

ParShaT *EMoR*- One Pager Series

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Rashi #1: Biblical Text: Lv23-43a All Jews will live in the Succoth [During the holiday of Succoth] in order that your generations know that I [God] sat the Jews in Succoth when I took them out of Egypt...

Biblical Text: Ex12-37 [Discussing the exodus (redemption) of the Jews from Egypt] The Jewish people journeyed from Raamseth towards Succoth....

Rashi Text: I sat the Jews in Succoth: [Succoth refers to] The Clouds of Glory.

Further Midrashic Text: This Rashi is found on Lv23-43. To fully understand it, we must view the alternate opinions on the meaning of *Succoth*. Although the Talmud (BT, Succah 11) cites two opinions, the full statement of three opinions is found in the Mechiltah [A Midrashic compilation] on Ex12-37. These 3 opinions are presented below. This technique of citing another verse and another Midrash is part of the Rashiyomi approach to Rashi *form*; full understanding of Rashi may require uniting several texts and several commentaries.

The Three Opinions: A) The Sages say that *Succoth* mentioned in Ex12-37 is the name of a place
B) Rabbi Eliezer says that *Succoth* mentioned in Ex12-37 refers to actual *Succoth* (*booths*).
C) Rabbi Akivah says that *Succoth* mentioned in Ex12-37 refers to the *clouds of Glory*

The Rashiyomi approach: Several times we have explained the Rashiyomi approach: We prefer to avoid an interpretation of *controversy*. Instead, we prefer an explanation and interpretation that the three opinions are *complementary*, each opinion explaining a different textual point. Since there are three textual points, there is no reason to assume any controversy; all scholars agree with all opinions.

- A) To fully understand the Sages, we must cite an additional part of the Mechiltah. Biblical Hebrew has two methods to indicate an *indirect object* which describes *to where* a motion is going: 1) You can use a prefix Lamed; for example LeSuccoth means going *to* Succoth; 2) You can use a suffix Hey; for example Succothah means *towards* Succoth. This grammatical point is actually cited in the Mechiltah. Without it, I might think that the Biblical verse at Ex12-37 means *The Jews journeyed using Succoth*, that is I might think that *Succothah* is an adverb describing the *method* of journeying, *how* they journeyed, by camping in Succoth. Therefore, the Sages explain that the simple meaning of the verse is that Succoth is the name of a place.
- B) To fully understand Rabbi Eliezer, we must cite an additional part of the Mechiltah. Rabbi Eliezer cites **Gn33-17** *Jacob journeyed to Succoth: [There] He built himself a house, and for his flock he made Succoth [booths]; therefore, they called the name of the place Succoth.* Thus, Rabbi Eliezer does not disagree with the Sages that Succoth is the name of a place, but rather, adds, that places with names of common objects, typically point to incidents that happened there. Jacob named his place Succoth because he made Succoth [booths] for his animals. It stands to reason that the Succoth the Jews journeyed to are also named after actual Succoth. Rabbi Eliezer makes a significant novelty; for he suggests that the Jews themselves did not sit in the Succoth; rather the Jews created Succoth for their flocks! Indeed, if the Jews left Egypt, why should they live in Succoth with thatched roofs when they could comfortably live in tents with complete roofs (cf. Dt05-27).
- C) Rabbi Akivah is *not* commenting on the word Succoth! He is commenting on something else. He is commenting on Lv23-43, *so that your generations should know that I God sat the Jews in Succoth.* Rabbi Akivah answers the question *Why commemorate that Jews built Succoth for their flocks! Why is it so important?* Rabbi Akivah answers: Egypt and the redemption were not ends in themselves but a means to the full redemption of revelation. The thatched-roof Succoth with a view of the skies and clouds prepared the Jews for the prophetic revelation they experienced at Sinai. Hence, the commemoration.

In conclusion, we see the three opinions are all correct, each commenting on a different aspect of the biblical text.