish that his family be separate from Egyptian society. At the same time, he taught his people that Egypt was merely a stop on the road back to Canaan, and promised them that G-d's presence would protect them on their journey home.

Unfortunately, after Yosef's death, the people did not always follow his guidance. "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly... *and the land was filled with them.*" (Shemot 1:7) According to the Netziv, these words imply that the Jewish people built homes all over the country, among the Egyptians. "The Children of Israel violated the dictum of Yaakov, who wanted them to be a nation apart from the Egyptians. That was part of their downfall in Egypt!"

At the end of his life, Yaakov gathers his children, blesses them, and reminds them of his desire to be buried in the family's ancestral cemetery in the Cave of Machpelah. This was after Yaakov had already made Yosef swear that he, Yosef, would make this happen and attend his father's funeral in person.

Yosef learned an essential lesson from his father. Despite the affluence and comforts that he and his family enjoyed in Egypt, Egypt was not the ultimate destination. Eretz Yisrael was where they belonged! And so Yosef, at the end of his life, conveyed the same message to the Jewish people: "Yosef said to his brothers, 'I am about to die. G-d will surely take notice of you and bring you up from this land to the land that He promised in an oath to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov.' So Yosef made the sons of Israel swear, saying, When G-d has taken notice of you, you shall carry up my bones from here" (Bereishit 50:24-25).

In both of these verses, Yosef uses the term "take notice" (פָּקַד פְּקִידָה) to indicate that Hashem will remember the Jewish people and take them out of Egypt. Indeed, G-d tells Moshe to use these very words when speaking to the

people: "Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: Hashem, the G-d of your fathers, the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, has appeared to me and said, 'I have taken notice of you and of what is being done to you in Egypt'" (Shemot 3:16).

Ramban explains that Yosef gave his brothers this phrase to pass on to future generations, indicating that when the redeemer comes, he will use this phrase.

Maimonides (Laws of Lulav 5:12) writes that while we are commanded to rejoice (שמחה) on all holidays, we are commanded to experience "extra joy" (שמחה יתרה) on Sukkot. This extra joy is due, in large part, to Yosef's contributions, for he guaranteed our religious survival in exile and inspired our yearning and commitment to return to Israel. What a joy to welcome him as an honored guest in our *sukkah*!

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