

# **Sukkot, Ushpizin, by Rabbi Michael Kossowsky zt"l**

- by Rabbi Michael Kossowsky, Explanation of the Ushpizin corresponding to periods of Jewish History, and the lessons learned from them. Submitted by Nisson Shulman

Sukkot: Ushpizin

By Rabbi Dr. Yechiel Michel Kossowski, zt"l

The KABBALAH is the source of our invitation of seven TZADIKIM to our SUKKAH. There are, however, many more TZADIKIM we might have invited. Why particularly these seven?

The reason is that Jewish history can be divided into six periods of time.

The first was when AVRAHAM was the only Jew. Until Avraham, there was no closer connection to Hashem than that of all humanity. He was the first to be called Ivri and who called out in the name of Hashem.

There was, however, a danger that he would also turn out to be the last Jew, until YITZCHOK was born. Yitzchok walking in Avraham's path of life was the symbol of transmission of Judaism from generation to generation. No longer was Judaism a notion of one particular man, but a movement to be transmitted and to live for all time. So this was the second period in our history.

Even so, Yitzchok was also a lonely man of faith. He was alone as Avraham's son and spiritual heir, until YAAKOV, who gave birth to an entire family, a large group walking in Avraham's and Yitzchak's path. An entire group, a family of people with all their progeny, represents the third period in our history.

In the course of time this family became a nation, and this is the period of YOSEPH. Only after we open the book of Shemot do we find the name AM given to the descendents of Jacob, so that even in Egypt's oppression they were now a nation, and as a nation were they drawn forth from bondage. So this is the fourth period in our history.

At that point this AM, this nation receives the Torah and becomes the AM HASEFER, and this is the period of MOSHE and AHARON which has continued until this very day, the fifth period in our history. And yet another period is to come in the future, the period of GEULAH, of MASHIACH TZIDKENU symbolized by King David. So these six periods of Jewish history are represented by the seven USHPIZIN, AVRAHAM, YITZCHOK, YAAKOV, YOSEPH, MOSHE, AHARON and DAVID MELECH YISRAEL.

All of these USHPIZIN who represent periods in our history, have in common, that their personal lives began with sorrow and anguish, and ended with great joy and redemption. And that, too, is symbolic of the history of our people. So that when we sit in the sukkah which represents poverty and wandering, weakness and suffering, we invite these seven guests to teach us that though hardship and sorrow is our lot at first, in the end there will be joy, honor and greatness.

We read in the Haftorah of the day (Zechariah 14), VEZOT TIHIYE HAMAGEFA ASHER YIGOF HASHEM ET KOL HAAMIM ASHER TZAV'U AL YERUSHALAYIM, HEMAK BESARO VEHU OMED AL RAGLAV.

What is the significance of such a peculiar punishment, that their flesh shall fall away from them while they are still standing? It is actually very precise. The salvation and YESHUAH of our people will come suddenly with no advance sign that it is happening. So it was with Haman. So it was with the Czar in Russia. So that when we see our enemies with their apparent strength, let us not fear. Their fall will be sudden. If we would have to wait until the natural end of their power, we might lose hope when they do not appear to weaken. And so we are told not to be afraid. The end will come suddenly, as if the flesh will suddenly fall away even while still standing in battle array. The tongue, which has attacked us and filled the world with anti-Semitic filth, will melt away. The eyes looking with envy and greed to all Israel will melt and disappear even without any advance warning for this. And this is a promise to all of us that we may have a true simcha of yomtov even in the face of implacable enemies.

(Written 5704, 1943-4, before the fall of the Third Reich.)