

## Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 7 #49-50, October 2, 9, 2020; Sukkot - Simchat Torah 5781

**NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.**

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**Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from [www.PotomacTorah.org](http://www.PotomacTorah.org). Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah. NOTE: No separate posting on October 9!**

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**Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at [www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.**

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**Consider a High Holy Day donation to the Chabad of the University of Delaware, victim of arson by anti-Semites who burned the Chabad building in late August. [UDFireRelief.com](http://UDFireRelief.com) or 262 S College Ave, Newark, DE 19711.**

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The Torah instructs all Jews to travel to the place that God would designate (Jerusalem) three times per year (Shalosh Regalim, or three festivals): Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. We know that Pesach observes the Exodus from Egypt and Shavuot coincides with the presentation of the Luchot at Har Sinai. If Sukkot recalls a specific event in Jewish history, that event is more subtle. What exactly do we celebrate on Sukkot?

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag (shiur attached by E-mail) provides some background. In Emor, God instructs Moshe to tell the people to dwell in sukkot for seven days so they will KNOW that He caused B'Nai Yisrael to dwell in sukkot when He took them out of Egypt (Vayikra 23:42-43). For Pesach, in contrast, God required us to observe the korban Pesach and week of matzot so we would REMEMBER that God took us out of Egypt. In the Torah, "know" involves a much more intimate and deep relationship than "remember."

The next hint comes from Pinchas, in the list of Musaf offerings (Bemidbar ch. 28-29). For the holy days during Tishrei (other than Sukkot), the Musaf offering consisted of one par (bull), one ram, and seven male lambs. For Pesach and Shavuot, the Musaf offerings consisted of two bulls, one ram, and seven lambs. For Sukkot, however, the Musaf offerings consisted of a total of 70 bulls over the week (thirteen the first day, decreasing by one each day, ending with seven). Each day, there were two rams and fourteen lambs. The Sukkot offerings of rams and lambs were therefore doubled – the number for the Tishrei holy days plus the number for the other festivals. (The bulls exploded to a total of 70, to show that all 70 nations would eventually observe Sukkot.) The message here, however, is that Sukkot has aspects of both the other festivals and of the Tishrei holy days.

Rabbi David Fohrman extends the connection between Pesach and Sukkot. When B'Nai Yisrael left Egypt, they first journeyed from Rameses to Sukkot (Shemot 12:37). What is Sukkot? When Yaakov left Lavan, after he encountered his brother Esav, Yaakov and his family journeyed to Sukkot, where he built a house and shelters for his livestock. He called

the place Sukkot, after the shelters that he built for his animals (Bereshis 33:17). Sukkot therefore means shelters worthy of sheltering animals.

Rabbi Fohrman observes that the first night after the Exodus, B'Nai Yisrael found themselves in a place called Sukkot, where the only shelters were fit for animals. In that rugged location, the Jews baked matzot for their first meal on their journey (12:39), and they spent the night under the stars with the only shelter being primitive structures intended for animals. Pesach and Sukkot therefore observe the same event – the first night of freedom after the Exodus from Egypt! Pesach focuses on God's love for B'Nai Yisrael in terms of providing food for millions of people in a barren desert. Sukkot focuses on God's love for the Jews in terms of protecting them from dangers, especially at night (something that must have been terrifying).

As Rabbi Leibtag observes, God took the Jews out of Egypt with awesome miracles. Because God's presence was so obvious, it is only necessary for us to remember them. Sukkot, however, comes at the time of the fruit harvest, at the end of the growing season. Moshe warned the people of the danger of thinking that their success came from their own efforts. The only way the people could succeed was with God's help – especially in providing rain at the proper times and enabling the land of Israel to be productive. (Indeed, no other people in history, except the Jews, have been able to make the land of Israel thrive.) We celebrate Sukkot when we most need to KNOW that our blessings come from God – exactly six months after Pesach, at the end of the harvest season, when we most need to remember God's role in nature. We especially need to recognize God's role when He hides his face (operating behind the scenes rather than with dramatic miracles).

Rabbi Fohrman's insight ties in with Rabbi Leibtag's message about Sukkot having aspects of both the Tishrei holy days and the Exodus from Egypt. One aspect of Yom Kippur is the kappara, or covering to protect the Jews from God's presence. (A human could not survive in God's presence without this protection.) This covering reminds us of God's clouds of glory that protected the Jews in the Midbar and hovered over the Jews as they lived in their sukkot. In this sense, Sukkot is the culmination of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – as Shavuot is the culmination of the freedom we start to experience at Pesach. Even a week of Sukkot is not enough. God wants an extra day of rejoicing with His Jews – Shemini Atzeret -- and then we extend the rejoicing with Simchat Torah. This period is indeed Moedim l'simcha – the time of our rejoicing.

The journey of our people from Egypt to their eventual entry into Israel also required a learning process. During their 210 years in Egypt, the Jews declined from the level of Yaakov and his family to a much lower spiritual level while slaves. During their period in the Midbar, the former slaves needed to trust in God, learn the mitzvot, and make the mitzvot a part of their nature. The Torah shows that this process was difficult and involved many steps back as well as forward. By placing Sukkot exactly six months after (and therefore six months before) Pesach, the Jewish calendar reinforces the message that freedom and living with God is an educational process that takes a significant amount of time and constant practice. While some religions involve an hour or two a week of prayer, our religion involves multiple services every day – plus daily study.

Our family always feels close to my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, on Sukkot. We enjoyed many Sukkot meals and visits with Leonard and Elizabeth Cahan, and their family, over the years. Rabbi Cahan helped me build our first two Sukkot – plywood structures that were beautifully crafted, lasted for many years, but eventually were too difficult for us to put up and take down by ourselves. (We now have a "snap" Sukkah that I can put up or take down by myself in less than an hour.) Sukkot with the Cahan family always embodied the spirit and feeling of moedim l'simcha – one of the happiest times of the year. May it be a time of rejoicing for all of us, and may this be the only year when we must do the rejoicing without a lot of guests.

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Nossan ben Pessel, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Ramesh bat Heshmat, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava**

**bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers. Note: Beth Sholom has additional names, including coronavirus victims, on a Tehillim list.**

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Hannah & Alan

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**Drasha: Succos: Just Desserts**  
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1997

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

The Talmud in Tractate Avodah Zarah talks about the future. It details for us a scenario that will occur after the final redemption, when the G-d of the Jews and His Torah are known and accepted by all of mankind. The entire world will see the great reward meted to the small nation that endured an incessant exile while following the Torah scrupulously. Then the idol-worshippers from other nations will line up before G-d and complain, "what about us?" Had we been given the Torah we, too, would surely have kept it! Why are you only rewarding the Jewish people?" The Talmud tells us that G-d makes a deal. "All right," He tells them. "I'll give you one easy mitzvah. If you observe it correctly, fine. However, if you do not, then your complaints are meaningless.

The Talmud tells us He will give them the mitzvah of Sukkah. G-d will then take out the sun in all its glory and the protection of the Sukkah will be no match for its rays. These idol-worshippers, predicts the Talmud, will kick the walls of the Sukkah and flee in disgust.

There are many mitzvos in the Torah. 613 to be exact. And there are quite a number of difficult ones. Some are conducive to despair and disheartenment without a broiling sun. Why, then, was the mitzvah of Sukkah chosen to be the cause celebre that differentiates our commitment to that of an idolator?

**Rabbi Paysach Krohn, in his first book of the Magid Series tells the story of a Reb Avraham who was about to enter a restaurant one late spring afternoon. Upon entering, he noticed a familiar vagrant Jew, known to all as Berel the beggar, meandering outside.**

**Reb Berel, rumor had it, was a formidable Torah scholar back in the old country, but had his life shattered physically and emotionally by Nazi atrocities. He was a recluse, no one knew exactly where or how he lived: but he bothered no one, and not too many people bothered with him.**

**Reb Avraham asked the loner to join him for a meal. He was about to make a business trip up to Binghamton and figured that he might as well prepare for the trip with more than a hot meal – he would begin it with a good deed.**

**Reb Berel gladly accepted the offer; however, when it came time to order, he asked for nothing more than two baked apples and a hot tea. Reb Avraham's prodding could do nothing to increase the poor man's order. "All I need are two baked apples and a steaming tea," he insisted.**

**Reb Avraham's trip to Binghamton was uneventful until the rain and the darkness began to fall almost simultaneously. As if dancing in step, the darker it got, the heavier the deluge fell. All Reb Avraham remembered was the skidding that took him over the divider and into oncoming traffic on Route 17 in Harriman, New York. He came to shortly after two tow trucks had pulled his wrecked car from a ditch and lifted him to safety. Refusing hospitalization, he was driven to a nearby motel that was owned by the Friedmans, a Jewish couple who were readying the place for the summer migrations.**

**Mr. Friedman saw the battered Reb Avraham and quickly prepared a comfortable room for him. His wife quickly prepared a little something for him to eat. She brought it out to a shocked and bewildered Reb Avraham. On her serving tray were two baked apples and a glass of steaming tea.**

When the Jews left Egypt, they had nothing to look at in the vast desert but faith. They built simple huts, almost in declaration: "Hashem we will do ours, we are sure You will do yours." And those simple huts, those Sukkos, protected

them from the heat, the cold, the wind, and the unknown. Hashem tells the prophet Jeremiah to tell his folk, “I remember the kindness of your youth as you followed Me in an unsowed desert.” (Jeremiah 2:2)

Perhaps when the final redemption arrives, it will again be the simple Sukkah that will stand as the protectorate and advocate of the People who stood for 2,000 years in the face of idolators, who invited the Jews to join them... or die. So, when we enter the Sukkah this year, let us remember that it is only a small Sukkah stop on a long journey home. And when we arrive there, the Sukkah will be there once again to greet us as it was more than 3,300 years ago in the Sinai Desert. After all, it's nice to be served at the end of a 2,000-year-long journey with just desserts.

Moedim l'simcha.

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## **Holy Imperfection: Torah Words from Rabbi Linzer on This Sukkot**

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2020

The Rabbis tell us that the mitzvah to dwell in a sukkah means that we are, for this week, to tzei midirat keva ve'sheiv bi'dirat aray –to leave our established, permanent abode and live in a temporary dwelling.

In other years, I have understood the message to be that by living in a temporary dwelling we become aware that the normal stability and predictability of our lives – our established abode – is actually an illusion. The Israelites, when they dwelled in huts in the Wilderness, were aware that it was only because of the Clouds of Glory that they were able to survive. It was not the huts that provided protection and shelter, but God. Our living in a sukkah reminds us that this is our reality as well, that it is not our house or our job that protects us, but God. At the end of the week, after we have hopefully internalized this awareness, we bring it back with us into our homes, so that it can become a lens through which we live our predictable, stable lives.

This year, however, the lesson is a different one. For this year, we do not live in a stable reality. The entire world changed drastically on us, and we have become painfully aware that our past reality was not nearly as firm as we thought. And it is not just the present. It is the future which is so unstable, and hence so deeply unsettling. When will this be over? What will the next month look like? What will the next year look like? This week schools are open, but for how long? And if they close, when will they reopen after that?

We are living in an unstable reality. We are living in that dirat aray. The message of Sukkot this year is to embrace that reality, to embrace the fact that our lives, when they are unstable, are not going to be perfect. But if we can own that, then this imperfection can be holy.

All the laws of how a Sukkah is to be built are about improvising and making do with less. A sukkah doesn't need four walls, three are good enough. The Rabbis then tell us that you don't even need three: If you just have a little bit more than two, the very beginning of a third wall, that also counts. You don't need the wall to be of full height – three feet high is good enough. And it doesn't need to be solid – gaps of up to nine inches are fine. And on and on. Then there are the Rabbinic concepts of gud asik mechitza, gud achit mechitza, and dofen akuma – a partial wall magically extends upwards or downwards, and invalid schach at the end of the sukkah can be looked at as if it were a bending –wall. These are all showing us that making do with less is ok, is part of our lives. And with a little imagination, we can see the gaps in our lives as if they were filled and complete.

I once had a student who had very little money. He couldn't afford a nice, canvas sukkah. I loved to get his calls before sukkot. They went something like this: “So, I was walking down the street and saw that someone had discarded a big piece of cardboard, so I took it, and want to use it as a wall, but it doesn't extend all the way, but if I put it near the edge, it can sort of reach this sheet that I am using for the other wall – is that kosher?” Here is someone who was building a sukkah as the Rabbis imagined! No easy prefab sukkah for him, but taking the world as it is, and making do with what comes to hand.

A final lesson that the Rabbis teach is that sukkah mi'kol makom, kosher – however the sukkah gets built, its fine. And while this is true and yet another teaching that we can accept and embrace our imperfect reality, there exists a special mitzvah to build the sukkah ourselves. For the way to truly make this imperfection a holy one is by throwing ourselves into it and bringing our skills and talents to the fore.

So many people told me that this recent Yom Kippur was not disappointing in the least. It was actually one of this most beautiful Yom Kippurs that they had ever had (of course, we must remember, that for others it was one of the most difficult Yom Kippurs). The davening was shorter, so they had more time to think about the prayers themselves. Some minyan were outdoors, and for those who participated in them, and they share with me that praying outdoors was a truly special experience. The small minyan that people participate in were small and intimate and had a real beauty and sense of connectedness. And most of all – that the small minyanim that took place outside the synagogue were do-it-yourself affairs. Yom Kippur services did not come prepackaged from the shul. People had to come together – one person lent their yard, another constructed the mechitza. People who had never read Torah on Yom Kippur or lead the prayers or served as gabbais, stepped up to the plate and did so. And you know what? It wasn't perfect. But it was beautiful. Because we were building it ourselves. And we embraced that imperfection, and were able to see God and holiness present where we had not seen it before.

This Sukkot, we are living in an unstable world are well aware that our lives lack a certain stability, that society is not as it was before and will not be so for some time to come. But it is in this reality that we can do the mitzvah of building a sukkah, we can bring our talents to the fore to make it not only livable, but truly special. It won't be perfect. But by embracing this imperfection, we can find new ways to connect with and discover God's presence in our lives. We can live lives of holy imperfection.

All the best and chag sameach.

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### **Succos: Working for G-d** by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine © 2017 Teach 613

The Talmud tells us that in the end of days, when it becomes clear that there is reward for doing mitzvos, there will be nations of the world who will wish for a second chance to accept the Mitzvos. Although at that time it really will be too late, the Talmud says that Hashem will offer them an "easy mitzva" which they can try, and through which they can prove themselves. The "easy mitzvah" that Hashem will offer them is the mitzvah of succah.

The Talmud questions why it is called an "easy mitzvah" and suggests that it is a mitzvah that can be done at no cost. One can take discarded items for the walls, and leftovers from the harvest for schach, and make a succah. It is a mitzvah that can be done without cost so it is called an easy mitzvah. (I'm not quite sure how the Talmud would have responded to the price tag on today's fancy, patented succos that come with options like buying a car.)

The Talmud continues and describes what happens: "Each one will build a succah, and Hashem will shine the sun with such intense heat that they will leave the succah with disgust, kicking it as they leave."

The Talmud questions, "Aren't they indeed absolved of the mitzvah if there is such intense heat?" It should be similar to the case of rainfall, which absolves a person of eating in the succah.

The Talmud replies that they are indeed absolved and may leave the succah. But they should not be kicking the succah as they do so.

The above Talmudic passage is fascinating, but with a bit of introspective review we can appreciate it on a deeper level.

The passage began that Hashem would assign them an "easy mitzvah" and suggested that it is easy because it doesn't cost much. But by the time we complete the passage we can draw an even deeper conclusion as to why the mitzvah of succah assigned to these nations is an "easy mitzvah." That is because they were never actually expected to do the mitzvah. In fact the entire endeavor to build the succah was merely needed to set the stage for the actual mitzvah assignment, which was: "To leave the succah with dignity." Hashem made it so hot that they couldn't do the mitzvah. That was His intent. The mitzvah was for them to accept the unexpected reassignment to a new task. The mitzvah was for them not to do the mitzvah that they thought they had to do. This is called an "easy mitzvah" because it doesn't take much to do. All they need to do is to leave the succah they built... with dignity.

I once read a story of an 80-year old woman who was told (after a certain serious surgery) that she could not fast on Yom Kippur. Her initial response was, "I never ate on Yom Kippur and I won't do it now. Even the Nazis couldn't get me to eat on Yom Kippur." But when her Rabbi found out he told her, "You must eat on Yom Kippur for your safety. It is a mitzvah. If you don't agree I will have to come and feed you." She ate. She told her family never to remind her of this Yom Kippur. It was so hard for her to accept the job reassignment that she had to eat on Yom Kippur. But she accepted it because she was working for G-d.

The concept of reassignment is actually quite common. Often we think the mitzvah that we are expected to do is one thing, when in actuality it is quite another.

A number of years ago when I was spending time in the hospital with my father-in-law z.l. he asked me to bring him some hot water for a tea. The problem was that the urn was located on a different floor, and so I insulated the cup as best as I could to keep it hot as I brought it from one floor to the next.

As I entered the elevator I was quite particular to keep away from people so that I would not get jostled and spill the water on anyone. Nevertheless, suddenly the elevator lurched, I lost my balance, and the cup of steaming hot water spilled all over my arm. It hurt enormously. But with fifteen pairs of eyes staring at my yarmulka, tzitzis, and steam generating shirt sleeve, I am eternally grateful that the only thing that emanated from my lips was the word, "Ouch!"

If you had asked me at the time what mitzvah I was involved in, I would have undoubtedly answered, "Getting a cup of hot water for a patient." But in reality I had apparently been assigned an entirely different mitzvah: Kiddush Hashem, thankfully responding to a disappointing and painful situation as someone trained in the yeshiva system should.

The concept of job reassignment applies to anyone who finds themselves in a situation that does not meet their plans or expectations. It applied to our father Avraham, who thought his mitzvah was to sacrifice his son, only to find out that that wasn't the real mitzvah at all. It applies to people who wish they could live elsewhere, but for whatever reason can't change things at the present time... even if the place they wish they would live is EretzYisroel. It applies to people forced into career changes, or changes in lifestyle due to lifecycle events. Sometimes people can plan a mitzvah only to find that it is a great mitzvah but at the wrong time. Accepting job reassignment, whether permanent or temporary, can be an "easy mitzvah" if one sees themselves as working for G-d. The motivation never was personal accolades or accumulation of reward. The motivation must be to serve G-d. Then even the toughest reassignment can be implemented with dignity.

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## **The Business of Life: Thoughts for Succoth**

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel\*

Healthy societies and communities depend on their members' loyalty and sense of responsibility. They thrive when people work for the general good and not just for their own self-interest. People realize that if they are to enjoy the benefits of a society/community, they should rightfully share in the responsibilities of its maintenance.

Happily, many people understand this and govern their lives accordingly. They are good citizens, good community members. They pay their way and do their share.

Unhappily, there is a growing trend in our society that undermines these values. Professor Barry Schwartz of Swarthmore College has written extensively and cogently on how the market economy—where people look out primarily for themselves rather than the public good—is eroding the quality of our lives. In almost every profession and every business, there is a "free agent" attitude that says: let me take as much as I can for myself; I'm not going to worry about how this affects others. Business is business. My first concern is for the bottom line; let others fend for themselves.

We read in our newspapers how major corporations, with billions of dollars of annual profits, pay little or no taxes. They hire lawyers to find loopholes, and they pay lobbyists to make the tax loopholes in the first place. Their explanation is: business is business. We need to maximize profits. We owe this to our stockholders.

But what about responsibility for the country, the society that enables them to do business and make profits? What about a sense of loyalty for the rest of the citizenry, who must pay all the taxes that these corporations avoid? The answer: business is business. We take what we can; if the burden falls on others, that's their problem, not ours.

While this philosophy of the market economy increases, the quality of our lives decreases. Some few get very rich, and the masses are left to pay the bills. This causes a breakdown in trust, a festering of social antagonisms and resentments. As the level of public responsibility decreases, personal relationships suffer as well. The conclusion is: people are disposable. Loyalty to others is not the top concern: money is.

Judaism is a powerful voice that stands for social responsibility. The Torah reminds us that we were slaves in Egypt. We are to have mercy on the stranger, for we were strangers in the land of Egypt. The Torah and rabbinic tradition insist that we see the humanity in others, that we put the concerns of human beings first. We are instructed to be constructive, caring, responsible people.

Each of us is an ambassador of this great idea, this great vision. The hallmark of who we are as a Jewish people is our commitment to humanity—our own humanity and the humanity of others. We rebel against oppression; we reject the philosophy of business is business, that profits come first; we embrace social responsibility and mutual trust. Each of us who strives to live by these Jewish ideals is a moral hero who defies the dehumanizing tendencies evident in our society.

In describing Succoth as the time of our rejoicing, our tradition reminds us that we are to rejoice by sharing our blessings with others. It is not a time to hoard our harvest for our own benefit, but a time to remember the poor and the stranger—to share and reach out to others.

The Succah is a temporary dwelling reminding us that our own lives are temporary—we are transient visitors in this world. Our personal fulfillment comes through sharing with others, through playing our part for the betterment of all.

Professor Gershon Galil of the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Haifa recently deciphered an inscription dating from the 10th century BCE—the earliest known fragment of Hebrew writing. How wonderful that this oldest Hebrew inscription captures the spirit of the Jewish people:

“You shall not do it, but worship the Lord. Judge the slave and the widow, judge the orphan and the stranger. Plead for the infant, plead for the poor and the widow. Rehabilitate the poor at the hands of the king. Protect the poor and the slave, support the stranger.”

Some people think it's fine to say business is business, that people are disposable, that people don't matter but profits matter. Look out for yourself, and let others look out for themselves.

We say with full voice: this is not the way. Hessed is the way. Social responsibility is the way. Building a righteous society is the way.

\* Jewishideas.org. **The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website [jewishideas.org](https://www.jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.**

**For a package of excellent short articles for Succot through Simchat Torah, go to <https://www.jewishideas.org/article/succothshemini-hag-atseretsimhat-torah-reader>. I am including a pdf of this reader as an attachment to my E-mail.**

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## **The Four Species – Self-Serving or G-d-Serving?**

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer\*

One of the most cherished mitzvot of Sukkos is the mitzvah to take the four species. There are numerous concepts symbolized by the four species – our forefathers, our foremothers, the human being, the different elements of the Jewish nation and more. We take these elements and bind them together and through this mitzvah bind ourselves with G-d. We

shake the bundle in all directions with further symbolism -denoting G-d's Omnipresence, our complete devotion to G-d, and more.

There is an unusual wording used in the Torah in Parshas Emor (Vayikra 23:40) when introducing this mitzvah. The possuk states "ולקחתם לכם" – "And you shall take for yourselves". The Medrash quotes R' Abba bar Kahana who explains this unusual language. Hashem is asking us to draw a comparison between the "taking" of the four species and the "taking" we did in Egypt when we took the hyssop to wipe the blood of the Pascal lamb on our doorpost. The hyssop was inexpensive and yet as a result of that simple plant we merited great bounty and wealth – the booty after the Splitting of the Sea, the booty from the battles of Sichon and Og and the booty of the thirty one kings of Canaan. If this is the result of easily taking the hyssop for that one mitzvah, than imagine the bounty for the four species, which is far more expensive and has many mitzvos done with it. It is for this reason that the possuk says "Take for yourselves". We should realize from the hyssop that taking the four species is really for our own benefit. (Vayikra Rabbah 30§1)

This Medrash is most astounding. The four species is a mitzvah of great mystical significance and depicts our relationship with Hashem. The four species would appear to be a mitzvah expressing the ultimate service to G-d. Yet, it is specifically here that the Torah instructs us to do mitzvos for our own sake – to serve ourselves. This mitzvah (and every mitzvah) should be done for Hashem. Why does Hashem command us to take the four species for ourselves rather than directly instructing us to serve Him?

Perhaps a closer look at mitzvos in general will help us better understand this Medrash. The Ramcha"l tells us in the opening paragraphs of Mesillas Yesharim – Path of the Just – that the reason Hashem creates us is to give us the pleasure and joy of the World to Come. In this world we have the opportunity to earn that pleasure and joy by using our time, talents and surroundings to get closer to Hashem and to develop and enhance our personal and individual relationship with Hashem. The means by which a person can attain that closeness and the pleasure which comes from that closeness are the mitzvos which Hashem has commanded us. By serving Hashem and keeping His mitzvos we create and mold our relationship with Hashem. Each mitzvah is a gift from Hashem to enable us to more fully experience a relationship with G-d.

When we return to our Medrash, this understanding of mitzvos would seem to only further our difficulty in understanding our Medrash. Mitzvos were given to us as a gift by which we can connect with G-d, have a real relationship with Him, and experience the great spiritual joys of the World to Come. Yet, the Medrash is telling us to take the four species for our own sake, because of the great bounty we received the last time Hashem told us to "take". Why is the possuk instructing us to approach the mitzvah of the four species as a means for personal physical gain and not for the great spiritual joy gained by serving G-d for G-d's sake?

If mitzvos are the means to our relationship with G-d, perhaps we can better understand this Medrash through a closer look at relationships. Human relationships begin with shared goals and shared experiences but they are deepened and cemented through mutual respect, mutual concern and mutual appreciation. Researchers and psychologists have studied the common practice of gift-giving and suggest that giving and receiving gifts is a critical element in expressing these feelings of mutual appreciation. When we give gifts, we tangibly express our appreciation of the other. When we receive a gift, we experience the other person's appreciation and can feel validated. When someone refrains from receiving gifts, they lose out on truly experiencing the relationships in their lives. In order to feel loved and appreciated, we need to learn to recognize and appreciate the gifts we have been given.

Perhaps this perspective on gift giving and receiving is the key to this Medrash. When we consider Hashem's gift of mitzvos, we need to understand that a gift is intended to signify more than the gift itself. The gift is intended to express one's depth of concern, appreciation and sometimes even commitment to the other. When Hashem gave us the Torah and the means to the spiritual joys of the World to Come, this wasn't only about the World to Come. Rather, Hashem's gift was an expression of His love and concern for us.

If we understand that this was Hashem's gift and that it is an expression of His love and concern for us, then it is incumbent upon us to recognize and appreciate not only the gift itself, but the deeper message, as well. We need to understand that the mitzvos are not only about the World to Come, but that the act itself of appreciating the mitzvos is part of developing our personal relationship with G-d here and now.



R' Abba bar Kahana is teaching us precisely this message. When we approach the mitzvah of the four species, Hashem is telling us that we have already seen the expression of His relationship with us in this area. The message of the bounty and wealth is not about the physical pleasures, but about the way Hashem loved us and cared for us after we kept the mitzvah of to "take" the hyssop. If our relationship with Hashem was so tangible for that simple act of "taking", how much greater will our relationship with Hashem be after "taking" the four species! If we are to understand and appreciate the gift of Torah and mitzvos, we need to reflect upon this truth. We need to truly receive the gift Hashem has given us by recognizing the good we have been given and thereby experiencing G-d's love for us. We need to take the four species as a precious gift.

The Maharz"u notes another related message in this Medrash. Although, the real reward for Torah and mitzvos is in the World to Come, the message of Hashem's love is not relegated to the World to Come. Hashem's concern for us and involvement in our lives is equally in both worlds. It is this deeper message which we are being instructed to focus on and learn from the "taking" of the hyssop. The more we engage in our relationship with Hashem and the more we experience and enjoy that relationship, the more Hashem expresses that relationship and the more He embraces us and cares for us. A proper life of Torah and mitzvos is not intended to be a sacrifice, exchanging this world for the next. Rather, it is intended to be a gift, living a life experiencing Hashem's embrace in this world and in the World to Come.

The Medrash illustrates this concept with a story of R' Yochanan. He was walking with his student R' Chiya bar Abba. As they passed farmland, a vineyard and an olive press R' Yochanan related how he had owned these lands but had sold them so he could support himself while studying Torah. When R' Chiya bar Abba expressed concern for R' Yochanan's physical world, R' Yochanan responded and said "Is it light in your eyes what I have done? For I have sold something that was created in six days and acquired something which was given in forty days." R' Yochanan was not belittling the beauty and pleasure of this world, nor was he sacrificing joy and pleasure for a greater purpose. Rather, R' Yochanan saw all the gifts and opportunities in his life, both the physical ones and the spiritual ones, as expressions of G-d's love and concern. He was simply exchanging one joy for another.

As we begin the new year and leave behind the sins of our past, we joyously celebrate our relationship with Hashem and our national heritage and identity with the holiday of Sukkos. It is specifically now that Hashem gives us the precious mitzvah of the four species, a unique opportunity for closeness and connection, It is specifically with this mitzvah at this time of year that Hashem instructs us on how to approach mitzvos. We must see them as expressions of G-d's love, accept them, cherish them, and elevate our lives now and forever.

\* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

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### **Sukkot Message**

by Rabbi Moshe Rube\*

[Rabbi Rube's Dvar Torah did not arrive before the deadline to send out my mailing. Watch for his Dvar next issue.]

\* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL

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### **Rav Kook Torah Sukkot: All of Israel in One Sukkah**

The Talmud in Sukkah 27b makes a remarkable claim regarding the holiday of Succoth:

*"For seven days ... all who belong to the people of Israel will live in sukkot [thatched huts]" (Lev.*

23:42). *This teaches that it is fitting for all of Israel to sit in one sukkah.*"

Obviously, no sukkah is large enough to hold the entire Jewish people. What is the meaning of this utopian vision — all of Israel sitting together in a single sukkah?

### **The Unity of Succoth**

As long as we are plagued by pettiness and other character flaws, we cannot attain true collective unity. But after experiencing the unique holiness of Yom Kippur, this unfortunate state is repaired. After our lives have been illuminated by the light of teshuvah and the entire Jewish nation has been purified from the negative influences of sin and moral weakness, the soul's inner purity becomes our predominant quality. With this regained integrity, we merit an ever-increasing harmony among the diverse sectors of the nation.

During the holiday of Succoth we absorb the light of Torah and a love for truth. Conflicting views become integrated and unified. Through the spiritual ascent of the Days of Awe, we attain a comprehensive unity, a unity that extends its holy light over all parts of the Jewish people. During this special time, it is as if the entire nation is sitting together, sharing the holy experience of the same sukkah.

According to the Hasidic master Rabbi Nathan (1780-1844, chief disciple and scribe of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov), this sense of unity is the very essence of the mitzvah of sukkah. He wrote in Likutei Halachot that one should fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah with the following kavanah:

*"One should concentrate on being part of the entire people of Israel, with intense love and peace, until it may be considered as if all of Israel dwells together in one sukkah."*

(Silver from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah p. 96.)

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## **The Festival of Insecurity – A message for Sukkot © 2013**

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Former UK Chief Rabbi,\*

What exactly is a sukkah? What is it supposed to represent?

The question is essential to the mitzvah itself. The Torah says: "Live in sukkot for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in sukkot so that your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in sukkot when I brought them out of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 23: 42-43). In other words, knowing – reflecting, understanding, being aware – is an integral part of the mitzvah. For that reason, says Rabbah in the Talmud (Sukkah 2a), a sukkah that is taller than twenty cubits (about thirty feet or nine metres high) is invalid because when the sechach, the "roof," is that far above your head, you are unaware of it. So what is a sukkah?

On this, two Mishnaic sages disagreed. Rabbi Eliezer held that the sukkah represents the clouds of glory that surrounded the Israelites during the wilderness years, protecting them from heat during the day, cold during the night, and bathing them with the radiance of the Divine presence. This view is reflected in a number of the Targumim. Rashi in his commentary takes it as the "plain sense" of the verse.

Rabbi Akiva on the other hand says sukkot mammash, meaning a sukkah is a sukkah, no more and no less: a hut, a booth, a temporary dwelling. It has no symbolism. It is what it is (Sukkah 11b).

If we follow Rabbi Eliezer then it is obvious why we celebrate by making a sukkah. It is there to remind us of a miracle. All

three pilgrimage festivals are about miracles. Pesach is about the miracle of the exodus when God brought us out of Egypt with signs and wonders. Shavuot is, according to the oral Torah, about the miracle of the revelation at Mount Sinai when, for the only time in history, God appeared to an entire nation. Sukkot is about God's tender care of his people, mitigating the hardships of the journey across the desert by surrounding them with His protective cloud as a parent wraps a young child in a blanket. Long afterward, the sight of the blanket evokes memories of the warmth of parental love.

Rabbi Akiva's view, though, is deeply problematic. If a sukkah is merely a hut, what was the miracle? There is nothing unusual about living in a hut if you are living a nomadic existence in the desert. It's what the Bedouin did until recently. Some still do. Why should there be a festival dedicated to something ordinary, commonplace and non-miraculous?

Rashbam (Rashi's grandson) says the sukkah was there to remind the Israelites of their past so that, at the very moment they were feeling the greatest satisfaction at living in Israel – at the time of the ingathering of the produce of the land – they should remember their lowly origins. They were once a group of refugees without a home, living in a favela or a shanty town, never knowing when they would have to move on. Sukkot, says Rashbam, is integrally connected to the warning Moses gave the Israelites at the end of his life about the danger of security and affluence:

Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God ... Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery ... You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." (Deut. 8: 11-17)

The festival of Sukkot, according to Rashbam, exists to remind us of our humble origins so that we never fall into the complacency of taking freedom, the land of Israel and the blessings it yields, for granted, thinking that it happened in the normal course of history.

However there is another way of understanding Rabbi Akiva, and it lies in one of the most important lines in the prophetic literature. Jeremiah says, in words we recited on Rosh Hashanah, "I remember the loving-kindness of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown" (Jer. 2:2). This is one of the very rare lines in Tanach that speaks in praise not of God but of the people Israel.

"How odd of God / to choose the Jews," goes the famous rhyme, to which the answer is: "Not quite so odd: the Jews chose God." They may have been, at times, fractious, rebellious, ungrateful and wayward. But they had the courage to travel, to move, to leave security behind, and follow God's call, as did Abraham and Sarah at the dawn of our history. If the sukkah represents God's clouds of glory, where was "the loving-kindness of your youth"? There is no sacrifice involved if God is visibly protecting you in every way and at all times. But if we follow Rabbi Akiva and see the sukkah as what it is, the temporary home of a temporarily homeless people, then it makes sense to say that Israel showed the courage of a bride willing to follow her husband on a risk-laden journey to a place she has never seen before – a love that shows itself in the fact that she is willing to live in a hut trusting her husband's promise that one day they will have a permanent home.

If so, then a wonderful symmetry discloses itself in the three pilgrimage festivals. Pesach represents the love of God for His people. Sukkot represents the love of the people for God. Shavuot represents the mutuality of love expressed in the covenant at Sinai in which God pledged Himself to the people, and the people to God. (For a similar conclusion, reached by a slightly different route, see R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, *Meshekh Chokhmah* to Deut. 5: 15. I am grateful to David Frei of the London Beth Din for this reference.)

Sukkot, on this reading, becomes a metaphor for the Jewish condition not only during the forty years in the desert but also the almost 2,000 years spent in exile and dispersion. For centuries Jews lived, not knowing whether the place in which

they lived would prove to be a mere temporary dwelling. To take just one period as an example: Jews were expelled from England in 1290, and during the next two centuries from almost every country in Europe, culminating in the Spanish Expulsion in 1492, and the Portuguese in 1497. They lived in a state of permanent insecurity. Sukkot is the festival of insecurity.

What is truly remarkable is that it is called, by tradition, *zeman simchatenu*, “our time of joy.” That to me is the wonder at the heart of the Jewish experience: that Jews throughout the ages were able to experience risk and uncertainty at every level of their existence and yet – while they sat *betzila de-mehemnuta*, “under the shadow of faith” (this is the Zohar’s description of the sukkah: Zohar, Emor, 103a) – they were able to rejoice. That is spiritual courage of a high order. I have often argued that faith is not certainty: faith is the courage to live with uncertainty. That is what Sukkot represents if what we celebrate is *sukkot mammash*, not the clouds of glory but the vulnerability of actual huts, open to the wind, the rain and the cold.

I find that faith today in the people and the State of Israel. It is astonishing to me how Israelis have been able to live with an almost constant threat of war and terror since the State was born, and not give way to fear. I sense even in the most secular Israelis a profound faith, not perhaps “religious” in the conventional sense, but faith nonetheless: in life, and the future, and hope. Israelis seem to me perfectly to exemplify what tradition says was God’s reply to Moses when he doubted the people’s capacity to believe: “They are believers, the children of believers” (Shabbat 97a). Today’s Israel is a living embodiment of what it is to exist in a state of insecurity and still rejoice.

And that is Sukkot’s message to the world. Sukkot is the only festival about which Tanach says that it will one day be celebrated by the whole world (Zechariah 14: 16-19). The twenty-first century is teaching us what this might mean. For most of history, most people have experienced a universe that did not change fundamentally in their lifetimes. But there have been rare great ages of transition: the birth of agriculture, the first cities, the dawn of civilisation, the invention of printing, and the industrial revolution. These were destabilising times, and they brought disruption in their wake. The age of transition we have experienced in our lifetime, born primarily out of the invention of the computer and instantaneous global communication, will one day be seen as the greatest and most rapid era of change since *Homo sapiens* first set foot on earth.

Since 9/11 2001, we have experienced the convulsions. As I write these words, some nations are tearing themselves apart, and no nation is free of the threat of terror. There are parts of the Middle East and beyond that recall Hobbes’ famous description of the “state of nature,” a “war of every man against every man” in which there is “continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, chapter X111). Insecurity begets fear, fear begets hate, hate begets violence, and violence eventually turns against its perpetrators.

The twenty-first century will one day be seen by historians as the Age of Insecurity. We, as Jews, are the world’s experts in insecurity, having lived with it for millennia. And the supreme response to insecurity is Sukkot, when we leave behind the safety of our houses and sit in *sukkot mammash*, in huts exposed to the elements. To be able to do so and still say, this is *zeman simchatenu*, our festival of joy, is the supreme achievement of faith, the ultimate antidote to fear.

Faith is the ability to rejoice in the midst of instability and change, travelling through the wilderness of time toward an unknown destination. Faith is not fear. Faith is not hate. Faith is not violence. These are vital truths, never more needed than now.

\* <https://rabbisacks.org/festival-insecurity-message-sukkot/> Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

## The Four Mysteries of King Solomon

By Yanki Tauber\*

*Three things are wondrous to me, and four I do not know.*<sup>1</sup>

*Despite all the wisdom granted to [King] Solomon . . . he was mystified by the Four Kinds. As it is written: “Three things are wondrous to me”—these are the Passover offering, matzah and maror [eaten at the Passover seder]; “and four I do not know”—these are the Four Kinds [taken on Sukkot].*<sup>2</sup>

On Sukkot, the Torah commands us to take the “Four Kinds”—the etrog (citron), lulav (an unopened frond of a date palm), hadas (myrtle twig) and aravah (willow twig).

As is often the case with the Torah’s commandments, the “Written Torah” (the Pentateuch or “Five Books of Moses”) conveys this mitzvah in a few cryptic words, leaving it to the “Oral Torah” (the traditional interpretation of the Written Torah taught by Moses and handed down through the generations) to decipher their meaning. In the Written Torah, the verse regarding the Four Kinds reads:

*And you shall take for yourselves . . . the splendid fruit of a tree, fronds of dates, the branch of the thick-leaved tree and aravot of the river . . .*<sup>3</sup>

King Solomon, the Midrash tells us, was mystified by this verse. “Who says that ‘the splendid fruit of a tree’ is the etrog?” he queried. “All fruit trees produce splendid fruit! [As for] ‘fronds of dates,’ the Torah tells us to take fronds, in the plural . . . yet we take a lulav, the unopened heart of the palm. And who says that ‘the branch of the thick-leaved tree’ is the myrtle? . . . And concerning the ‘aravot of the river’—all trees tend to grow near water.”

How, indeed, do we know that “the splendid fruit of a tree, fronds of dates, the branch of the thick-leaved tree and aravot of the river” are the etrog, lulav, myrtle and willow? The Talmud, which summarizes forty generations of the oral tradition of Torah interpretation, identifies the Four Kinds through a series of homiletic exegeses of the Hebrew words employed by the verse. The clue to the identity of “the splendid fruit of a tree” lies in the word *hadar* (“splendid”), which can also be read as *ha-dar*—“that which dwells.” The etrog is unique in that, while other fruits each have a particular season in which they grow, the etrog “dwells in its tree all year round,” continuing to grow and develop under a variety of climatic conditions.<sup>4</sup>

As for the lulav, the Torah indeed writes, “fronds of dates,” but the word *kapot* (“fronds of”) is spelled without the letter *vav*, meaning that it can also be read *kapat*, “the frond of,” in the singular. In addition, the word *kapot* also means “bound,” implying that we are to take a closed frond (“the heart of the palm”). By these means, the Oral Torah identifies the second of the Four Kinds as the lulav.<sup>5</sup>

There are many “thick-leaved trees” in whose branches “the leaves completely cover the stem”; but the Hebrew word *avot* (“thick”) also means “plaited” and “rope-like.” Hence the “branch of the thick-leaved tree” (*anaf eitz avot*) is identified as the myrtle twig, whose overlapping leaves grow in knots of three, giving it the appearance of a plaited rope. There is another plant that meets this description—the *hirduf* (oleander, *Nerium oleander*)—but the Talmud rejects that possibility as inconsistent with the rule the “[the Torah’s] ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its pathways are peace” (since the *hirduf* has thorn-like leaves and is a poisonous plant).<sup>6</sup>

The aravot of the verse are identified as willow branches, because of the willow’s tendency to grow near water, and the elongated shape of its leaves (like a river).<sup>7</sup> Another identifying mark of the aravah is that willow bushes tend to grow in close-knit groups (aravah is related to the word *achavah*, “brotherhood”).

So what was it about the identity of the Four Kinds that so mystified King Solomon? Surely “the wisest of men” was as proficient in the ways of Torah exegesis as the Talmudic sages whose analysis is summarized above. In any case, there are many cryptic passages in the Torah where laws are derived from double meanings and variant spellings of its words. Solomon’s dramatic declaration regarding the etrog, lulav, myrtle and willow—“[Three are wondrous to me] and four I do not know”—must bode a deeper meaning, a meaning that relates to the inner significance of the Four Kinds taken on Sukkot.

### **Four Species of Man**

The Four Kinds, says the Midrash, represent four types of people.

Man’s mission in life consists of two basic challenges, learning and doing; or, as these relate to Jewish life, Torah and mitzvot. The Torah is the vehicle by which we gain knowledge of our Creator and insight into the essence of life; the mitzvot, the divine commandments, are the means by which we build a better and holier world, developing the physical creation into a “dwelling for G d.” These two endeavors define the four personalities represented in the Four Kinds.

The etrog, which has both a delicious taste and a delightful aroma, represents the perfect individual who both learns and achieves. The lulav, being the branch of the date palm, produces fruit that has a taste but no aroma; this is the prototype of the reclusive scholar who grows in wisdom but shuns the world of action. The fragrant but tasteless myrtle is the activist whose profusion of good deeds consumes all his time and energies. Finally, the tasteless, scentless willow represents the person who neither learns nor does, actualizing neither his intellectual potential nor his capacity to improve the world.

On Sukkot, concludes the Midrash, these “Four Kinds” are “all bound together in one bundle,” each an integral part of the community of G d.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Tormented Fruit**

In light of this, we can understand the four things that mystified the wisest of men.

If the “splendid fruit” in the Four Kinds represents the harmony of learning and accomplishment, why is this the fruit that “dwells in its tree all year round”? One would expect such perfection from a fruit maturing in tranquility, in a climate that is singularly attuned to its nature and needs—not from one whose development is agitated by ever-shifting conditions. And yet, time and again we indeed find that the greatest lives are those beset by travail and challenge; that the most balanced personalities are forged by the need to deal with changing circumstances and to constantly adapt to new climates and environments.

This, to King Solomon, was one of the great mysteries of life. How does vacillation fuel growth? Why is it that the individual who enjoys a tranquil existence is never as “fragrant” and “delectable” as the one who is battered by the vicissitudes of life?

### **Pressed Leaves**

The lulav, too, perplexed the great mind of Solomon. Is not the very nature of intellectual discourse that it produces varied opinions and conclusions? In the words of the Talmud, “Torah scholars sit in numerous groups and study the Torah. One group deems a thing impure, and another deems it pure; one group forbids a deed, and another permits it; one group disqualifies something, and another renders it fit.”<sup>9</sup>

So when the verse speaks of “fronds of dates,” we are inclined to understand these words in their literal, plural sense. For if the second of the Four Kinds connotes the Torah scholar—the human mind enfranchised to assimilate the divine

wisdom—should it not consist of two palm branches, in keeping with the plural nature of the intellect? Should not their leaves be opened and spread, pointing to the various directions that the rational examination of a concept will take when embarked on by the mind of man?

And yet, the lulav commanded by the Torah is a single, closed frond, its leaves fused to a single rod pointing in a single direction. As the above-quoted Talmudic passage concludes: “Should a person then ask: How, then, might I study Torah? But all was received from a single Shepherd.”

This was the second of the two mysteries pondered by King Solomon. How do the flock of opinions and perspectives of Torah relate to their “single Shepherd”? How can the divine wisdom be funneled through the multifarious world of human reason and remain the singular truth of a singular G d?

### **The Plaited Twig**

The myrtle in the Four Kinds represents the “deed” aspect of life—the manner in which we fulfill the purpose of creation with the physical actions of the mitzvot, thereby constructing a “dwelling for G d in the physical world.” Thus, the Torah identifies the myrtle by alluding to its “plaited” appearance, given it by the way that its leaves grow in clumps of three: the number “three” represents the realm of action, which is the third of the soul’s three “garments” or vehicles of expression (thought, speech and deed).

Here lies what is perhaps the most profound mystery of all. How can the finite and mundane physical deed “house” the divine essence? Indeed, the plaited twig that comes to mind when thinking of the physical world is not the fragrant myrtle, but the barbed and poisonous hirduf!

Yet it is the material world where G d elected to make His home. It is the physical deed to which He imparted the ability to serve as man’s highest form of communion with Him. Why? To the wisest of men, this was one of the four phenomena to which he could only say: “I do not know it.”

### **A Brotherhood of Trees**

The fourth of Solomon’s mysteries concerns the willow, a plant with neither fragrance nor taste, devoid of learning as well as deeds.

Why is this species counted among the Four Kinds? The verse itself answers that question by referring to the fourth kind as “aravot of the river.” The willow might not exhibit any positive qualities, but its roots are embedded in the banks of its ancestral river and nourished by the waters of its heritage. It, too, is a child of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; in its veins, too, course the love and awe of G d that they bequeathed to all their descendants.

Another hallmark of the willow is that “it grows in brotherhood.” This alludes to a unique feature of the human “willow.” Taken alone, he might exhibit not a single positive trait or achievement; but when gathered in a community, the aura of holiness that suffuses each individual soul suddenly comes to light. Thus our sages tell us that the divine presence rests upon a gathering of ten individuals (the number that comprises a “community”) even if they are not engaged in the study of Torah or the performance of a mitzvah. This is also the significance of the minyan (the quorum of ten required to recite certain prayers): ten individuals gathered together represent a quantum leap in holiness. Ten ignorant boors make a minyan, while nine pious scholars do not.

This is what mystified King Solomon about the willow. How does ten times nothing add up to something? If each on his own possesses no visible expression of his innate holiness, how does that change when ten of them come together? All trees grow on water, mused the wisest of men; what sets the willows apart, earning them a place among the Four Kinds?

Simply the fact that they grow close together?

### **Impossible Truths**

If we think of these mysteries, they are as enigmatic and elusive as when King Solomon pondered them thirty centuries ago. But we usually don't think of them at all, so deeply are they ingrained in our reality. Despite their logical incomprehensibility, these are obvious and ever-present truths in our lives.

Why do vacillation and hardship fuel growth? How can contradictory ideas embody a singular truth? Why does a simple physical deed elevate us to levels of holiness and G dliness unequalled by the most transcendent spiritual experience? How are a number of ordinary human beings magically transformed when knit into a community, greatly surpassing the sum of their individual parts?

King Solomon couldn't explain these mysteries; certainly, we cannot. But we recognize these as axiomatic to our lives, as four cornerstones to our existence that bear the stamp of a Creator within whose infinite being opposites merge and paradoxical truths harmoniously reside.<sup>10</sup>

### **FOOTNOTES:**

1. Proverbs 30:18.
2. Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra 30:14.
3. Leviticus 23:40.
4. Talmud, Sukkah 35a.
5. Ibid. 32a.
6. Ibid. 32b.
7. Ibid. 33b.
8. Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra 30:11.
9. Talmud, Chagigah 3b.
10. Based on an entry in the Rebbe's journal dated Sukkot 5702 (1941); Reshimot #62, pp. 16–20.

\* Based on the talks and writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson; rendered by Yanki Tauber.. © Chabad 2020.

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## **Your Sukkah Your Home**

by Rabbi Moshe Wisenfsky\*

The requirement to "live" in sukot obligates us to "move into" it and performing as many of our day-to-day activities in it as possible. Thus, unlike other commandments, which involve only a particular limb of the body, the sukah involves the whole person. During Sukot, even mundane, weekday eating becomes a fulfillment of a commandment when performed in the sukah.



Furthermore, a home is a basic human need, secondary only to food and clothing. Besides fulfilling the need for shelter, a home is a tangible expression of our mastery over the physical world; as such, it is a vital component of the fulfillment of our Divine mission -- to make this world into G-d's home. Moreover, inasmuch as each of us is required to reveal Divinity in the world in a unique manner, as an expression of our unique Divine souls, a private home is an expression of the personal component of our Divine mission and an essential vehicle for our self-expression. Inasmuch as fulfilling this Divine imperative lies at the bedrock of our psychological makeup, the lack of a place to call home leaves us disoriented and unfocused. The sense of completeness we draw from our home is felt not only when we are in it, but even when we are outside it.

So when, during Sukot, the sukah becomes our home, our domiciliary self-completeness is invested with the holiness of the commandment of living in the sukah. This experience of living inside a Divine commandment and drawing our sense of self-completeness from it enables us to live the rest of the year "surrounded by G-d's commandments," i.e., sanctifying our entire lives, including their most mundane aspects.

Yet, paradoxically, while the sukah is given an element of permanence, it must be a temporary hut: its roof must be makeshift, and it cannot be taller than 20 cubits (9.6 m or 31.5 ft). This paradox conveys an important message: The experience of living in a temporary hut for seven days reminds us that life itself is ephemeral. The seven days of Sukot correspond to the basic human lifespan, described in the Psalms as consisting of 70 years. By recognizing life's inherent transience, we protect ourselves from losing our perspective in the illusion of permanence. We can then imbue the world with true permanence and meaning by transforming it into G-d's dwelling.

-- From: The Kehot Chumash .

May we all be blessed with a sweet new year.

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
Kehot Publication Society

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# Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah  
via the Internet

Chag Sameach

By Dr. Israel & Rebecca Rivkin, Edison, NJ,  
in memory of Israel's father, William Rivkin, a"h,  
(Refael Zeav ben Yisrael)  
whose yearzeit was on Yom Kippur

Volume 26

Succot Issue

5781 B"H

## Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

### The Festival of Insecurity

What exactly is a sukkah? What is it supposed to represent? The question is essential to the mitzvah itself. The Torah says: "Live in sukkot for seven days... so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in sukkot when I brought them out of Egypt" (Lev. 23: 42-43). In other words, knowing – reflecting, understanding, being aware – is an integral part of the mitzvah. For that reason, says Rabbah in the Talmud (Sukkah 2a), a sukkah that is taller than twenty cubits (about 30 feet) is invalid because when the sechach, the "roof," is that far above your head, you are unaware of it. So what is a sukkah?

On this, two Mishnaic sages disagreed. Rabbi Eliezer held that the sukkah represents the clouds of glory that surrounded the Israelites during the wilderness years, protecting them from heat during the day, cold during the night, and bathing them with the radiance of the Divine presence. Rashi in his commentary takes it as the literal sense of the verse.

On the other hand, Rabbi Akiva says sukkot mammash, meaning a sukkah is a sukkah, no more and no less: a hut, a booth, a temporary dwelling. It has no symbolism. It is what it is (Sukkah 11b).

If we follow Rabbi Eliezer then it is obvious why we celebrate by making a sukkah. It is there to remind us of a miracle. All three pilgrimage festivals are about miracles. Pesach is about the miracle of the Exodus when God brought us out of Egypt with signs and wonders. Shavuot is, according to the oral Torah, about the miracle of the revelation at Mount Sinai when, for the only time in history, God appeared to an entire nation. Sukkot is about God's tender care of his people, mitigating the hardships of the journey across the desert by surrounding them with His protective cloud as a parent wraps a young child in a blanket. Long afterward, the sight of the blanket evokes memories of the warmth of parental love.

Rabbi Akiva's view, though, is deeply problematic. If a sukkah is merely a hut, what was the miracle? There is nothing unusual about living in a hut if you are living a nomadic existence in the desert. It's what the Bedouin did until recently. Some still do. Why should there be a festival dedicated to something ordinary, commonplace and non-miraculous?

Rashbam says the sukkah was there to remind the Israelites of their past so that, at the very moment they were feeling the greatest satisfaction at living in Israel – at the time of the ingathering of the produce of the Land – they should remember their lowly origins. They were once a group of refugees without a home, never knowing when they would have to move on.

Sukkot, according to Rashbam, exists to remind us of our humble origins so that we never fall into the complacency of taking freedom, the Land of Israel and the blessings it yields, for granted, thinking that it happened in the normal course of history.

However, there is another way of understanding Rabbi Akiva, and it lies in one of the most important lines in the prophetic literature. Jeremiah says, in words we recited on Rosh Hashanah, "I remember the loving-kindness of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown" (Jeremiah. 2:2). This is one of the very rare lines in Tanach that speaks in praise not of God but of the people Israel.

"How odd of God / to choose the Jews," goes the famous rhyme, to which the answer is: "Not quite so odd: the Jews chose God." They may have been, at times, fractious, rebellious, ungrateful and wayward. But they had the courage to travel, to move, to leave security behind, and follow God's call, as did Abraham and Sarah at the dawn of our history.

If the sukkah represents God's clouds of glory, where was "the loving-kindness of your youth"? There is no sacrifice involved if God is visibly protecting you in every way and at all times. But if we follow Rabbi Akiva and see the sukkah as what it is, the temporary home of a temporarily homeless people, then it makes sense to say that Israel showed the courage of a bride willing to follow her husband on a risk-laden journey to a place she has never seen before – a love that shows itself in the fact that she is willing to live in a hut trusting her husband's promise that one day they will have a permanent home.

If so, then a wonderful symmetry discloses itself in the three pilgrimage festivals. Pesach represents the love of God for His people. Sukkot represents the love of the people for God. Shavuot represents the mutuality of love expressed in the covenant at Sinai in which

God pledged Himself to the people, and the people to God.\*

Sukkot, on this reading, becomes a metaphor for the Jewish condition not only during the forty years in the desert but also the almost 2,000 years spent in exile and dispersion. For centuries Jews lived, not knowing whether the place in which they lived would prove to be a mere temporary dwelling. Sukkot is the festival of insecurity.

What is truly remarkable is that it is called, by tradition, zeman simchatenu, "our time of joy." That to me is the wonder at the heart of the Jewish experience: that Jews throughout the ages were able to experience risk and uncertainty at every level of their existence and yet – while they sat betzila de-mehemnuta, "under the shadow of faith" (Zohar, Emor, 103a) – they were able to rejoice. That is spiritual courage of a high order. I have often argued that faith is not certainty: faith is the courage to live with uncertainty. That is what Sukkot represents if what we celebrate is sukkot mammash, not the clouds of glory but the vulnerability of actual huts, open to the wind, the rain and the cold.

I find that faith today in the people and the State of Israel. It is astonishing to me how Israelis have been able to live with an almost constant threat of war and terror since the State was born, and not give way to fear. I sense even in the most secular Israelis a profound faith, not perhaps "religious" in the conventional sense, but faith nonetheless: in life, and the future, and hope. Israelis seem to me perfectly to exemplify what tradition says was God's reply to Moses when he doubted the people's capacity to believe: "They are believers, the children of believers" (Shabbat 97a). Today's Israel is a living embodiment of what it is to exist in a state of insecurity and still rejoice.

And that is Sukkot's message to the world. Sukkot is the only festival about which Tanach says that it will one day be celebrated by the whole world (Zechariah 14: 16-19). The twenty-first century is teaching us what this might mean. For most of history, most people have experienced a universe that did not change fundamentally in their lifetimes. But there have been rare great ages of transition:

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the birth of agriculture, the first cities, the dawn of civilisation, the invention of printing, and the industrial revolution. These were destabilising times, and they brought disruption in their wake. The age of transition we have experienced in our lifetime, born primarily out of the invention of the computer and instantaneous global communication, will one day be seen as the greatest and most rapid era of change since Homo sapiens first set foot on earth.

Since September 11, 2001, we have experienced the convulsions. As I write these words, some nations continue to tear themselves apart, and no nation is free of the threat of terror. Antisemitism has returned, not just to Europe, but around the world. There are parts of the Middle East and beyond that recall Hobbes' famous description of the "state of nature," a "war of every man against every man" in which there is "continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, chapter XIII). Insecurity begets fear, fear begets hate, hate begets violence, and violence eventually turns against its perpetrators.

The twenty-first century will one day be seen by historians as the Age of Insecurity. We, as Jews, are the world's experts in insecurity, having lived with it for millennia. And the supreme response to insecurity is Sukkot, when we leave behind the safety of our houses and sit in sukkot mammash, in huts exposed to the elements. To be able to do so and still say, this is zeman simchatenu, our festival of joy, is the supreme achievement of faith, the ultimate antidote to fear.

Faith is the ability to rejoice in the midst of instability and change, travelling through the wilderness of time toward an unknown destination. Faith is not fear. Faith is not hate. Faith is not violence. These are vital truths, never more needed than now.

\* For a similar conclusion, reached by a slightly different route, see R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, *Meshekh Chokhmah* to Deut. 5: 15. I am grateful to David Frei of the London Beth Din for this reference.

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### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

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One of the most picturesque and creative festivals of the year is the Festival of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) – when the entire family is involved in building and decorating a special "nature home" which will be lived in for an entire week. But what are we actually celebrating and what is the true meaning of the symbol of the sukkah? Is it the sukkah of our desert wanderings, the temporary hut which the Israelites constructed in the desert when they wandered from place to place? If so, then the sukkah becomes a reminder of all of the exiles of Israel throughout our 4,000-year history, and our thanksgiving to God is for the fact that we have survived despite the difficult

climates – the persecution and pogroms – which threaten to overwhelm us.

Or is the sukkah meant to be reminiscent of the Divine "clouds of glory" which encompassed us in the desert with God's rays of splendor, the sanctuary which served as the forerunner of our Holy Temple in Jerusalem? In the Grace after Meals during the Sukkot festival we pray that "the Merciful One restore for us the fallen tabernacle of David," which would certainly imply that the sukkah symbolizes the Holy Temple. The Talmud (B.T. Succot 11) brings a difference of opinion between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer as to which of these options is the true significance of our celebration. I would like to attempt to analyze which I believe to be the true meaning and why.

The major biblical description of the festivals is found in Chapter 23 of the Book of Leviticus. There are two textual curiosities which need to be examined. The three festivals which were always considered to be our national festivals, and which also biblically appear as the "desert" festivals, are Pessah, Shavuot and Sukkot – commemorating when we left Egypt, when we received the Torah at Sinai and when we lived in desert booths. Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are more universal in nature and not at all related to the desert sojourn. It seems strange that in the biblical exposition of the Hebrew calendar Pessah and Shavuot are explained, after which comes Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and only at the conclusion of the description comes Sukkot.

Now, of course one can argue that this is the way the months fall out on the calendar year! However, that too is strange. After all, the Israelites left Egypt for the desert; presumably they built their booths immediately after the Festival of Pessah. Would it not have been more logical for the order to be Pessah, Sukkot, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?

Secondly, the Festival of Sukkot is broken up into two parts. Initially, the Torah tells us: "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying: on the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Festival of Sukkot, seven days for God these are the Festivals of the Lord which you shall call holy convocations" (Leviticus 23:33-38). It would seem that these last words conclude the biblical description of the festivals and the Hebrew calendar. But then, in the very next verse, the Torah comes back again to Sukkot, as if for the first time: "but on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the crop of the land, you shall celebrate God's festival for a seven day period... You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree (myrtle) and willows of brooks; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven-day period... You shall dwell in booths for a seven-day period... so that your generations will know that I caused

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the people of Israel to dwell in booths when I took them from the Land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (ibid. Leviticus 23:39-44). Why the repetition? And if the Bible now wishes to tell us about the four species which we are to wave in all directions in thanksgiving to God for his agricultural bounty, why was this verse not linked to the previous discussion of the Sukkot booths? And why repeat the booths again this second time?

I have heard it said in the name of the Vilna Gaon that this repetition of Sukkot with the commandment concerning the Four Species is introducing an entirely new aspect of the Sukkot festival: the celebration of our entering into the Land of Israel. Indeed, the great philosopher-legalist Maimonides explains the great joy of the festival of Sukkot as expressing the transition of the Israelites from the arid desert to a place of trees and rivers, fruits and vegetables, as symbolized by the Four Species (Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 Chapter 43). In fact, this second Sukkot segment opens with the words, "But on the fifteenth day of the seventh month when you gather the crop of the land (of Israel), you shall celebrate this festival to the Lord."

Hence, there are two identities to the festival of Sukkot. On the one hand, it is a desert festival, alongside Pessah and Shavuot, which celebrates our desert wanderings and survivals while living in flimsy booths. From that perspective, perhaps it ought to have found its place immediately after Pessah in terms of the calendar and certainly before the description of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in the biblical text. However, the second identity of Sukkot, the Four Species, which represent our conquest and inhabitation of our homeland and signal the beginning of redemption, belongs after Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur – the festivals of God's kingship over the world and his Divine Temple, which is to be "a house of prayer for all the nations." This aspect of Sukkot turns the sukkah into rays of Divine splendor and an expression of the Holy Temple.

So which Sukkot do we celebrate? Both at the very same time! But when we sit in the sukkah, are we sitting in transitory booths representative of our wandering or rather in a Divine sanctuary protected by rays of God's glory? I think it depends on whether we are celebrating the festival in the Diaspora or in the Land of Israel.

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**Rabbi Michael Rosensweig**

#### **Yeshivah be-Sukkah: An Immersive and Comprehensive Religious Experience**

The special relationship between Chag ha-Matzot and Chag ha-Sukkot – each a seven day holiday including a chol ha-moed period – is both structurally obvious and halachically axiomatic. The Talmud (Sukkah 27a) invokes the common date – the fifteenth of Tishrei and of Nissan – as the source for the independent

obligation (in contrast to the implied prohibition to eat a more substantial, betzah sized, meal outside the Sukkah) to consume at least a kezayit in the sukkah on the first night of the chag, parallel to the mitzvah of ba-erev tochlul matzot on Pesach, though there is no scriptural hint of such a law. Some Rishonim contend that this equation to matzah even overrides the typical sukkah exemptions of mitzaer and possibly also rain (Tosafot, though Rashba and others dispute this)! Indeed, Rama (Orach Chaim 639:3) expands this link to matzah to exclude applying the principle of tosefet kedushah to the mitzvah of sukkah, as well as to demand that the sukkah meal conclude by midnight and that it be in take place in a state of hunger (be-taavah), paralleling matzah requirements. In recording these halachot, Rambam (Hilchot Sukkah 6:7) and Shulchan Aruch explicate the matzah parallel.

Yet, the substantive and structural affinity between these two mitzvot and festivals also magnifies subtle differences that imply that while they are indeed parallels, they are equally foils of one another. Rishonim (Ramban on Torah and Tur, beginning of Hilchot Sukkah and others) were troubled why Sukkot, explicitly tied to the exodus from Egypt (Vayikra 23:43), is only celebrated a half year later. Is it mere coincidence (beyond the suggested explanations for delaying Sukkot) that these two pivotal expressions of kedushat ha-zeman and avodat Hashem divide the year and are also maximally temporally distant from one another? Moreover, is it significant that Sukkot concludes after seven days with a quasi-independent Shmini Azeret, while Pesach terminates on the seventh day with a celebration of keriyat Yam Suf that mutes that theme and does not engender either its own birkat ha-zeman or even whole Hallel?

Let us focus on one curious phenomenon directly related to the fifteenth-fifteenth parallel. Halachists were preoccupied with the intriguing discrepancy highlighted by the Baal ha-Maor (end of Pesachim): why do we continue to recite birkat leishev ba-Sukkah beyond the first evening of Sukkot when only the first kezayit of matzah engenders a birkat ha-mitzvah? Baal ha-Maor's own resolution - that one can avoid matzah (and chametz) consumption during the rest of Pesach, but one inexorably requires a sukkah for sleep during this period, is somewhat enigmatic. Does necessity, including the inability to avoid prohibition, per se justify a berachah which is generally associated with the continued meaningful positive performance of the mitzvah? Does the inevitability to bypass the sukkah perhaps reflect a greater halachic ambition for this halachic institution? Some authorities neutralize Baal ha-Maor's difficulty by positing that matzah consumption beyond the obligatory minimum is merely a neutral reshut, while presence in the sukkah always constitutes a kiyum ha-mitzvah, deserving of a berachah. This perspective still does not

explain why the halachic system treated these parallels so differently. Moreover, it is noteworthy that some authorities (Tosafot collections on the Torah, Chizkuni, Gera etc.) conclude that the consumption of matzah shemurah beyond the obligatory quantity and throughout the entire Chag ha-Matzot does constitute a kiyum ha-mitzvah, sharpening the discrepancy regarding the berachah requirement.

We may briefly suggest two overlapping approaches to explain this discrepancy (that may in turn also illuminate other distinctions, as well.)

A survey of the pesukim in Parshat Pinchas delineating the mussafim of the respective holidays demonstrates that while the same mussaf configuration was offered throughout Pesach, different configurations were offered every day of Sukkot. The gemara in Arachin (10a-b) suggests that this discrepancy explains why whole Hallel is recited every day of Sukkot, while it is restricted to the first day of Pesach. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Sukkah 5:1) alternatively attributes this phenomenon to the fact that the mitzvah of lulav was obligatory every day in the Mikdash. Both approaches signify that while the kedushat ha-yom of Pesach is defined by the first day, sukkot's sanctity is expressed independently every day. Indeed, a close examination of the Torah's presentation of these apparently parallel chagim - in Emor, Pinchas, and Reeh demonstrates that Pesach celebrates the fifteenth of Nissan, the actual anniversary of yeziat Mitzrayim, though the celebration continues for seven days, while Sukkot, which is at least half of year from the exodus, focuses on a diffused seven day celebration. [The Netziv in his commentary in the various locations also accentuates these subtleties and raises intriguing questions about the respective chol ha-moed status of each festival.] The discrepancy regarding the continued relevance of the berachah after the initial onset of the festival is consistent with the distinctive characters of these chaggim.

Moreover, it is possibly significant, notwithstanding the common "fifteenth" theme and other parallels, that matzah consumption and sukkah habitation represent contrasting types of mitzvot. Eating matzah constitutes a clearly defined and measured (kezayit, kederech etc.) mitzvah. Its symbolic significance is profound but self-evident. This contrasts sharply, and possibly constitutes an intentional foil to the broader, more amorphous, more expansive mitzvah of yeshivah be-Sukkah - "basukkot teishvu shivat yamim...ki be-sukkot hoshavti..." There is discussion about the core commemoration-celebration itself: sukkot mamash or ananei ha-kavod (or both)! Moreover, the core halachic parameters are disputed and debated, an unusual phenomenon for a biblical imperative. Rif, Rambam (Hilchot Sukkah 6:12, 5,6), Gera (O.H. 639:29), and other authorities actually

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require a berachah for any and every meaningful activity or time in the sukkah, accentuating the comprehensiveness of this mitzvah. Rambam even posits that the berachah should precede sitting in the sukkah, as that literal application of the mitzvah already triggers the need to recite a blessing. [See Maggid Mishneh's query why it would not be necessary to recite the berachah prior to even entering the sukkah!] However, even the Tosafists (Berachot 11b, ), Ra'avad (6:12), Shulchan Aruch 639:8) and other poskim who limit the berachah to halachically substantial meal consumption, acknowledge the broader goal and requirement of yeshivah be-Sukkah that is conveyed by the pesukim (above) and nusach ha-berachah - "leishev ba-sukkah". In their view, the focus on substantial meals comes under the rubric of ikkar poter ha-tafel (primary applications include or exempt secondary or peripheral manifestations in berachot). [See the debate between the Magen Avraham and Taz (Orach Chaim 639:8) Even the Taz, who places great emphasis on eating meals acknowledges that one engaged in a taanit would say leishev ba-Sukkah for other activities.] The Talmud's expansive catalogue of activities appropriately to be conducted in the sukkah (28b) are universally accepted.

R' Manoach (on Rambam 6:7) suggests that the broad formulation of "leishev ba-Sukkah", rather than achilah or sheinah (sleeping in the Sukkah) was designed to emphasize the comprehensiveness of this mitzvah. He further suggests that this breadth itself solves the Baal ha-Maor's puzzle regarding the difference between matzah and sukkah! Evidently, R' Manoach conceives the expansive, ambitious portfolio of yeshivah be-Sukkah as reflecting a perspective on the character of this mitzvah that precludes restricting its spiritual significance to the time of its initial and absolute obligation. [See also his remarks on 6:7 regarding the option of reciting a berachah on consumptions that do not absolutely require a sukkah.]

The parallel festivals of Pesach and Sukkot - each an expression of the exodus experience - also constitute two distinctive types of commemoration and expression of avodat Hashem. Pesach, the anniversary of yeziat Mizrayim, focuses in a very targeted way on the transformative event itself which effectively changed the historical trajectory and destiny of Klal Yisrael. Its matzah focus is clear and its impact requires a multi-day celebration of that charismatic moment. A birkat ha-mitzvah can only be recited at the critical moment itself. Sukkot, however, addresses the aftermath of the exodus, the cultivation of the enduring relationship between Knesset Yisrael and Hashem. It is the ultimate symbol and celebration not of a single event, but of the enduring relationship, national and personal dependence, and Divine providence - sukkot mamash, and ananei ha-kavod - that Klal Yisrael experienced. While the "fifteenth" theme instructs that intense

positive, proactive obligation should initiate the period of commemoration, it is consistent with the sukkot theme that the mitzvah be applied broadly in terms of embracing a range of activities, and that continued immersion in the sukkah environment and experience throughout the entire diffused commemorative period would also generate a birkat hamitzvah- "asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu leishev ba-Sukkah".

## OTS Dvar Torah

### The Sukkot of the Mind

by Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence

The Sukkah is about a change of outlook. A change of mind. R' Simcha Meir Dvinsk, the Meshech Chochma, explains that the mitzvot of Sukkot both embrace nature (and our natural desires) and constrain them.

The celebration of our harvest by rejoicing with the four species is natural. Though we should seek out mehudar (beautiful) specimens, they require no particular preparation. However, when a farmer has toiled in the fields throughout the summer, ploughed, sown, cultivated, reaped and bundled his produce; once he has filled his granary, he will feel joyous and accomplished. What could be sweeter or more natural than to rest in the shade of his home? The Meshech Chochma remarks that the Torah steps in and proclaims, "Go from your regular residence and dwell in a temporary one!"

Our natural proclivities are curbed. We are thrust into a festival, not a feast of ingathering, but a "Chag L'Hashem," a Festival to G-d. To express that gratitude, the Torah in Devarim (16:13) instructs us to put ourselves out and build sukkot. הָגַדְתָּ סֻכּוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ, "Build sukkot for yourself," is explained as a requirement of effort.

Jewish law requires the covering of the sukkah to be תְּעָשֶׂה וְלֹא מִן הַעֲשִׂי, built anew and not previously constructed. We must make a Sukkah, not just avail ourselves of something already on hand. But why?

The Talmud (Sukkah 11b) teaches תְּנִיחָא כִּי בְּסוּכּוֹת הוֹשְׁבֵי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲנִי כְבוֹד הָיוּ דְּבָרֵי ר' אליעזר ר' "ע אומר סוכות ממש עשו להם. According to Rabbi Eliezer, the Sukkah represents the Clouds of Glory which accompanied Israel, directing and protecting them through the forty years in the Wilderness. According to Rabbi Akiva, the sukkah represents real booths that G-d made for us.

Rabbi Akiva's approach melds with the Rashbam's explanation that we should not become too self-congratulatory at our harvest and the work of our own hands (see his commentary to Deuteronomy 8:17). In building our sukkot, we reinforce our gratitude for the shelters G-d gave us when we were vulnerable and on our way to the Land of Israel. Making a Sukkah is a re-enactment of

the Exodus experience when G-d sheltered us in the Wilderness.

By contrast, the Clouds of Glory are purely spiritual constructs. It is the dwelling in our sukkot, rather than the building of them, that carries the symbolism. The Vilna Gaon comments that G-d withdrew the Clouds of Glory from Israel after the Sin of the Golden Calf. He only returned them when the Children of Israel commenced the construction of the Tabernacle on the 15th of Tishrei, the first day of Sukkot (see his commentary to Shir Hashirim 1:4). In the Wilderness, our labour to build the Tabernacle as a spiritual vehicle to experience G-d's Divine presence coalesced with the return of the Clouds of Glory. Our own sukkot, as well, express a spiritual re-enactment of the return of the Clouds of Glory.

Carrying the Clouds of Glory allusion further, Reb Nosson of Breslov, the scribe of Rebbe Nachman, wrote in his Likutei Halachot that our intention while sitting in the sukkah should be that Israel is one people, for whom we feel only love and peace. We should imagine ourselves all together, sitting under the same sukkah.

This idea is grounded in a Talmudic discussion (Sukkah 27b) which conjectures, in conjunction with the deficient spelling סֻכָּה (missing a vav), that all Israel might be able to use the one sukkah.

Whereas the Torah requires us וְלִקְהָתָם לָכֶם, that we take our own Four Species (and at least need to own them while we are waving them), there is no requirement that we own our own sukkah. A borrowed sukkah is fine; there is no need for a financial stake in building or owning a sukkah (though a sukkah may not be stolen). All of Israel can share in the same sukkah.

This image that we should see the whole nation sharing a sukkah takes us from our fields, our harvests, and our personal booths back into the realm of the Clouds of Glory and the unity of a nation עַם אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד, one people with one heart, as we were at Sinai.

To the sukkot in our yards and gardens we welcome the familiar Ushpizin, our great patriarchs and leaders who visit us as we sit in the sukkah. But in the Rav Nosson sukkah of our minds, we must welcome all of Israel.

Building a physical Sukkah requires a modicum of effort. Making room for all Israel in this sukkah of our minds is much more demanding. If we can imagine a sukkah, of course we can imagine a large sukkah... a really large sukkah! But can we find it in our hearts to embrace each fellow Jew within it? Can we accept that they are not tenants of my sukkah and on my terms, but partners by virtue of being part of G-d's Holy Nation?

## Likutei Divrei Torah

Just as we need to take time to step out of our homes and into sukkot to properly appreciate G-d's protection of us and all of Israel, the festival affords us an opportunity to properly appreciate ourselves with all of Israel under G-d's protection.

וּפְרוּשׁ עֲלֵינוּ סוּכַת שְׁלֹמֹךְ

May Hashem indeed spread His Tabernacle of Peace over us and all of Israel.

### Why did Shemini Atzeret Become Simchat Torah? - Rabbanit Sally Mayer

The Torah describes Succot repeatedly as a seven-day holiday (Vayikra 23, Bemidbar 29, Devarim 16). Yet the pesukim add that the eighth day will be "atzeret," literally "stopping" or "gathering," to be celebrated as a festival. What is the nature of this eighth day? Why is Succot described as lasting seven days, if it seems to actually last eight? Why does Succot have an "extra" day, given that the parallel seven-day holiday of Pesach has no eighth? Indeed, Talmudic Sages (Amoraim) debate (Succah 47b) whether we say the bracha of shehecheyanu on Shemini Atzeret (as we do over lighting candles and kiddush of all festivals, except for the last day of Pesach). The Gemara concludes that we do say the blessing, because Shemini Atzeret is considered its own holiday in many different respects. This debate seems to be about the nature of Shemini Atzeret – is this holiday an addendum to Succot, making shehecheyanu unnecessary since no new chag is beginning, or does it have its own unique character, necessitating shehecheyanu? If it does have its own theme, what is that theme? And how did this enigmatic day become the joyous holiday of Simchat Torah, which is not Biblically mandated at all?

Three approaches toward the nature of Shemini Atzeret emerge from the Talmud and Midrashim. In Pesikta deRav Kahana (28), Rav Alexandri says that by using extra letters in the pesukim regarding the sacrifices of each day[1] of Succot, Hashem hints to Am Yisrael to pray for rain. After Succot passes and we still have not taken the hint, Hashem gives us a whole day just to pray for rain. The special prayer for rain, tefillat geshem, is in fact recited on Shemini Atzeret. According to this view, Shemini Atzeret amplifies a theme that is latent during Succot, and that theme moves to center stage on the eighth day.

The Gemara (Succah 55b) provides a second perspective, based on the striking difference between the sacrifices brought throughout Succot and those offered on Shemini Atzeret. On each day of Succot, we offer bulls on the mizbe'ach — thirteen on the first day, twelve on the second, eleven on the third, and so forth. But then the pattern breaks – we offer seven bulls on the seventh day of Succot, but just one bull on Shemini Atzeret. Why? Rabbi Elazar explains that the seventy bulls offered over Succot correspond to the seventy nations of the world, with one bull offered on behalf of

each nation; Shemini Atzeret's sacrifice of one bull, on the other hand, symbolizes Hashem's asking His beloved nation for just a small meal to enjoy. The midrash in Bemidbar Rabbah modifies this slightly: Hashem is like a king who invites all his subjects to a seven-day feast, and afterward says to his beloved, "Let us enjoy whatever you can find, a bit of meat, or fish, or vegetables." According to this idea, Succot is a universal holiday; indeed, Zechariah (14:16-19) prophesies that one day, all the nations will celebrate Succot. Shemini Atzeret, however, is only for the Jewish people, and it is a modest holiday just to celebrate Hashem's special relationship with His beloved people.

Rashi provides the third approach. In his commentary on the Torah (Vayikra 23:36, s.v. "atzeret hi"), he cites the following: "I have stopped you with Me, like a king who invited his sons to a meal for a certain number of days; when the time came to part, he asked his children, 'Please stay with me one more day; 'kashah alai preidatchem,' your departure is difficulty for me.'" According to this understanding, all of Succot is a holiday for Hashem to enjoy with His children, the Jewish people. At the end, however, he adds Shemini Atzeret because it is so difficult for Him to see us go. Shemini Atzeret is neither an opportunity to emphasize a concept that was hidden during Succot nor a holiday with its own theme – it is simply a moving expression of Hashem's desire that we stay with Him, that we delay our departure.

Let us now return to the question debated by the Amoraim: Should we recite the blessing of shehecheyanu on Shemini Atzeret or not? Perhaps the answer depends on how one views this holiday. If its main theme is to pray for rain, which we should have done on Succot, it is debatable whether it warrants its own shehecheyanu. One could argue that no new blessing is necessary, since rain is a theme that exists on Succot through the pouring of the water on the altar and the hints to pray for rain throughout those days; on the other hand, rain is emphasized more prominently on Shemini Atzeret. If, in line with our second approach, Shemini Atzeret is a "personal" holiday for the Jewish people after the universal holiday of Succot, one can well understand that it warrants its own shehecheyanu. If, however, as Rashi writes, Shemini Atzeret is an added day to Succot, just to stay a bit longer, it is hard to understand why that would be considered a new holiday – isn't it really exactly the same as the previous seven days? Staying one more day at the same house or on the same vacation wouldn't count in our minds as a new entity. According to this approach, why would there be a requirement to say shehecheyanu on Shemini Atzeret?

Perhaps the nature of Shemini Atzeret is exactly that – it celebrates our unique relationship with Hashem, that He loves us and does not want to see us go. It actually is a

separate day – a day that celebrates our close bond with Hashem as His chosen, beloved people. "Kasha alai preidatchem" highlights a different quality to our relationship with Hashem, one not emphasized previously, and therefore it does not simply add a day to Succot, but creates a unique day, one that deserves its own shehecheyanu.

Perhaps this final approach answers another question as well: Why this day became Simchat Torah. The Rabbis could not leave the day an empty shell[2] – it was waiting to be filled with a celebration appropriate to its theme. Simchat Torah is a fitting celebration on this day, as we complete the public reading of the entire Torah, dance with the Sifrei Torah and celebrate our bond with Hashem. This is what we celebrate on Simchat Torah; it is not merely a siyyum of the Torah we have learned as a community each Shabbat throughout the year, but rather a celebration of Hashem's love for us, of the unique connection He has with us, and how much He wants us to remain close to Him.

[1] In Bemidbar 29:29, 33, there are three words that the midrash identifies as having extra letters: וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם, וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם, כְּמִשְׁפָּטָם. Those extra letters are מ-י-מ, which spells mayim, water.

[2] It is an interesting question exactly when Shemini Atzeret evolved into Simchat Torah. The Gemara in Megilla 31a writes that we read VeZot HaBerakhah on yom tov acharon, which seems to indicate that we finish the Torah that day. The Darkei Moshe (OC 669) quotes the Maharik, who quotes the Geonim that there was already at that time a minhag to dance on this day over the completion of the Torah.

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#### **Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam**

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##### **The Happiness Box**

Every once in a while when reading a bed time story to the younger children I find myself in the end wiping a tear from the corner of my eye and wondering if any of the children are really capable of appreciating the depth of the seemingly simple story, if it is not meant more for the parents and if we get it either.

One such book reappeared on the bookshelf recently. It must have been with all the stuff for sukkos 'cause it certainly belongs there. It's called, "The Happiness Box". The plot is something like this. There's this kid that's never happy with what he has. He finds things to complain about all day. Whatever he has is not enough or not just right and all he can find is fault.

One day after his family moves into a beautiful new house a giant package arrives. It's a washing machine or some other large appliance and the kid is suffering from existential nausea because it's not for him. His clever father convinces him that the box is the real item of desire and it's just for him. It's

## **Likutei Divrei Torah**

called "a happiness box" and while inside one must think only happy thoughts.

This boy accepts the premise of the box and at first begrudgingly but later with greater ease is able to generate happiness producing thoughts such as; "Sometimes my mother makes dinners I like." And other such affirming statements that put him into a state of mind that makes him feel rich and full. After a while he's complaining a lot less. Then he becomes anxious about going to summer camp because all his possessions need to fit neatly into a duffel bag and he would have to leave "the box" at home. What would become of his state of happiness? He then realizes the great truth that the happiness is not in his box but in his head. The important life lesson is well learned. The children are fast asleep but I am more awake.

The simple child's story reminds me a little of a bad joke about a fellow who claims his dog is so talented he can do anything he is commanded to do. The challenge is taken up by a friend who throws a stick a distance and commands the dog, "Fetch!"

The dog looks up at him and begins his diatribe. "All day long people tell me what to do. Roll over! Jump! Go through the fiery hoop! Good dog. Bad dog. Sit! Heal. Eat this! Don't eat that! I can't take it anymore. It's no fun being a dog. I hate it. I wish I were never born! The fellow interrupts the dog and tells him with a sense of outrage, "All I asked you to do was fetch." The dog answers back with surprise, "Ohhhhhh! I thought you said "Kvetch".

Sukkos is referred to in our liturgy as "the time of our happiness". How do we celebrate? We leave our lovely homes and sit exposed to the elements in little boxes. We are commanded by the Torah; "and you should rejoice with your holiday and be only happy!"

Maybe the story is not so simplistic and the joke not so (as we say in yiddish) "farfetched". It's very easy to be focused on what's missing in life; to give special recognition to the cruel and heartless; to the unfinished business of history and history of business. Even more so these days we need a way to regain a sense of optimism. How about 7 days in "a happiness box" to see what's right in G-d's world. Hearing clearly the commandment as it is pronounced is a critical point. No where does it say, "kvetch"!

We all know how we can feel sometimes and how it creates a contagion of negativity. Therefore we hung two signs in our sukkah. One upon entering reads, "You are entering a no kvetching zone". The other posted prominently reads, "Don't even think of kvetching in the sukkah!" The Vilna Gaon called this the hardest mitzvah in the Torah to fulfill. So, don't expect it to happen with a simple story, a bad joke, by reciting an

imperative verse, or by hanging a humorous sign but it sure is a good beginning

### **Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash Real Booths or Clouds of Glory?**

**Harav Yaakov Medan**

#### **"I Made the Children of Israel to Dwell in Booths"**

The reason for the mitzva of dwelling in a sukka is stated explicitly in the Torah: "You shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are home-born in Israel shall dwell in booths. So that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God. (Vayikra 23:42-43)"

No explanation, however, is given as to why we must remember that we dwelled in booths at the time of the exodus from Egypt. The Tannaim disagree about this matter: "For I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths." These were clouds of glory; these are the words of R. Eliezer. R. Akiva says: They made for themselves real booths. (Sukka 11b)

The commentators also disagree about the plain meaning of the biblical text. While Rashi, the Ramban, and the Aramaic translations understood the booths as references to the clouds of glory, the Rashbam and the Ibn Ezra understood the verse as referring to real booths.

The authors of the piyyutim for Sukkot tended to accept the view that the reference is to clouds of glory:

The shade of the clouds I will remember.  
In each and every generation I will make mention of it.

Remember the loving acts performed for David.

(Yotzer for the first day of Sukkot)

With the beauty of Your clouds You covered the redeemed.

The canopy of Your glory You spread over them so that they be high. (Ma'aravit for the second day of Sukkot)

He covered His laden ones with clouds, for I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths. (Yotzer for second day of Sukkot)

On the face of it, we are dealing here with a theoretical matter that need not be decided. Surprisingly, however, the Shulchan Arukh issued a clear halakhic ruling about it: Regarding the booths that the verse says He made us to dwell in – these are clouds of glory with which He surrounded them, so that they not be struck by heat and the sun. (Orach Chayim 625:1)

It turns out that the matter has practical significance. The Bach explains that the mitzva of dwelling in a sukka is different from all other mitzvot, in that one who does not have in mind the purpose written in its regard has not fulfilled his obligation.

Since it is written, "That your generations may know," one has not performed the mitzva in the proper manner if he does not know the objective of the mitzva of sukka according to the plain sense of the verse. Therefore, he [the Shulchan Arukh] explains according to the plain sense of the text that the primary

intention of dwelling in the sukka is that one should remember the exodus from Egypt... One must have in mind when dwelling in the sukka the reason of the mitzva. (Bach, Orach Chayim 625:1)

This is why the Shulchan Arukh rules on this disagreement – so that one who dwells in the sukka will know whether he must have in mind that his dwelling in the sukka serves as a reminder of our having dwelt in real booths or as a reminder of our having dwelt in the shade of the clouds of glory.

**The Difference between a Real Booth and Clouds of Glory** - According to R. Eliezer, we must remember on Sukkot God's acts of kindness toward the people whom He took out of Egypt and the high level that they achieved during the period of their wandering in the wilderness. God sent down the clouds of glory in order to house His people in them in the wilderness. In this way, He protected them from enemies and beasts, from the roasting sun, and from the dust and from the wind, and in this way He also caused His Shekhina to rest upon them:

It turns out that there were seven clouds... four on the four sides, one above and one below, and one that went before them. Whatever was low, it raised, and whatever was high, it lowered... And it would strike snakes and scorpions, and sweep and sprinkle before them. (Mekhilta Beshalach, petichta).

There is, in fact, an explicit source in Scripture for a "booth" made from clouds of glory: And the Lord will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory shall be a booth. And there shall be a pavilion for a shadow in the day-time from the heat and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain. (Yeshayahu 4:5-6)

According to R. Akiva, on the other hand, we must remember how difficult it was for the people of Israel in the wilderness. They sat in the roasting sun and in sandstorms in simple booths. We must remember this in order to appreciate all the good that God provides us with today, giving us a good land and houses full of all things good. Thus writes the Rashbam: "You shall keep the feast of Sukkot seven days, after you have gathered in from your threshing-floor and from your winepress" (Devarim 16:13) – When you gather in the produce of the land and your houses are filled with all things good, grain, wine and oil. So that you remember that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths in the wilderness for forty years, without settling and without an inheritance. Because of this you will give thanks to Him who gave you an inheritance and filled your houses with all things goods, and you will not say in your hearts: "My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth" (Devarim 8:17). (Rashbam, Vayikra 23:43)

It seems that according to R. Akiva, the most important part of the holiday is the eighth day – Shemini Atzeret – when we come in from the sukka, from seven days of living in a

## **Likutei Divrei Torah**

temporary dwelling, into our warm and comfortable homes that God has given us. According to R. Akiva, it is clear why a person who dwells in his sukka on the eighth day transgresses the prohibition of bal tosif, adding a mitzva (Rosh Hashana 28b), for he lengthens his period of exile. On the contrary, it falls upon us to re-enter our homes and thank God for the opportunity.

According to R. Eliezer, the sukka is a continuation of the four cups of wine drunk at the Pesach seder, which is a sign of freedom. According to R. Akiva, it is a continuation of the maror and a remembrance of the servitude.

**Both Opinions Are Correct** - Do R. Eliezer and R. Akiva disagree about the fate of the people of Israel in the wilderness? In our opinion, this is not necessarily the case. It is possible that during the first year and the beginning of the second year, the people of Israel enjoyed the elevating and pampering providence of clouds of glory. But after the sin of the spies and the decree that "your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness" (Bemidbar 14:29), the Shekhina departed from them. The clouds of glory disappeared and the people remained exposed in simple booths that they built for themselves to protect themselves from enemies, wild beasts, and the desert winds, until the fortieth year when the clouds of glory returned by virtue of the merits of Aharon.

Consider this: Rashi argues, based on the plain sense of the verses, that during the thirty-eight years of their punishment, the people of Israel were censured and the Shekhina did not rest with affection and illumination even upon Moshe:

During these entire thirty-eight years during which the Israelites were lying under God's censure, the Divine utterance was not specially vouchsafed to him in affectionate language, face to face, and tranquility of mind – to teach you that the Shekhina rests upon the prophets only for Israel's sake. (Rashi, Devarim 2:16)

If even Moshe was under God's censure until the fortieth year, why would clouds of glory rest upon Israel? Rather, the clouds undoubtedly departed, and only later in the fortieth year did they return and once again protect the people of Israel.

**The Affection of Your Youth** - According to the opinion that the booths were clouds of glory, the mitzva of dwelling in the sukka surely comes to remind us of God's acts of lovingkindness to us, as we explained above. According to the opinion that they were "real booths," we find a view among the Rishonim that the sukka comes to remind us not of God's acts of lovingkindness toward us, but on the contrary, of the great virtue of Israel. Rabbeinu Bachya writes as follows:

According to the opinion that they made for themselves real booths, this is the reason that we were commanded to make sukkot like them – to reveal and publicize through the mitzva of sukka the great virtue of Israel in the wilderness. For they walked with all those men, women, and children in that place, where it is not in man's nature to live. As the verse testifies: "a land barren and desolate" (Yoel

2:20); "it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates" (Bemidbar 20:5). (Rabbeinu Bachya, Vayikra 23:43)

Real booths are the handiwork of man, whereas clouds of glory are heavenly "messengers." According to Rabbeinu Bachya, this distinction accords with what the sukkah is supposed to remind us of: Clouds of glory are meant to remind us of God's lovingkindness toward Israel, whereas real booths bring to mind the people of Israel's following after God, which is described by the prophet as an act of affection performed, as it were, for the sake of God:

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying: Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying: Thus says the Lord: I remember for you the affection of your youth, the love of your espousals; how you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. (Yirmeyahu 2:1-2)

In the Zikhronei blessing recited on Rosh Hashana, we recite these verses in order to remind God of the days of Israel's love of espousals in the aftermath of the exodus from Egypt. At that time, the entire nation entered the desolate wilderness – men, women and children – based on their trust in God. Manna fell from heaven, but it was forbidden to leave over any of it for the next day; a well accompanied the people, but it was forbidden to store water. The people of Israel marched off in the wake of God with strong belief, and centuries later the prophet Yirmeyahu recalls this conduct as Israel's great merit.

According to Rabbeinu Bachya, the mitzva of sukkah comes "to reveal and publicize through the mitzva of sukkah Israel's great virtue in the wilderness." "I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths" – but still they did not complain, but rather they trusted in God. By bringing to mind the days of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, dwelling in the sukkah strengthens our belief in God and at the same time it reminds God of the virtues of Israel.

**Booths of War** - Thus far, we have assumed that "real booths" are the booths in which the people of Israel lived for most of the years of their wanderings in the wilderness. But this is difficult: If those booths were so important, how can it be that the Torah makes no mention of them anywhere in the five books of Moshe? What was so unique about those booths that a holiday was established because of them for all generations?

Owing to this difficulty, R. Eliezer of Worms – one of the great Ashkenazi Rishonim – explains that these were not ordinary booths, but rather booths of those going out to war: Some explain that when they laid siege on the land of the Emorites of Sichon and Og and on the cities in the land of Canaan – this is when Israel dwelled in booths, as it is stated: "The ark, and Israel, and Yehuda are dwelling in booths"... This is the meaning of "I made the children of Israel dwell in booths" – when they laid siege to the nations... And this is "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths" – that they should not think that we were living in the

land from the time of our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, but rather they should know that they left Egypt and laid siege to the cities, and God gave them into the hand of Israel. (Roke'ach 219)

The Roke'ach's view is supported by various verses in Scripture, in which it is explicitly stated that soldiers who went out to war dwelt in booths. Thus, it is stated, for example, about David's soldiers who laid siege on Amon: And Uriya said to David: The ark, and Israel, and Yehuda, abide in booths; and my lord Yoav, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open field... (II Shemuel 11:11)

It is very possible that when the people of a fortified city prepared themselves for an enemy threatening war against them, they would build booths for their soldiers in the fields that surrounded the city. These booths provided comfortable quarters for the soldiers who were waiting for the enemy army, and at the same time they were well camouflaged by what was growing in the fields. Thus, we find: Will you hunt the prey for the lioness or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they couch in their dens and abide in the booth to lie in wait? (Iyov (38:39-40))

In the fortieth year following Israel's exodus from Egypt, the inhabitants of the land prepared themselves for war against Israel. To that end, the Canaanites established battle booths and set ambushes against the people of Israel. The people of Israel overpowered the Canaanites and defeated them. It is possible that afterwards, they dwelt in the very booths that the Canaanites had built to fight from them against Israel. In this way, God's promise to Israel by way of Moshe was fulfilled in those who took possession of the land:

And it shall be, when the Lord your God shall bring you into the land which He swore to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, to give you – great and goodly cities, which you did not build, and houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out, which you did not hew, vineyards and olive-trees, which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied. (Devarim 6:10-11)

The mitzva of sukkah comes, then, to remind us also of Israel's dwelling in the battle booths, following their victory over the Canaanite inhabitants of the land. In remembrance of this victory, a holiday was established for all generations, and Israel was commanded to dwell during that holiday in sukkot. While we are in the sukkah, we are reminded of the help that God provided our forefathers at the time of the conquest, and we know that it is only by virtue of God's assistance that we merited to take possession of the land. *(Translated by David Strauss)*





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from: YUTorah <[office@yutorah.org](mailto:office@yutorah.org)>

date: Oct 2, 2020, 2:55 AM

subject: 20th Set of Rav Schachter's Piskei Halacha for Coronavirus

Regarding Hoshanos, because of social distancing, it may be preferable for the Chazzan or Rabbi to circle around the shul by himself. The same could apply for Simchas Torah where we should minimize the number of people carrying Sifrei Torah. Dancing should be avoided lest people become lax about social distancing. If there is a concern regarding the length of davening on the day when Koheles is being read, then Koheles may be omitted this year or read later in the day at Mincha, after laining.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

<http://torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-48-Aug-28-2020.pdf>

It is expected that an individual begin to plan and prepare the necessary arrangements for performance of any mitzvah thirty days in advance. If one has no shofar, machzor or sukkah locally, one must plan accordingly to ensure that they have the opportunity to fulfill these mitzvos.

Due to the important consideration of social distancing, there are many communal sukkos that will be arranging multiple shifts for their membership to have a chance to eat in the sukkah. On the first two nights of Sukkos, we generally do not make kiddush or eat the meal before tzais hakochavim. However, this year there is room to be lenient to allow the first shift to accept Yom Tov early and make kiddush following davening. Ideally, the first shift should be sure to eat a kezayis of bread in the sukkah after tzais hakochavim. However, if it is necessary to begin the second shift before tzais hakochavim, one may be lenient to complete the meal entirely before tzais hakochavim.

If there are many who need to use a communal sukkah and the shifts must be very short, each shift may make kiddush, eat bread and bentch, leaving the rest of the meal (fish, meat, vegetables, etc.) to be eaten inside at home (without bread).

If one shift must wait a very long time for its turn, the delay may cause a situation of mitzta'er, and members of that shift are potentially exempt from

sukkah. However, this would not apply on the first two nights of Sukkos, when even a mitzta'er must eat in the sukkah.

Should there be rain, or a similar uncomfortable situation (on the first two nights of Sukkos) that affects the experience while sitting in the sukkah itself, the bracha of Leishev B'Sukkah should not be recited.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

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from: Aish.com <[newsletterserver@aish.com](mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com)>

date: Oct 2, 2020, 12:01 AM

subject: Aish.com Daily - Tishrei 14-16

Aish.com <https://www.aish.com/sp/ged/45659757.html>

Growing Each Day

Tishrei 16

And you shall take for yourself on the first day the fruit of a (citron) beautiful tree (Leviticus 23:40).

Rabbi Mordechai of Nesh'chiz looked forward all year to the mitzvah of the Four Species on Succos. Since a fine esrog was costly and Rabbi Mordechai was hardly a man of means, he would accumulate small coins all year round, even depriving himself of food, in order to be able to afford an esrog.

A few days before Succos, Rabbi Mordechai joyfully took the money he had saved, and in high spirits, went off to buy the coveted esrog. On the way, he encountered a man sitting at the side of the road, weeping bitterly. He inquired as to the reason for the man's grief, and the latter told him, "Woe is to me! I earn my living with my horse and wagon, and this morning my nag died. How am I to feed my wife and children?"

"How much do you need to buy another horse?" Rabbi Mordechai asked.

The sum that the man specified was exactly the amount that Rabbi Mordechai had laboriously saved all year long for the esrog. Without giving it another thought, he gave his purse to the man. "Here, my dear man. Go buy yourself a horse."

After the man joyfully left with the money, Rabbi Mordechai said, "Oh well. All of Israel will be fulfilling the mitzvah of the Four Species with an esrog, but I will do so with a horse."

Rabbi Mordechai's sacrifice of his personal comfort all year round teaches us how precious is the mitzvah of the Four Species, but his final act teaches us that the mitzvah of tzedakah (charity) is even greater.

Today I shall... try to realize the greatness of the commandment of charity, to make certain that another person has the means to survive.

This article can also be read at: <https://www.aish.com/sp/ged/45659757.html>

Ask the Rabbi Tishrei 14

Why is Sukkot Celebrated in the Fall?

I noticed that of all the major holidays, Sukkot does not really seem to correspond to the time of year we celebrate it. The Torah states that we should dwell in huts on Sukkot to commemorate the huts the Jewish people used in the desert. But I assume they lived that way the entire forty years they were there! If so, why is Sukkot celebrated specifically in the fall, right after the other major holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

The Aish Rabbi Replies:

It's an excellent question. In fact, it is so good that it is practically considered the classic question of Sukkot – the equivalent of the Hanukkah question why we celebrate the first day if there was enough oil to burn for one day. A number of great scholars over the centuries have posed and discussed your question, so I'll offer a brief sampling of some of the main answers.

Before answering, I should mention that the Talmud (Sukkah 11b) records two opinions as to the exact meaning of the "booths" of the Torah ("...for in booths I caused Israel to dwell when I took them out of the Land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23:43)). One opinion sees them as literal huts. The second understands them as a reference to the Clouds of Glory which protected the nation in the desert. The Children of Israel did not need their tents to protect them from the sun. God Himself did so with His glorious clouds.

Thus, according to one opinion, we celebrate Sukkot to commemorate the Divine protection God accorded us when we first became a nation. It's very plausible that the same theme holds true for the other opinion as well. By commemorating the flimsy huts our ancestors inhabited in the desert, we are reminded that such huts were sufficient in such an inhospitable climate because it was truly God who was protecting them. As we will see, many of the answers below are predicated upon this overall theme that Sukkot commemorates God's protection.

With that introduction, we'll begin the answers.

(1) Logically, we should celebrate Sukkot shortly after Pesach – to commemorate the first time we began dwelling in huts right after our departure from Egypt. But God instructed us to wait until the fall, when the weather is cooler. He did this so that our act would be more meaningful. Had we gone outdoors during the summer, it would have appeared that we were doing so to enjoy the nice weather. Instead, God told us to wait till the cooler weather, so our act would make it clear we are dwelling in booths for God's sake rather than our own (Tur O.C. 625, Minhagei Maharil sof hil' yom kippur). (Note that God told us to wait till the fall but not the winter – so the mitzvah would not be too uncomfortable either.)

(2) We do not commemorate the original Clouds of Glory, which we received when we first departed from Egypt. We lost those clouds after the sin of the Golden Calf. We rather celebrate the return of the clouds which occurred after God granted us absolution from that sin. According to the Vilna Gaon, this occurred on Sukkot.

The sin of the Golden Calf occurred on the 16th day of Tammuz, three months after we left Egypt. Moses returned a day later with the Tablets of the Ten Commandments – and smashed them. Moses then spent 40 days praying that God not destroy Israel, then another 40 days receiving the second Tablets. According to our tradition, that entire period ended on Yom Kippur, the 10th of Tishrei, on which date God wholeheartedly re-accepted Israel as His nation.

The next day, the 11th, God commanded Israel to donate materials for the building of the Tabernacle. The nation donated for a few days. On the 14th the artisans collected the material and on the 15th they began the actual construction. On that day, the Clouds of Glory returned.

Thus, at the same point in time we began building a house for God – so He could dwell among us, we were commanded to leave our ordinary homes and dwell with God in our sukkahs (Kol Eliyahu 84 with Sefer HaToda'ah p. 74).

(3) Although Sukkot could be celebrated any time of the year, God decreed it be done in the fall, after the harvest. This is the time when man is happiest and the most blessed with possessions. God therefore instructed us that rather than becoming too involved in our riches and our physical needs, that we go out to temporary dwellings and remind ourselves that all is truly from and truly belongs to God. Ultimately it is not our homes and possessions which give us security. It is the God who granted them (Rashbam Leviticus 23:43, Menoras HaMaor).

(4) The Children of Israel first constructed (substantial) booths for themselves in the desert in the fall when the weather became cooler. Thus, Sukkot commemorates the time of year when we first began dwelling in booths (Ramban and Ibn Ezra to Leviticus 23:43).

(5) The holiday of Sukkot has a unique role in the Jewish calendar. It serves as the culmination of the three major festivals of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. Passover celebrates our freedom – our emancipation from bondage and becoming a nation. Shavuot celebrates our receiving the Torah – in essence the taking of our freedom and directing it towards God by accepting the national mission He has for us.

Sukkot represents the culmination of the first two holidays – the point in time in which we are settled in our new role – when we celebrate our living the mission God charged us with. Sukkot does not commemorate a specific, one-time event in the desert. It celebrates the ongoing state we maintained – that after attaining freedom and receiving the Torah we lived with God, under His Divine protection beneath the Clouds of Glory. It is the holiday of “making it” – of just celebrating who we are and the closeness to God we

achieved. It is this closeness we commemorate when we leave our houses to dwell with God in the sukkah.

This explains why Sukkot is celebrated in the fall. The seasons of the year (in the Holy Land) reflect the spiritual seasons of the universe. Passover celebrates our birth as a nation, and it occurs in the spring when the world likewise comes to life. Shavuot celebrates our receiving the Torah, and it comes out in the harvest season. Just as we have taken our newfound freedom and transformed it into devotion to a higher cause, in early summer the springtime seeds of potential have become fully-grown plants. Lastly, Sukkot is celebrated in the fall. In Biblical Israel the crops which had been drying in the fields the entire summer are gathered in in the autumn. This is the time of the true celebration of the labors of the growing season. On Sukkot we celebrate the spiritual level we have achieved – the state of closeness we have now earned with God – and we do so in the fall, when we correspondingly celebrate the fruits of our physical efforts (based on Maharal Gevuras Ari 46, ArtScroll Succos pp. 9-17).

(6) Sukkot can also be related to the High Holidays it immediately follows (see e.g. Yalkut Shimoni Emor 653). On the High Holidays we achieve a strong bond of closeness with God. We repent our past failures and God lovingly accepts us. But this is undeniably accompanied with a heavy sense – the fear of God's judgment, the owning up to our past mistakes. As close as we become to God during the High Holidays through our repentance, we cannot escape the underlying sense of awe inherent to that time of the year. Sukkot continues this closeness to God, but on an entirely different plane. God has accepted our repentance. The time of fear has passed. And God now invites us to dwell together with Him in the sukkah. We maintain the very same closeness our return to God has engendered, but with a sense of love rather than fear.

#### Tishrei 15 Three Pilgrimage Festivals

The Bible speaks about the entire Jewish nation going to Jerusalem for the three pilgrimage festivals. Is that still practiced today?

The Aish Rabbi Replies:

From a technical standpoint, it was only when the Temple was standing that people were required to appear three times annually and bring an offering – on Passover, Sukkot and Shavuot. (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 117:1; Nodah BiYehuda O.C. 94; Chasam Sofer Y.D. 233; Yabia Omer O.C. 5:15; Tzitz Eliezer 10:1)

Nevertheless, citing the Midrash from Shir HaShirim, some opinions maintain that coming today to see the Temple Mount and the Western Wall still applies on the pilgrimage festivals (Ran – Ta'anit 7a; She'alat Ya'avetz 1:87; Yechaveh Daas 1:25; Teshuvah Kol Mevasser 2:10).

Whatever the case, today many tens of thousands of people make a point to come visit the site of the Temple and the Western Wall during the festival days. The Aish Center, whose spectacular rooftop terrace rises seven stories above the Western Wall Plaza, offers a particularly unique vantage point to fulfill this.

Your question also raises a unique aspect of pilgrimage that I think you'll enjoy:

Imagine we're a committee writing the Bible. If we made up a law that all the men in Israel are required to go to Jerusalem and visit the Temple, three times each year on the pilgrimage holidays, do you think it's a good idea? On one hand, it unites the people. They get inspired to gather as a nation and see the priestly service in the Temple.

hy is it a bad idea?

If all the men are in Jerusalem, who's going to guard the land? What will happen when the enemies find out that no one is protecting the borders? It won't take long for them to figure out that three times a year the Jews leave themselves wide open to attack.

Of course, we could send the men in shifts, as opposed to all at once. But the Torah is very clear: "Three times each year, all your males shall present themselves before God, the Master and Lord of Israel" (Exodus 34:23).

And if one might think that is the making of a national tragedy, the very next verse promises: "[N]o one will be envious of your land when you go to be seen in God's presence" (Exodus 34:24).

In other words, don't worry. God will make sure that no one will even think of attacking you! Who in their right mind would write this? The one thing the author of the Bible knows for sure is that he can't control the thoughts of their enemies, never mind the bullets!

Why take such an outlandish risk? Did the author actually expect the people to say, "Oh, that's a great idea; everybody'll just leave and we'll be unprotected. No problem." And even if by some fluke, the people swallow it, after the first pilgrimage or two, they're out of business, assuming they're still alive!

Which brings us to an astounding conclusion: Not only does this pilgrimage idea demonstrate that God has supernatural control, but simple psychology forces us to ask who else but God could write such a thing and expect people to accept it?

This is just another piece of evidence substantiating God as the Author of the Torah.

(based on Aish HaTorah's Discovery Seminar)

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**In My Opinion :: SUCCOT Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

The holiday of Succot is, perhaps, unique amongst all the holidays of the Jewish calendar year. The laws pertaining to the commandments particular to this holiday are almost all exclusively derived from the oral law given to our teacher Moshe on Sinai

There is no way that a succah can be successfully and traditionally constructed without recourse to the intricacies and nuances that the oral law that the Torah provides for us. This will be especially true for this holiday, that is so burdened by the terrible Corona virus that afflicts the world.

Here in Israel where a lockdown is in force, the construction of succot is much more muted and minimal than in previous years. There is a far greater reliance upon the so-called imaginary walls that the oral law envisions for us, to somehow be halachically acceptable and valid, and allows much outside air to enter and escape, as mandated by the health authorities.

Simply reading the text in the Torah itself does not allow for partial walls to be considered as complete walls, and for walls and roofs to be considered as touching each other, even though strictly speaking to our human eyes, they do not touch.

There are myriad laws involved in the proper construction of a succah. But these laws are not readily apparent from the reading of the text of the Torah itself. It is only the oral law that breathes life into words and letters of the Torah and gives them meaning and practical vitality. Chag Sameach Berel Wein

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torahweb@torahweb.org Thu, Oct 1, 2020

**Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg**

**The Sukkah - The Ultimate Symbol of Jewish Unity**

There is a minhag to recite the chapter of "L'Dovid Hashem ori" twice a day from the beginning of the month of Elul until Shemini Atzeres. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (128:2) explains that the source for this custom is a comment of the Midrash Shochar Tov that "Hashem ori" (Hashem is my light) refers to Rosh Hashana, "yishi" (my salvation) refers to Yom Kippur and "ki yitzpineini b'sukko" (for He protects me in His sukkah) alludes to Sukkos. We know that Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are a unit known as the yamim noraim. But why is Sukkos included in this special grouping? One of the central themes of the yamim noraim is accepting the kingship of the Ribbono Shel Olam. We daven that the entire world should recognize

Hashem's sovereignty, and all of humanity should join together in one group - b'agudah achas - to fulfill Hashem's will. The posuk says, "And He (Hashem) was king over Yeshurun (Klal Yisrael) when the heads of the nation gathered together in unity with all the tribes of Israel" (V'zos Habrachta 33:5.) Rashi explains that when Klal Yisrael join together in one group - b'agudah achas - and there is peace among them (like when the Torah was given), then Hashem is their king, but not if there is discord among them.

A king cannot reign without subjects (ein melech b'lo am.) The more focused the king's subjects are on serving the king and not on furthering their own personal interests, the more powerful is the king's rule. Thus, when Klal Yisrael join together in a unified service of Hakadosh Boruch Hu, they actually strengthen Hashem's monarchy. This is one of the goals of the tefilla of the yamim noraim - to declare our commitment to the kingship of the Ribbono Shel Olam, and to accept upon ourselves to bond together to strengthen that kingship.

On Sukkos, we gain the perspective needed to maintain that sense of unity. We are commanded to leave our homes and sit in the sukkah. Chazal explain (Sukkah 2a) that the Torah is telling us, "Leave your permanent home (diras keva) and sit in a temporary home (diras arai)." The flimsy, temporary physical structure of the sukkah serves as a reminder that our physical homes are really only temporary, and we should focus our attention on spiritual pursuits which have eternal value, not on the ephemeral, fleeting pleasures of the physical world (see Vilna Gaon to Sefer Yonah 4:5). The sukkah must have more shade than sun to symbolize that one's involvement in the material world should be secondary to one's preoccupation with ruchniyus. As the Mishna says (Avos 1:15), "Make the study of Torah your primary pursuit."

But the sukkah is also a symbol of peace and unity. Chazal say (Sukkah 27b) that one may fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah even with a borrowed sukkah because the posuk "Every citizen of Israel should dwell in Sukkos" (Emor 33:42) implies that all of Klal Yisrael can sit in one sukkah. The language that Chazal use that all of Klal Yisrael can sit in one sukkah highlights the idea that the sukkah is a structure that unifies the Jewish people.

How does the sukkah bring the Jewish people together? Rav Dessler (Michtav M'Eliyahu, vol. 2, p. 170) explains that the diras arai of the sukkah reorders our sense of priorities. It reminds us that our lives should revolve around avodas Hashem, rather than pursuing the transient pleasures of the material world. The more people focus on satisfying their physical desires, the less likely they are to be able to live together in peace and harmony because each one wants what the other has, and that leads to competition and disagreement (see also Rabbenu Yona, Sha'arei Teshuva 1:30). But when people concentrate on spiritual activities, and their sole desire is to serve the Ribbono Shel Olam, they join together with a unified sense of purpose. Perhaps this is the connection between the yamim noraim and Sukkos. Yom Kippur is referred to as "a day to increase love and friendship, a day to abandon jealousy and competition" (tefillas mussaf of Yom Kippur). On Yom Kippur we abstain from certain physical activities, and we concentrate almost exclusively on tefillah and avodas Hashem, and that unified spiritual focus allows us to bond together. The sukkah teaches us that the way to stay united throughout the year is by maintaining our spiritual focus. The more involved we are in Torah and mitzvos, the more we will be able to join together in our service of the Ribbono Shel Olam, and that sense of unity will strengthen Hashem's kingship and add to His honor.

It is not surprising then that the Beis HaMikdash is referred to as a sukkah. In the tefillah of ma'ariv, we ask Hashem to "spread over us the sukkah of Your peace (ufros aleinu sukas shlomecha)". Similarly, at the end of birchas hamazon on Sukkos we add, "May the merciful One resurrect the fallen sukkah of Dovid (sukkas Dovid hanofales)." The Beis HaMikdash is the ultimate place of peace and unity. It can stand only when the hearts of Klal Yisrael are unified, not when there is disagreement and strife among them (Yoma 9b). Hashem will reveal the full glory of His Shechinah if Klal Yisrael is b'agudah achas. But that can happen only if we appreciate the

message of the sukkah. When all of Klal Yisrael focus on developing their spiritual essence, they are able to rise above their insignificant differences and they unite in serving Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

This year, the message of the sukkah takes on new meaning. We might be physically distant from each other, but we can still bond together emotionally. When we focus on what is truly important in life, not only do we connect more with Hakadosh Boruch Hu, but we unite as a people and merit the ultimate bracha of ufros aleinu sukas shlomecha.

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### **Succoth: The Role of the Lowly Willow**

#### **Rav Kook Torah**

You have to feel sorry for the poor aravah, the willow branch waved together with the other three species of the arba'ah minim on Succoth. It lacks the fragrance of the etrog and the myrtle, and, unlike the date-palm, it has no fruit. The willow has come to represent the simple folk who are neither learned in Torah nor respected for numerous good deeds.

And yet, according to an ancient oral tradition, the aravah becomes the star of the show on Hoshanah Rabbah, the last day of the Succoth holiday. When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, the kohanim would raise tall willow boughs around the altar. In synagogues nowadays, after waving all four species, we set aside the other three species and raise the willow alone. And then, at the end of the Hoshanah prayers, the congregants beat the willow on the floor. Why does the lowly willow merit this special attention? And what is the meaning of the age-old custom of striking the floor with willow branches? Sabbath Desecration in Jaffa

Rav Kook related the following story one holiday evening in his sukkah. The incident took place in Jaffa, where Rav Kook served as chief rabbi from 1904 to 1914. One Shabbat day, a secular photographer came and disturbed the Sabbath peace in a religious neighborhood. In total disregard for the local religious sensibilities, he set up his tripod and camera in the middle of the street and began taking pictures.

This public desecration of the Sabbath deeply angered the local residents. One man who was particularly incensed by the photographer's insensitivity took a pail of water and thoroughly soaked the Sabbath-desecrator. Naturally, the photographer was indignant. He was so confident in the justice of his cause that he registered a complaint against the water-douser - at the beit din (religious court) of the rabbi of Jaffa, Rav Kook.

Rav Kook told the photographer, "I see that you fail to understand the severity of desecrating the Sabbath in public, but you should realize that your action was a serious affront to the community. You entered a neighborhood of Sabbath-observers and offended them deeply.

"Or course, the correct course of action for the residents would have been to rebuke you verbally. Perhaps you would have understood the seriousness of your actions and stopped. Had that man consulted with me first, I would have advised him not to throw water on you.

"However, he didn't ask, but reacted spontaneously. You should know that on occasion, such impulsive reactions are justified. When people disregard societal norms and cross accepted boundaries, regardless of the implications for others, it is often the spontaneous reaction that most effectively prevents future abuse.

"Such an occasion took place when the Israelites were in the desert and Pinchas responded, not accordingly to the normative Halachah, but as a zealot: "Kena'im pogim bo" ('Zealots punish them' - Num. 25:6-8; Sanhedrin 82a). If Pinchas had asked beforehand, he would have been instructed not to kill Zimri. But since his act was done sincerely and served to prevent future violations, his zealous deed was approved after the fact." The Boethusians and the Willow

What about the willow and Succoth? Rav Kook continued his explanation that evening:

The lowly willow represents the common folk, unlearned and lacking exceptional deeds. Yet, these 'willows' are blessed with an abundance of common sense and are unencumbered by sophisticated calculations. As a result, they have filled important roles in the history of the Jewish people. In Talmudic times, there was a sect called the Boethusians who disagreed with many of the rulings of the Sages. One disagreement concerned the willow ceremony. The Boethusians prohibited observing this ceremony on the Sabbath. One year, when Hoshanah Rabbah fell on the Sabbath, the Boethusians took the willows and covered them with stones. They knew the Rabbis would not permit moving the stones on the Sabbath since stones are muktzeh (various categories of objects, such as stones, money, and work tools, that the Rabbis prohibited to be handled on the Sabbath in order to safeguard the sanctity of the day).

On Shabbat morning, however, some simple folk who were ignorant about the prohibition of muktzeh pulled out the willow boughs from under the stones. Then the kohanim were able to raise the willows alongside the altar (Sukkah 43b).

Why does the Talmud emphasize that this praiseworthy act was performed by common folk? By covering the boughs with stones, the Boethusians had placed the Sages in a quandary. If the willow boughs were not used, the Boethusians could cite this as proof that the rabbis had conceded to their opinion that willows should not be raised on the Sabbath. On the other hand, if the rabbis decided to move the stones, the Boethusians could have announced that the rabbinic prohibition of muktzeh had been abolished. Fortunately, the problem never materialized. The simple Jews resolved the dilemma in their own typical manner. They did not ask questions; rather, alarmed by the scandal, they responded by simply removing the willows from under the stones.

#### **The Role of the Willow**

The custom to hit the floor with willows does not mean that we wish to 'punish' the willow, as is often thought, for its lack of Torah and good deeds. Rather, it is meant to demonstrate that the willow is also a force to be reckoned with - a natural, healthy power that is part of the arsenal of the Jewish people. We do not strike the willow. We strike with the willow.

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### **Insights :: Succos Edition Tishrei 5781**

#### **Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University**

#### **Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig**

This week's Insights is dedicated in memory of Nissim Yaakov ben Moshe. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

#### **Dancing with the Bride**

The Torah that Moshe commanded us is a heritage to the Congregation of Jacob (33:4).

Simchas Torah is a day on which we celebrate the Torah. Why did Chazal see fit to designate a separate day for Simchas Torah? Would not Shavuot, the day we received the Torah, be a more appropriate time for this celebration?

The Talmud instructs a father that as soon as his child is able to speak, he should teach him, "The Torah that Moshe commanded us is a heritage to the Congregation of Jacob." Why is this the verse selected when there are earlier verses in the Torah that convey a similar message, such as "This is the Torah that Moshe placed before Bnei Yisroel"?

The last four parshios in the Torah record the events that transpired on the day of Moshe's death. A major event that ensued was the new covenant in Parshas Nitzavim. The concept of "each Jew is a guarantor for his fellow

Jew," in regards to mitzvos and aveiros, is introduced as a result of our responsibility for the covenant.

The general concept of a guarantor is discussed by the Talmud. The Talmud teaches that one who accepts upon himself to repay a loan should the borrower default is required by Torah law to honor his commitment to pay. The commentaries raise the following difficulty: Legally, for a person to be liable to perform a service, there must be consideration, such as money. What is the instrument that obligates a guarantor to honor his commitment? The Ritva answers that although the guarantor does not receive money, he nevertheless receives the satisfaction that the lender is relying upon his credibility to issue the loan. This benefit serves as the instrument for the transaction in lieu of money. In light of this explanation, the following difficulty arises: Why are Bnei Yisroel bound to their commitment of arvus? What were they receiving that they did not already have?

To begin answering the aforementioned questions, we must analyze another concept that was introduced on the day that Moshe died; "Torah is no longer in the Heavens." While Moshe was alive he consulted with Hashem concerning all difficult Torah legislation. Therefore, Hashem was the final arbiter for Torah legislation; thus, as long as Moshe was alive, Torah was still in the Heavens. On the day of Moshe's death, Bnei Yisroel were given unilateral authority over all Torah legislation. This is what is meant by "The Torah is no longer in the Heavens." This new authorization that Bnei Yisroel received is the instrument that obligates them to honor their commitment to be guarantors.

At Sinai, when Bnei Yisroel received the Torah, Chazal describe the relationship formed as that of bride and groom. Hashem was the groom and Bnei Yisroel was the bride. On the day that Moshe died, a new relationship was formed; Bnei Yisroel became the groom and the Torah was the bride. This is alluded to in the verse, "Torah tziva lanu Moshe morasha kehillats Yaakov." Chazal see in the word "morasha" an allusion to the word "meorasa" which means "betrothed" (i.e. the Torah that Moshe commanded us is also betrothed to us). The notion of Torah not being in the Heavens and the Torah becoming the bride to Bnei Yisroel are one and the same. The Talmud instructs a father to begin teaching his son Torah with the verse that reflects this new relationship.

Shavuot celebrates Bnei Yisroel becoming a bride to Hashem, while Simchas Torah celebrates Bnei Yisroel becoming betrothed to the Torah. This is reflected in the customs of the day. In most Jewish communities, a representative is chosen to be the "chassan Torah," the groom to the Torah. We also dance with the Torah as a groom dancing with his bride.

#### **Question to Contemplate**

In Vayikra, Rashi explains that the idea of Shemini Atzeres is akin to a king who makes a feast for his children for seven days and then pleads with them to remain for an extra day. Similarly, Hashem requests that Bnei Yisroel remain with Him for an extra day. The implication is that Hashem is the host and we are His guests. However, in Bamidbar, Rashi explains that on Shemini Atzeres Hashem says to Bnei Yisroel, "Please make for me a small feast so that I can enjoy your company." Here, the implication is that we are the hosts and Hashem is our guest. How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction?

#### **To Rule is Divine**

He became King over Yeshurun (33:5).

The Ibn Ezra renders the verse "He became King over Yeshurun (i.e. Israel)" as a reference to Moshe being the King of Israel. The Ramban points out that this interpretation contradicts the following Talmudic discourse: A major component of the Rosh Hashana prayers is a section known as "malchiyos," which declares the existence and total sovereignty of Hashem. One of the verses that the Talmud lists should be recited within this section is the verse, "vayehi bishuran Melech." Clearly, the King being referred to in the verse is Hashem, not Moshe. How does the Ibn Ezra resolve this apparent contradiction?

A more striking contradiction can be found in Rashi's commentary on the Torah. When explaining the verse "He became King over Yeshurun," Rashi

defines "King" as Hashem. In Parshas Behaaloscha, Hashem commands that a set of trumpets be fashioned for Moshe's exclusive use. Rashi comments that they were used in a manner befitting a king. Here Rashi cites the verse, "He became King over Yeshurun" to prove that Moshe had the status of king.

The Talmud teaches that, although a scholar may waive the honor that is due to him, a king is not permitted to do so. The Mordechai, one of the early Talmudic codifiers, sheds some light on the reason for this. A scholar, who earns the right to be honored, may relinquish this right. However, the honor due to a king is Hashem's honor: "For sovereignty belongs to Hashem." Therefore, a king has no right to waive the honor due to him. The Jewish notion of monarchy is that the king functions as a conduit for Hashem's sovereignty over the world. This is what is meant by sovereignty belonging to Hashem.

Moshe Rabbeinu epitomizes the notion of the Jewish king being the conduit for Hashem's sovereignty over this world. As Chazal say, "The Divine Presence spoke through Moshe's mouth." Therefore, there is no contradiction in interpreting the verse "He became King over Yeshurun" as referring to both Hashem and Moshe, for Moshe's sovereignty is, in reality, the sovereignty of Hashem.

#### **Quick Halacha**

Before the silent Mussaf prayer for Shemini Atzeres has begun, an announcement should be made reminding the congregation to insert the phrase, "mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem." However, if no announcement was made, one should not recite this phrase in the silent prayer. The chazzan, however, recites the geshem benediction in his public repetition even in the absence of an announcement.

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by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)

**Weekly Halacha :: Eating In The Succah On The First Night**

**Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

**Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya**

The following is a discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

You should dwell in a Succah (Emor 23:42)

Every adult male is Biblically obligated to eat a k'zayis of bread in a succah on the first night of Succos. The Talmud (1) derives this obligation from the similar obligation of eating a k'zayis of matzah on the first night of Pesach. Since these two obligations are closely related, their halachos are similar in many respects. Like all mitzvos, this mitzvah, too, can only be properly fulfilled if there is prior planning and clear knowledge of all the requirements. Let us review the pertinent halachos:

**WHEN IS IT EATEN**

In the late afternoon of Erev Succos, one should not fill himself with food or wine so that he will be able to eat the k'zayis of bread with a good appetite (2).

The k'zayis of bread [and the Kiddush that precedes it (3)] may not be eaten until it is definitely night (4), no earlier than 50 minutes after sundown (5). If one ate before that time, he must eat another k'zayis of bread in order to fulfill the mitzvah (6).

The k'zayis of bread may not be eaten after midnight (7). B'dieved, though, one who did not eat before midnight should do so after midnight and recite the proper blessing (8).

Preferably, one should sit down to eat the k'zayis of bread immediately after coming home from Ma'ariv. Unnecessary delays should be avoided (9).

#### HOW MUCH MUST BE EATEN

There are various views in the poskim about the exact measurement of a k'zayis. Since this is a Biblical obligation, it is proper to be stringent and eat at least 1.75 fl. oz. of bread, though one who eats 1 oz. of bread fulfills his obligation.

There is a view in the Rishonim (10) that holds that the minimum amount of bread one is obligated to eat in the succah on the first night is a k'beitzah, not merely a k'zayis. Although the basic halachah does not require the larger amount (11), still it is proper to satisfy that view as well (12). The amount to be eaten [to satisfy all views], therefore, is 3.5 oz. of bread (13).

The bread which is eaten [whether it is a k'zayis or a k'beitzah (14)] must be eaten within a time-span of 3 to 4 minutes (15). No talking may take place until the full amount is chewed and swallowed (16). L'chatchilah, it is proper to chew and then swallow the bread in its entirety (17).

#### THE BASIC PROCEDURE

One is obligated to eat the minimum amount of bread even if he does not enjoy it and even if it causes him distress (18). Even a person who is classified as a choleh sh'ein bo sakanah is obligated to eat a k'zayis of bread (19).

Before eating the bread, one must have in mind that he is about to fulfill the Biblical mitzvah of eating bread on the first night of Succos (20). If one fails to have this intent and eats the piece of bread as he normally does every Shabbos or Yom Tov, it is questionable if he has fulfilled the mitzvah (21). In any case, he should eat another portion of bread with the proper intent (22).

One does not fulfill his obligation by eating cake, etc. (23) Only bread made out of one of the five species of grain is valid.

Women are exempt from this mitzvah, but if they do eat the required amount of bread in the succah, it is considered a mitzvah and they may recite the blessing (24).

There are some who maintain that the bread should be eaten without being dipped in honey (25), etc. Most poskim are not particular about this stringency (26).

#### ARE WE REQUIRED TO FULFILL THIS MITZVAH WHEN IT IS RAINING?

There are many discussions in the poskim concerning the obligation to eat in the succah on the first night of Succos if it is raining. The following points are raised:

If rain is falling, is one obligated to eat in the succah or not?

If it is raining, is one obligated to wait and see if the rain will stop so that he can eat in a rain-free succah?

If one does eat in the succah while it is raining, can a blessing be recited?

If a person ate in the succah while it was raining and then the rain stopped, is he required to eat in the succah again?

If a person ate in the succah while it was raining and then went to sleep, is he obligated to get out of bed to eat again once the rain has stopped?

Since there are different rulings on all of these issues, the following, then, is a summary of the majority opinion (27):

If it is raining steadily and there is a reliable weather forecast for rain all night, one should make Kiddush [with shehecheyanu] and eat a k'zayis [or a k'beitzah (28)] in the succah. No blessing over the succah is recited. The rest of the meal is eaten inside the house (29).

If there is no reliable weather forecast and there is a possibility that the rain will stop [e.g., it is drizzling or it is raining on and off], it is proper to wait an hour or two for the rain to subside (30). The poskim agree, however, that if the delay will disturb the dignity and pleasure of the Yom Tov, or if the family is hungry and/or tired, there is no obligation to wait.

If the rain stops while the meal is being eaten inside the house or even after the meal has finished, one is obligated to eat at least a beitzah (31) of bread in the succah. Even if the rain stops after midnight, a beitzah of bread must

be eaten in the succah. If one has already gone to bed and then the rain stops, there is no obligation to get out of bed in order to eat in the succah (32).

#### FOOTNOTES

1 Succah 27a. 2 Mishnah Berurah 639:27. 3 Be'ur Halachah 639:3. 4 Rama O.C. 639:3. 5 This is the generally accepted time for "night". Under extenuating circumstances, there are those who permit eating the bread a few minutes earlier. Since this is a Biblical mitzvah, it is proper – weather permitting – to wait for 72 minutes after sundown, to satisfy the views of the Rishonim who hold that before that time it is not definitely night. 6 Mishnah Berurah 639:25. If, mistakenly, one ate the bread even earlier than sundown, not only must he eat another k'zayis but he must also repeat the blessing of leishev basukah. 7 Rama 639:3. 8 Mishnah Berurah 639:26. In that case, though, at least a k'beitzah of bread should be eaten. 9 Mateh Efrayim 625:42, 44. 10 Quoted by the Rivva and Ran in Succah 27b. 11 O.C. 639:3. 12 Mateh Efrayim 625:51; Mishnah Berurah 639:22. 13 The amount of a beitzah according to the Chazon Ish. 14 Mateh Efrayim 625:52 and Elef le-Mateh 87. 15 Mishnah Berurah 639:22. Children under bar mitzvah may take up to 9 minutes for the amount to be eaten—Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 54 note 130). 16 Kaf ha-Chayim 639:50. 17 Mateh Efrayim 625:52. Mishnah Berurah, though, does not mention this. 18 Be'ur Halachah 639:3. 19 Bikurei Yaakov 639:6,24; Aruch ha-Shulchan 639:17. 20 Mateh Efrayim 625:51; Mishnah Berurah 625:1. In addition to this, one should bear in mind the reasons behind the mitzvah of succah. According to some poskim (Bikurei Yaakov 625:3 based on Bach), failure to have this intent invalidates the mitzvah. Mishnah Berurah, however, rules, that b'dieved one fulfills his obligation even if he does not have in mind the reasons for the mitzvah. 21 See Chidah (Simchas ha-Regel, quoted in Mo'adim U'zmanim 6:69) who questions if one has fulfilled his obligation in this case. See, however, Mishnah Berurah 60:10, quoting the Chayei Adam. 22 Mateh Efrayim 625:53. 23 Mishnah Berurah 639:21. 24 Sephardic women, though should not recite the blessing on this mitzvah or on any mitzvah which they are not obligated to perform, such as lulav, shofar, etc. 25 See Yechaveh Da'as 4:37 for the various views. 26 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Nishmas Avraham O.C. pg. 320 and Harav O. Yosef (ibid. pg. 337). Tzitz Eliezer (15:32-14) maintains that one should be stringent. See also Mo'adim U'zmanim 1:86. 27 Based on rulings of Mateh Efrayim and Mishnah Berurah. 28 Mateh Efrayim 625:51, 62 and Elef le-Mateh 84. See, however, Ktzei ha-Mateh who holds that when raining all agree that a k'zayis is sufficient. 29 When reciting Hamotzi, one should have in mind that he will recite Birkas ha-Mazon inside the house. 30 Some poskim are more stringent and recommend waiting until midnight. 31 In this case, a k'zayis is not enough. 32 There is a minority opinion (Mo'adim U'zmanim 1:86, based on his understanding of the Gr"a; Harav M. Soloveitchik, quoted in Reshimos Shiurim (Succah, pg. 92) and in Mesorah Torah Journal, vol. 14, pg. 57) which maintains that even after going to sleep one is obligated to get out of bed in order to eat in the succah. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Haya'el Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 1999 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Project Genesis, Inc. Rabbi Neustadt is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. Weekly Halacha © 2020 by Torah.org.

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date: Oct 1, 2020, 8:02 AM

#### Shabbat Shalom: Sukkot

##### Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – One of the most picturesque and creative festivals of the year is the Festival of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) – when the entire family is involved in building and decorating a special “nature home” which will be lived in for an entire week. But what are we actually celebrating and what is the true meaning of the symbol of the sukka? Is it the sukka of our desert wanderings, the temporary hut which the Israelites constructed in the desert when they wandered from place to place? If so, then the sukka becomes a reminder of all of the exiles of Israel throughout our 4,000-year history, and our thanksgiving to God is for the fact that we have survived despite the difficult “climates” – the persecution and pogroms and assimilation – which still threaten to overwhelm those who unfortunately still live in the Diaspora (may the wise reader take my “hint”).

Or is the sukka meant to be reminiscent of the Divine “clouds of glory” which encompassed us in the desert with God’s rays of splendor, a foretaste of the Sanctuary which served as the forerunner of our Holy Temple in Jerusalem? In the Grace after Meals during the Sukkot festival we pray that

“the Merciful One restore for us the fallen tabernacle of David,” which would certainly imply that the sukka symbolizes the Holy Temple. The Talmud (B.T. Succot 11) brings a difference of opinion between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer as to which of these options is the true significance of our celebration. I would like to attempt to analyze which I believe to be the true symbolic meaning and why.

The major biblical description of the festivals is found in Chapter 23 of the Book of Leviticus. There are two textual curiosities which need to be examined. The three festivals which were always considered to be our national festivals, and which also biblically appear as the “desert” festivals, are Pessah, Shavuot and Sukkot – commemorating when we left Egypt, when we received the Torah at Sinai and when we lived in desert booths. Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are more universal in nature and not at all related to the desert sojourn. It seems strange that in the biblical exposition of the Hebrew calendar Pessah and Shavuot are explained, after which comes Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and only at the conclusion of the description comes Sukkot.

Now, of course one can argue that this is the way the months fall out on the calendar year! However, that too is strange. After all, the Israelites left Egypt for the desert; presumably they built their booths immediately after the Festival of Pessah. Would it not have been more logical for the order to have been Pesach, Sukkot, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?

Secondly, the Festival of Sukkot is broken up into two parts. Initially, the Torah tells us: “And the Lord spoke to Moses saying: on the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Festival of Sukkot, seven days for God these are the Festivals of the Lord which you shall call holy convocations” (Leviticus 23:33-38). It would seem that these last words conclude the biblical description of the festivals and the Hebrew calendar. But then, in the very next verse, the Torah comes back again to Sukkot, as if for the first time: “but on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the crop of the land, you shall celebrate God’s festival for a seven day period... You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree (myrtle) and willows of brooks; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven-day period... You shall dwell in booths for a seven-day period... so that your generations will know that I caused the people of Israel to dwell in booths when I took them from the Land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (ibid. Leviticus 23:39-44). Why the repetition? And if the Bible now wishes to tell us about the four species which we are to wave in all directions in thanksgiving to God for his agricultural bounty, why was this verse not linked to the previous discussion of the Sukkot booths? And why repeat the booths again this second time?

I have heard it said in the name of the Vilna Gaon that this repetition of Sukkot with the commandment concerning the Four Species is introducing an entirely new aspect of the Sukkot festival: the celebration of our entering into the Land of Israel. Indeed, the great philosopher-legalist Maimonides explains the great joy of the festival of Sukkot as expressing the transition of the Israelites from the arid desert to a place of trees and rivers, fruits and vegetables, as symbolized by the Four Species (Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 Chapter 43). In fact, this second Sukkot segment opens with the words, “But on the fifteenth day of the seventh month when you gather the crop of the land (of Israel), you shall celebrate this festival to the Lord.” Hence, there are two identities to the festival of Sukkot. On the one hand, it is a desert festival, alongside Pessah and Shavuot, which celebrates our desert wanderings and survivals while living in flimsy booths. From that perspective, perhaps it ought to have found its place immediately after Pessah in terms of the calendar and certainly before the description of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in the biblical text. However, the second identity of Sukkot, the Four Species, which represent our conquest and inhabitation of our homeland and signals the beginning of redemption, belongs after Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur – the festivals of God’s kingship over the world and his Divine Temple, which is to be “a house of prayer for all the nations.”

This aspect of Sukkot turns the sukka into rays of Divine splendor and an expression of the Holy Temple.

So which Sukkot do we celebrate? Both at the very same time! But when we sit in the sukka, are we sitting in transitory booths representative of our wandering or rather in a Divine sanctuary protected by rays of God’s glory? I think it depends on whether we are celebrating the festival in the Diaspora or in the Land of Israel!

Shabbat Shalom!

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Shabbat Parashat Bereishet

For the week ending 3 October 2020 / 15 Tishri 5781

**Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**

**חש"פ 5781 An Exceptional Year**

As we entered into the Yomim Noraim of a new year, with the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) still raging around the world, and Eretz Yisrael in yet another lockdown,[1] we are surely all davening for the Gemara’s aphorism of “Tichleh Shana U’Klalosecha, May the year and its curses end,”[2] and its addendum, “Tachel Shana U’Birchosecha”,[3] May the New Year and its blessings be ushered in,” to rapidly come true.

Indeed, there are several suggestions floated as to what the initials of חש"פ may stand for, including ‘Tehei Shnas Pidyon Acharon’ (May this be the year of final redemption) or simply (and perhaps somewhat sarcastically) ‘Ois Tav Shin Pei’ (No longer 5780). Many are excited about the great Chasam Sofer’s referring to 5781 as “Mei’ashpos Yarim Evyon”[4] and our nation being exalted and lifted up, as opposed to 5780 being portent of death and calamity.[5] Either way, we are all looking forward to a New Year chock-full of blessing.

ZaCh”A

Yet, there is more to 5781’s exceptionality. Much more. You see, this year is classified as חש"פ in our calendars. This abbreviation is referring to Rosh Hashana falling out on Shabbos (zayin), both months of Cheshvan and Kislev being chesir (ches; 29-day months instead of 30; these are the only months that can switch off in our set calendar),[6] and Pesach falling out on Sunday (aleph). Out of the 14 possibilities in Tur’s 247-year calendar cycle,[7] this is one of the rarest setups of a year, and occurs on average only once in 23 years.[8] The last time we had this calendrical makeup was 20 years ago (5761), and the time before that was 24 years prior. The reasons and rules governing the whys and whens this transpires are too complicated for this discussion; suffice to say that when the Mishnah Berurah discusses these issues he writes “ain kan makom l’ha’arich”, that this is not the place to expound in detail,[9] which is certainly good enough for this author.

A ZaCh”A year ensures that there will be a plethora of rare calendrical phenomena that we will IY”H be witnessing, or more accurately, taking an active part in.

No Shofar

The first unusual minhag of the year is one that last occurred eleven years ago, back in 5770 (2009). This is that Rosh Hashana fell out on Shabbos. Accordingly, the shofar was not sounded on the first (Biblical) day of Rosh Hashana, but rather only on the second (Rabbinic) day. The reason given for this ‘silencing of the shofar’ is the remarkable Gezeira of Chazal that one may come to mistakenly carry a shofar out of the permitted area on this Shabbos in order to learn how to properly blow it.[10] Whenever Shabbos Rosh Hashana occurs, we are collectively astounded as to the strength of this extraordinary Gezeira – for all of Klal Yisrael desisting from performing an outright Mitzva Deoraysa simply due to a far-out possibility of one person unwittingly and unintentionally transgressing another – that of Hotza’ah – carrying, especially in an age when many of us have Eruvin[11] (and thus technically, the issue moot), is simply incredible.

Yet, there is an alternate, and perhaps more appropriate way to view this situation – not sounding the shofar on Shabbos Rosh Hashana as per



Gezeiras Chazal showcases to us all that Kedushas HaShabbos is of paramount importance in all that we do – and yes, even to the extent of pushing off a precious, once-a-year (OK, twice a year) Mitzva Deoraysa. Several Acharonim stressed that in a way, a year like ours is a gift[12] – that not blowing the shofar due to Shabbos credits us with whatever spiritual gain we would have obtained had we been able to blow the shofar.[13] Yet, there is a caveat – we need to show how much we honor, respect, and delight in our Shabbos observance in order to properly reap the spiritual rewards of a Shabbos Rosh Hashana.[14]

No Lulav

As the Gemara continues, the same Gezeira holds true regarding Lulav and Megillah as well. Meaning, if the first day of Rosh Hashana occurred on Shabbos, then the first day of Sukkos two weeks later will also occur on Shabbos. And just as there was no fulfilling the Mitzva Deoraysa of Shofar on Rosh Hashana, but rather only the second day M'Derabbanan, there will also be no fulfilling the Mitzva Deoraysa of taking and waving the Arba Minim on the first day of Sukkos – which is M'Deoraysa, but rather only M'Derabbanan – as performing this Mitzva on all the remaining days of Sukkos is M'Derabbanan. Another spectacular testament to the prominence and centrality of Kedushas HaShabbos.

Five YaKNeHa"Zes

Another record-breaking occurrence is that this year there will be five (!) YaKNeHa"Zes over the course of the year for those in Chutz La'arezt (but only two for those of us in Eretz Yisrael). YaKNeHa"Z refers to the special hybrid Kiddush-Havdalah that is only recited when a Shabbos exits directly into a Yom Tov. This occurs more frequently in Chutz La'arezt than in Eretz Yisrael due to the prevalence of two-day Yomim Tovim.

In Chutz La'arezt this year there are the:

Second night of Rosh Hashana

Second night of Sukkos

Night of Simchas Torah

First night of Pesach (Leil HaSeder)

Last night of Pesach

Yet, in Eretz Yisrael there are only two YaKNeHa"Zes occurring:

Second night of Rosh Hashana

First night of Pesach (Leil HaSeder)

The reason for this discrepancy is due to Yom Tov Sheini, which is observed in Chutz La'arezt and not in Eretz Yisrael.[15]

Of course, along with each YaKNeHa"Z is the special Havdalah bracha addition recited in the Yom Tov Maariv Shemoneh Esrei at the time that Shabbos "is going away" – "Vatode'ainu," which concludes with the not too common "HaMavdil Bein Kodesh L'Kodesh." [16]

The word YaKNeHa"Z is an acronym of the proper order of brachos in this Kiddush/Havdalah. It stands for Yayin (Borei Pri Hagafen), Kiddush (Mekadeish Yisrael V'Hazmanim), Ner (Borei Me'orei Ha'Aish), Havdalah (Hamavdil Bein Kodesh L'Kodesh), Zman (Shehechiyanu). [17]

To help facilitate this special Kiddush that needs its own Havdalah candle(s) that will go out by itself/themselves (in order not to unwittingly transgress the prohibition of 'Kivui', extinguishing), [18] several companies recently started making "YaKNeHa"Z Candles" (a.k.a. "avukalehs") small candles containing several wicks (to be classified as an 'avuka' – torch, for Havdalah; [19] as opposed to the traditional one-wick candle) that go out by themselves after several minutes – made especially to facilitate easy YaKNeHa"Z performance. It is reported that Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv's "face lit up with joy" the first time someone brought him one of these YaKNeHa"Z candles, as it enabled him to properly perform this Kiddush/Havdalah without any potential chashashos. [20] Mi K'Amcha Yisrael!

Wabbit Season?

All of these YaKNeHa"Z es in one year makes this author ruminate about what is possibly the oddest connection to it. In what appears to be an interesting turn of phrase, many classic Ashkenazic Illuminated Haggados over the centuries, including the Cincinnati, Ashkenazic, Prague, Venice, and

Augsburg Haggados, depict an interesting phenomenon next to the hybrid Kiddush-Havdalah of YaKNeHa"Z: a rabbit hunt. Yes, you read that right. Not even remotely related to either Kiddush or Havdalah (or in fact anything else in Yiddishkeit; except possibly the Noda B'Yehuda's famous teshuva regarding hunting for sport or pleasure), [21] a full-fledged rabbit hunt. Scholars theorize that the reason this picture is placed specifically at this point of the Haggada is the similar-sounding German phrase "Jag den Häs," which translates to "Chase the Rabbit" or "Hunt the Hare." Apparently this was an easy, albeit whimsical way to remind the locales in their vernacular of the proper order of brachos of this Kiddush-Havdalah on Seder Night.

Megillah Mystery

This calendrical setup also means that this year there is no Shabbos Chol HaMoed – which ordinarily means more time for Chol HaMoed trips (not seemingly too applicable under Israeli Lockdown). Yet, this also means that the Yom Tov days of both Sukkos and Pesach will have longer davenings. This is due to Megillah readings – Koheles on Sukkos and Shir HaShirim on Pesach. As both of these Megillos are ordinarily read on the Yom Tov's respective Shabbos Chol HaMoed, [23] when there isn't one, they get pushed off to other days of Yom Tov. But there is another fascinating divergence between Eretz Yisrael and Chutz La'arezt. Without Shabbos Chol HaMoed, in Eretz Yisrael Koheles gets pushed forward to Yom Tov Rishon of Sukkos, whereas in Chutz La'arezt it gets pushed off further to Shemini Atzeres. Meaning, although everyone will read Koheles on a Shabbos Yom Tov day of Sukkos, in Eretz Yisrael it will be read a full week (!) before it is read in Chutz La'arezt. [24]

On the other hand, regarding Pesach, in lieu of Shabbos Chol HaMoed, everyone will be united in pushing Shir HaS hirim's reading off to Shevii shel Pesach – which will also be the only Shabbos over Pesach this year. Haftaras Parashas Mikeitz

This year, as the eight-day chag of Chanuka will start on a Friday, it will end on a Friday as well – right before Parashas Mikeitz. This affords us a rare opportunity to read Mikeitz's actual haftara, as the vast majority of the time it is Shabbos Chanuka, which pre-empts it for one of the special Shabbos Chanuka haftaras. [25] This haftara, last publicly read twenty years ago back in 5761, discusses the wisdom of Shlomo HaMelech – ordering to cut the baby in half in order to determine its real mother. [26] This is actually the second rarest haftara Ashkenazim read – just 24 times over the Tur's entire 247 year cycle. [27]

Fasting on Friday?

Another fascinating characteristic of 5781 is that the Taanis Tzibbur of Asarah B'Teves will fall out on a Friday. This status is actually exclusive to this fast – as it is the only one that we do actually observe as a communal fast on a Friday. [28] Proof to this, perhaps is from the words of Yechezkel HaNavi referring to Asarah B'Teves that the siege of Yerushalayim leading up to the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash transpired "B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh", [29] implying that the fast must always be observed on that exact day, no matter the conflicting occurrence. This would explain why it is fully observed on Friday, with no dispensation given. [30]

This is fairly interesting as there is a whole debate in the Gemara about how to conduct fasts on a Friday, when we must also take kavod Shabbos into account, [31] implying that it is a common occurrence. However, according to our calendar, a communal Friday fast is only applicable with Asarah B'Teves, and it does happen quasi-frequently. The last few times Asarah B'Teves fell out on a Friday were in 1996, 2001, 2010, and 2013; the latter of which, quite appropriately, coincided with a "Yerushalmi Blizzard." [32] Asarah B'Teves is next expected to occur on a Friday in 2023 (5784), 2025 (5785), 2034 (5795), and 2037 (5798). In another interesting calendrical twist, but not the Jewish calendar, due to the differences between the Jewish lunar-based year and the Gregorian solar-based year, this fast, curiously falling out on December 25th, [33] is actually the second Asarah B'Teves fast to occur in 2020. The first was back on January 7th (anyone remember that B.C. – Before Covid?).

Halachos of a Friday Fast



The halachos of a Friday fast generally parallel those of a regular fast day.[34] In fact, even though there is some debate in the Rishonim as to the Gemara's intent that "Halacha – Mesaneh U'Mashlim, a Friday fast should be completed" whether or not one may be mekabel Shabbos early and thereby end the fast before nightfall,[35] nonetheless, the halacha follows the Shulchan Aruch and Rema that since Asarah B'Teves is a public fast (Taanis Tzibbur) and not a Taanis Yachid, one must fast the whole day and complete it at nightfall (Tzeis HaKochavim) before making Kiddush.[36] There are many Poskim who maintain that it is preferable to daven Maariv earlier than usual on such a Friday night, to enable making Kiddush, and breaking the fast exactly at Tzeis HaKochavim.[37]

Zachor - Terumah

Another interesting calendarical anomaly, albeit one with absolutely no halachic significance, is which Parashah Parashas Zachor will be read on. Usually, in a non-leap year, Parashas Zachor is read on Parashas Tetzaveh. Yet, this year, it will be pre-empted a week, and read on Parashas Terumah. This also last occurred twenty years ago in 5761.

Purim Shechal B'Erev Shabbos

As we are already discussing the Purim season, the next calendar quirk has significant importance. You see, in 5781, Purim will fall out on Friday. For most of us worldwide this will mean a rushed day to pack in all of the Purim-day Mitzvos before the onset Shabbos.[38] Yet, for those fortunate enough to live in Yerushalayim (or other walled cities from the time of Yehoshua Bin Nun) where Purim is celebrated on the next day, Shushan Purim, which falls out on Shabbos, this unique set of circumstances triggers the incredible Purim Meshulash, or "Triple Purim," a rare three-day Purim extravaganza. This last occurred back in 5768/2008, and prior to that in 5765/2005 and 5761/2001, and is next expected in another four years in 5785/2024, followed by a long break of 21 years, in 5805/2045, and then three years later in 5808/2047.

This rare occurrence is due to the same Gezeiras Chazal discussed previously regarding Shofar and Lulav, that due to the Megillah obligation, one may unwittingly carry it on Shabbos outside the permitted Reshus to an expert. Hence, the Megillah may not be read on Shabbos:[39] ergo, Purim's mitzvos get divvied up to the surrounding days.

It is important to note that this three-day Purim Meshulash is not an actual three-day Yom Tov. Each separate day possesses unique observances of Purim exclusive to it, with the different mitzvos of Purim applying separately on Friday, Shabbos, and Sunday. Friday's mitzvos are the Megillah reading and Matanos L'Evyonim (like the rest of the world). Shabbos has the recitation of Al Hanissim and the special Purim Maftir ("Vayavo Amalek"),[40] as well as the Haftarah of Parashas Zachor ("Pakaditi") [41] read a second time (two weeks in a row), [42] and Sunday has Mishloach Manos and the Purim Seudah. Yes, as one who has celebrated a few over the years, there is nothing quite like a Purim Meshulash.

Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos

Yet, whenever there is a Purim Meshulash, there is an even greater phenomenon with great halachic ramifications that will occur exactly one month later: Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos. When this happens, we need an entirely new rulebook on how our Pesach preparations are supposed to ensue.

For example, the Erev Pesach Taanis Bechorim gets pre-empted two days earlier to Thursday.[43] Perhaps more importantly, Bedikas Chometz cannot be done the night before Pesach as usual. Since Erev Pesach is Shabbos, Bedikas Chometz must be performed on Thursday night instead. But that means that Sereifas Chometz has to take place on Friday morning, Erev Erev Pesach. But we can't recite Kol Chamira as we still need to save some chometz for the Shabbos Seudos (remember, Shabbos is Erev Pesach), as it is forbidden to eat Matzah on Erev Pesach.[44] Yet, all of the chometz has to be finished before Sof Zman Achillas Chometz.[45]

So what are we to do? How are we to have our Shabbos seudos?[46]

The answer is to only leave over a small amount of (hopefully not crumbly) chometz for the seudos (such as using pita for Lechem Mishneh), daven

K'Vasikin (HaNeitz) and immediately start the Shabbos Seudah afterwards. Optimally, one should split the seudos in order to be yotzei eating Seudas Shlishis as well. This entails very close timing as well as a sufficient break (and perhaps a walk) between the two seudos.[47] and making sure to finish all chometz before Sof Zman Achillas Chometz. Afterwards, getting rid of the rest of the chometz,[48] brushing off and cleaning up any chometz crumbs, rinsing and cleaning off hands and mouths,[49] and reciting Kol Chamira – all before Sof Zman Sereifas Chometz.[50] Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin advised that these chometzdik seudos should be served on disposables, thus enabling a much faster and easier cleaning up process.[51] Anyone who wishes to eat Seudas Shlishis afterwards, cannot eat Challah or Matzah, and must eat other foods, such as fruit or shehakol items instead.[52] As there is no way to be fulfill every inyan lechatchilla in this situation,[53] including eating a Hamotzi Seudas Shlishis after davening Mincha,[54] many Poskim advise eating Matzah balls (kneidlach) Shabbos afternoon after an early Mincha,[55] for at least a Mezonos Seudas Shlishis (more germane for those who are not makpid on Sheruya/Gebrochts[56]). This solution is due to the fact that one may not fulfill his Matzah obligation on Leil HaSeder with cooked Matzah.[57] Hence kneidlach, although made with Matzah Meal, are nonetheless permitted to be eaten on Erev Pesach. On this Shabbos Erev Pesach afternoon, when neither chometz nor Matzah can be eaten, this becomes an optimal manner to fulfill the Seudas Shlishis obligation.[58]

An important reminder for this marathon Shabbos: as it is Shabbos that is immediately preceding Pesach, one may not perform any preparations on Shabbos for Yom Tov, and all Seder preparations may only begin from Tzeis Hakochavim,[59] after reciting "HaMavdil Bein Kodesh L'Kodesh," either by itself or as part of "Vatode'ainu" in the Yom Tov Maariv.

One last fascinating fact about our remarkable year is that of all possibilities in the Tur's 247 year cycle, due to its calendarical makeup, a ZaCH"A year has the least amount of Tefillos recited within: 1143 (in Chutz La'aretz).[60] In conclusion, Tachel Shanah U'Birchoseha, and may this exceptional year's initials stand for Tehei Shnas Pidyon Rachon!

*This author wishes to acknowledge Rabbi Shea Linder's excellent article on topic.*

[1]As far as this author is aware, the city of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia is still under full lockdown from over a month before this period and was unable to hold minyanim at all for the Yomim Noraim. [2]Gemara Megillah (31b). [3]As per the final refrain of the piyut many recite on Leil Rosh Hashana, "Achos Ketana" (composed by the noted Mekubal Rav Avraham Chazan of Gerona, Spain, a contemporary of the Ramban's). See Mathe Efraim (581:57). [4]Shmuel I (Ch. 2:8) and Tehillim (113:7) – Hashem lifts the pauper out of the garbage-heap (or dung pile). [5]Originally written over 180 years ago (!), this passage is found in Chasam Sofer al HaTorah (Vayikra, Parashas Bechukosai, pg. 86a, right-hand column in the 5719 Shaar Yosef edition, published by the Chasam Sofer's grandson's son-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Nafali Stern). [6]See previous article titled "Bar Mitzvah-ed Before His Time?". [7]Tur (Orach Chaim428). [8]See Rav David Heber's Shaarei Zmanim (Ch. 22, footnote 8, pg. 188). [9]Biur Halacha (428:1, end s.v. eilu hayamim). He also writes a tad earlier that "v'hinei kol zeh shekasavnu ain tzarich leha'arich b'frotrot aich hu kein, rak shetaida haklal," (loosely) that all of these matters do not need to be measured in their exact minutiae, but rather one should know the general rules. [10]Mishnah and following Gemara in Rosh Hashana (29b), Beitzah (17b-18a), Megillah (4b), Pesachim (69a), and Sukka (42b). See also Rambam (Hilchos Shofar Ch. 2:6, 8, 9) and Rivva (Megillah 4b s.v. hani taama) as to how fundamental this rule is – even though we now have a set calendar, and ruled practically in Orach Chaim (588:5). Yet, several Rishonim (including the Rosh (Rosh Hashana Ch. 4:1), Ran (ad loc. 8a s.v. nireh in the Rif's pagination), Maggid Mishnah (on the Rambam ad loc. 9), Sefer Hachinuch (Parashas Pinchas, Mitzva 405), and Tur (O.C. 588:5)) point out that although seemingly against the halachic consensus, the Rif had the Shofar blown for him on Shabbos Rosh Hashanah, as he understood that a Beis Din Kavua (or Beis Din Muflag B'Doro) had the ability to do so. The Ramban, in a Drasha L'Rosh Hashana, writes that he did so as well, citing precedent from "Ziknei Anshei Sefard". Yet, the halacha pesuka follows the Rambam, that samuch to or in Eretz Yisrael, as well as being a Beis Din Gadol that is Mekadeish the Chodesh is also needed to allow this – prerequisites that are sorely lacking nowadays. In more contemporary times, records of Rav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger in the early 1900s trying to convince the Rabbanim and Batei Dinim of his time in Yerushalayim to allow shofar blowing on Shabbos Rosh Hashana overlooking the Makom Hamikdash are legend, as is the listing of several Rabbanim that came to listen to him (while hidden) blowing on the tzad that his position was correct. See Rabbi Elyakum Dvorkes' recent Nesivei Minhagim (B'Inyanei Elul, Rosh Hashana, V'Aseres Yemei Teshuva) who devotes a chapter to this fascinating machlokes of historical record. [11]See previous article titled "The Curious Case of the Karpef." [12]For those who ask how can this possibly hold true, when the Gemara in Rosh Hashana (16b) famously states that "any year that the Shofar is not blown at the beginning of the year, there will be Teruos at the end of the year, as the Satan was not confused," ostensibly referring to being the harbinger of a difficult year (see Rashash ad loc. for an explanation), and we know that as Rosh Hashana falls on Shabbos this year, we do not blow the Shofar except on the second day. To these questioners I refer to Tosafot's brief elucidation (Rosh Hashana 16b s.v. she'ain; citing the BeHa"G) that this dictum is specifically not referring to when Rosh Hashana occurs on Shabbos, but rather a regular year when the Shofar was not blown due to some other oness (unforeseen extenuating circumstance). [13]See, for example, "Rav Yechezkel Kachli's" Shu"r Torah Lishma (436; generally attributed to the Ben Ish Chai), the Chasam Sofer's Toras Moshe (Parashas Nitzavim, pg. 51a s.v. v'chein sha'alu), and the Aruch LaNer's posthumously published Minchas Ani (Parashas Haazinu, Shabbos Shuva 5632, pg. 133b-134a). [14]Toras Moshe and Minchas Ani (ibid.). This was actually part of the content of the Aruch LaNer's drasha on his final Shabbos Shuva - 5632. [15]See previous articles titled "Rosh Hashana: The Universal Two-Day Yom Tov", "One Day or Two?" and "Sukka on Shemini Atzeres?" [16]See Rambam (Hilchos Tefilla Ch. 2:12) and Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 492:2 and 599:1), based on Gemara Brachos (33b). It is important to note that it is only when Motzai Shabbos is Yom Tov when "HaMavdil Bein Kodesh L'Kodesh" is recited and effective as a Havdalah. In the

reverse scenario, when Motzai Yom Tov is Shabbos - there is no Havdalah, due to the increase of Kedusha from Yom Tov to Shabbos and din of Tosefes Shabbos. [In such a case, and as opposed to when Yom Tov immediately follows Shabbos (when this would be forbidden), one may prepare on Yom Tov for Shabbos, but exclusively when an Erev Tavshilin was performed before said Yom Tov.] [17]See Gemara Pesachim (102b-103a), Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos Ch. 29:22 and Maggid Mishnah ad loc.), Mathe Efraim (600:2), and Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 473:5). [18]See Elef HaMagen (on the Mathe Efraim 620:3; citing Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avodah, Shaar 9, Ch. 5), Mishnah Berurah (502:19 and 20 and Biur Halacha 514:2 s.v. v'ychbeh b' me'eharah), theShulchan Aruch Harav's Lekutei Taamim U'Minhagim L'Haggada shel Pesach (at the end of vol. 3; Kadeish, Havdalah), Shu"t Igros Moshe (O.C. vol. 5:20, 30), Shu"t Ba'er Moshe (vol. 8:184), Shu"t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 8:217), Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa (vol. 2, Ch. 62:18 and vol. Tikkunim U'Miluim ad loc. footnote 31), Orchos Rabbeinu (new edition; vol. 2, pg. 133:43), Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchaso (Ch. 1:20; and extensive footnotes), Halichos Shlomo (Moadim vol. 2, Ch. 9, footnote 155 s.v. uv'taam), Halichos Even Yisrael (Moadim vol. 1, pg. 162-163:7-9 and pg. 273-274:6-7), Rav Pesach Eliyahu Falk's Zachor V'Shamor (original edition, vol. 7, pg. 33-e and 52-d), and Rav Shimon Eider's Sefer Hilchos Shabbos (pg. 263 and footnote 34). [19]See Shulchan Aruch, Rema, and main commentaries to Orach Chaim (298:2; as well as Hagahos Rav Akiva Eiger, Y.D. 11:1 s.v. u'shnei' neiros; citing the Orach Misor), based on Gemara Pesachim (103b). [20]Alon Shoalin U'Dorshin (#137, Rosh Hashana 5781), from Rav Elyashiv's noted talmid Rav Ben Tzion Kook. [21]Shu"t Noda B'Yehuda (Tinyana Y.D. 10). [22]YaNeHa"Z depiction in the famous illuminated 1629 Venice Hagaddah. [23]Rema(O.C. 490:9; citing the Abudraham, Hilchos Tefillas HaPesach, pg. 266 s.v. nahagu, and O.C. 663:2; citing the Maharil, Seder Tefillos Chag HaSukkos). See also Leavush (O.C. 490:3 s.v. v'korin and 9 s.v. v'im and 666:2 s.v. v'omrim), Biur HaGr"v (O.C. 490:9), Magen Avraham (ad loc. 8), and Shu"t Igros Moshe (O.C. vol. 4:99, 2). [24]See Pri Megadim (O.C. 490 E.A. 8), Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky's authoritative Luach Eretz Yisrael (5781, pg. 30), Rav Sroya Deblitzky's Sakosa L'Roshi (Sukkos 14, pg. 27-28), Luach Halachachos U'Minhagim B'Eretz Yisrael (5781, pg. 86 and footnote 570), and Luach Itim L'vina (5781, Shabbos Chag HaSukkos). [25]Eiether "Runi V'Simchi" (Zecharia Ch. 2:14) or "Vayaas Chirom" (Melachim I Ch. 7:40) if it is the second Shabbos Chanuka. "Vayaas Chirom" is interestingly also the Ashkenazic Haftara for a rare stand-alone Parashas Vaykheil if it is not one of the Arba Parshiyos; this only occurs 26 times out of the Tur's 247-year cycle, or approximately once every 9 years. See Rav David Heber's Shaarei Zmanim (pg. 180-181). [26]"Vayikatz Shlomo" (Melachim I Ch. 3:15). [27]See Rav David Heber's Shaarei Zmanim (Ch. 21, pg. 180 and footnote 9). So what is the rarest? "Hashishof" – Parashas Kedoshim's haftara – read by Ashkenazim only 14 times in the 247-year cycle. This one was last read in 5757 and is next due to be read in another four years – 5784. See Shu"t Igros Moshe (O.C. vol. 1:36) and Shaarei Zmanim (ad loc. pg. 179 and footnote 6 and 7). Why this holds true was discussed at length in a previous article titled "The Case of the Missing Haftara." [28]See Abudraham (Hilchos Taanis), Magen Avraham (O.C. 550:4), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 4), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. end 2), and Mishna Berura (ad loc. 10). Although the Erev Pesach Taanis Bechorim [see Tur and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 470)] can also fall out on Friday, nevertheless, it is not a true communal fast, as it is not incumbent upon all of Klal Yisrael, rather exclusive to firstborns, of whom the vast majority exempt themselves with a siyum [see Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 5) and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 10)]. [29]Yechezekel (Ch. 24:2). [30]Although technically speaking, if other fasts (with the possible exception of Taanis Esther) would fall out on Friday, an impossibility in our calendar, we would also have to fast. See Rambam (Hilchos Taanios Ch. 5:5), Abudraham (ibid.), Beis Yosef (O.C. 550 s.v. u' mashekasav v'im), Rema (ad loc. 3), Magen Avraham (ad loc. 6), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 4). [31]Gemara Eiruvim (41a). [32]Yes, this author is familiar with the "Coincidences" involved with that memorable Yerushalayim snowstorm. According to the Targum (Rav Yosef) to Divrei Hayamim, "Yom Hasheleg", "The Day of Snow" that Benayahu ben Yehoyada "smote the lion in the pit" (Shmuel II, Ch. 23:20 and Divrei Hayamim I, Ch. 11:22; see also Gemara Brachos 18a), is none other than Asarah B'Teves! Additionally, since it was a fast, the Haftara read by Mincha included the apropos verse (Yeshaya Ch. 55:10) referring to "Ka'asher Yei reid Hageshem V'ehaseleg min Hashamayim, when the rain and snow fall from the heavens." Furthermore, that day's Daf Yomi was Yoma 35, which includes the famous account of Hillel almost freezing to death on the roof of Shmaya and Avtalyon's Beis Midrash, while trying to listen to their teaching "Divrei Elokim Chaim," when he could not afford the admission fee. That day was described by the Gemara as an Erev Shabbos in Teves, that a tremendous amount of snow (three amos) fell upon him from the heavens. Moreover, this incident ostensibly occurred in Yerushalayim, as it is well known that Shmaya and Avtalyon, the Gedolei HaDor, lived in Yerushalayim. [See Mishnayos Ediyus (Ch. 1:3 and Ch. 5:6), Gemara Brachos (19a), Shabbos (15a), and Yoma (71b).] Thanks are due to Rabbi David Alexander for his paper on these "Coincidences". [33]Well, perhaps not so curious, but possibly rather apropos. You see, according to the Selicha for Asarah B'Teves that starts with the word Ezerah, generally attributed to Rav Yosef Tov-Alem (Bonfils), a unique aspect of Asarah B'Teves is that we are actually fasting for two other days of tragedy as well; the 8th and 9th of Teves. According to the Megillas Taanis, regarding the 9th of Teves, "lo noda bo eizo hi hatzara she'e'era bo," the reason for the fast is unclear. One theory posited over the centuries is that the real reason for fasting is that the 9th of Teves is the true birthday of 'Oso Halsh', in whose name myriads of Jews over the millennia were R"t murdered. The origin of this claim seems to be the 12th century Sefer Halbur by Rav Avraham bar Chiya (pg. 109). In fact, the Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Chanuka, Inyanei Nittel, pg. 416) cites that some say that Nittel, the name used for the Christian December holiday, actually stands for Nolat Y'eshu T'es L'Teves. See previous article titled "The Many Facets of Asarah B'Teves." [34]However, even those who advise not to bathe on a regular fast day, nevertheless allow one to do so on a Friday fast L'Kavod Shabbos, with hot water as usual. See Bach (O.C. 550:3; although cited by both the Ba'er Heitiv and Mishnah Berurah as the source for this rule, nevertheless, this author has been unable to locate where exactly the Bach states an explicit Erev Shabbos exception for bathing), Elya Rabba (ad loc. 2), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 3), Shu"t Ksav Sofer (O.C. 100), Shulchan HaTahor (249:4), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. end 6), and Shu"t Siach Yitzchak (217). [35]Although the Gemara (Eruvin 41a; and also in Midrash Tanchuma, Bereishis 2) concludes "Halacha - Mesaneh U'Mashlim", even so, there are many Rishonim (most notably Tosafos (ad loc. 41b s.v. v'hilchasa) who understand that to mean that one may conclude his Erev Shabbos fast at Tzeis HaKochavim, even though it means he will enter Shabbos famished (a situation that is normally disfavored), and not that one must conclude his fast on Friday night at Tzeis HaKochavim. A further complication is that this also may depend on whether one is fasting for personal reasons (Taanis Yachid) or an obligatory public fast (Taanis Tzibbur). The Rema (O.C. 249:4) concludes that for a Taanis Yachid one may rely upon the lenient opinions and end his fast after he accepted Shabbos, prior to Tzeis HaKochavim (especially if he made such a stipulation before commencing his fast), yet for a Taanis Tzibbur, he rules that we follow the Rishonim who mandate strict interpretation of the Gemara, and we must fast until actual nightfall on Friday night. It is debatable whether the Shulchan Aruch is actually fully agreeing with this approach or not. See explanation of the Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 21 and Biur Halacha s.v. v'im) at length. This has since become normative halacha. See next footnote. [36]See Shulchan Aruch and Rema (O.C. 249:4), based on the Rosh (Taanis Ch. 2:4) and Maharil (Shu"t 33); Magen Avraham (ad loc. 8), Bach (ad loc. end 6), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 7), Elya Rabba (ad loc. 10), Korban Nesanel (Taanis, end Ch. 2:60), Shulchan Aruch HaRav (ad loc. 12), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (121:6), Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parashas Lech Lecha 23), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 10), Mishna Berura (ad loc. 21 and Biur Halacha s.v. v'im), Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 29 and 31), Shu"t Yabea Omer (vol. 6, O.C. 31), Shu"t Yechaveh Daas (vol. 1:80), Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Chanuka, Shu"t 14), Yalkut Yosef (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 249:7 and 559:25), and Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's Darchei Halacha glosses to the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (121:5). The Netei Gavriel adds that B'shaas Hadachak and l'torech gadol one may be mekabel Shabbos early and rely on the lenient opinions, as long it is after nightfall according to several opinions (meaning, an earlier zeman of Tzeis HaKochavim than the faster would usually observe). [37]See Shulchan HaTahor (249:13) who writes that usually it is assur to complete a Friday fast until Tzeis HaKochavim, even an obligatory fast, as it is an affront to Kedushas Shabbos; rather, he maintains that one should be mekabel Shabbos early and have his seudah before nightfall. Yet, in his explanations (Zer Zahav ad loc. 4) he maintains that regarding Asarah B'Teves on Friday, since we are beholden to follow the ruling of the Rema, one should still be mekabel Shabbos early, and daven Maariv earlier than usual, to enable us to end the fast with making Kiddush at the exact zeman of Tzeis HaKochavim. This is also cited by the Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Chanuka, Ch. 63:6). The Steipler Gaon (cited in Orchos Rabbeinu, new version, vol. 1, pg. 203:7 and vol.

2, pg. 200:8) was noheig this way, that in his shul on Asarah B'Teves on a Friday, they davened Maariv earlier than usual and announced that everyone should repeat Kriyas Shema. It is also mentioned (Orchos Rabbeinu ibid. and vol. 3, pg. 160:5) that this was the Chazon Ish's shittah as well, regarding any taanis, that Maariv should be davened somewhat earlier than usual, with Krias Shma repeated later on (the Chazon Ish held to start from 30 minutes after Shkiya, instead of his usual shittah of 40 minutes). This idea is also found in the Mathe Efraim (602:29), albeit regarding Tzom Gedalia, not to tarry extraneously regarding Maariv on a Motzai Taanis. He explains that there is no inyan of tosefes (adding extra time to) on a fast day aside for the Biblically mandated Yom Kippur, and therefore it is worthwhile to synchronize the ending of Maariv with the fast ending, and not wait for the full Tzeis Hakochavim to start Maariv as is usually preferred. Rav Shmuel Halevi Vosner (Shu"t Shevet Halevi vol. 6:72 and vol. 10:81 and Halichos Shevet Halevi Ch. 21:4, pg. 172) ruled this way as well, that it is proper to daven Maariv earlier on a standard fast day, shortly after Bein Hashmashos of the Gaonim's shittah, in Eretz Yisrael approximately 20 minutes after Shkiya. Rav Shmuel Salant, long time Rav of Yerushalayim in the late 1800s, ruled similarly (Toras Rabbeinu Shmuel Salant zt"l vol. 1, pg. 102:5) that on a Motzai Taanis, Maariv should be recited earlier than usual, in Yerushalayim from 10 minutes after Shkiya, and making sure Krias Shema is repeated afterwards. [38]Following the Rema's psak (O.C. 695:2; citing the Sefer Minhagim of Rav Yitzchak Isaac Tirnau/Tyrna) of starting before Chatzos. The Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 10) cites the Yad Efraim (ad loc.) quoting the Maharil (Shu"t 56), that in this situation, one has a bit more time to start his Purim Seudah - until the beginning of the tenth hour (three halachic hours before shkiya; see Orach Chaim 249:2). Yet, I used the expression "most of us," as there will be minority who will try to take advantage and perform the halachically not-so-simple "Pores Mapha U'Mekadeish" to extend their Purim Seudah into their Leil Shabbos Seudah (as per Pesachim 105a-b). See Magen Avraham (ad loc. 9; citing theMordechai), Chayei Adam (vol. 2:155, 32), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 15; see also Orach Chaim 271:4 and 6). Both the Meiri (Kesuvos 7b) and the Maharikash (Erech Lechem O.C. 695) wrote that they personally did this on Purim Erev Shabbos [as opposed to the Maharil (ibid. who seems not to have accepted this) and the Leket Yosher (pg. 156; who wrote "ain nohagin lekadeish"). For those who wish to perform this complicated hanhaga, this author advises to read Rav Sroyah Deblitzky's Purim Meshulash (Ch. 1:6 and extensive footnotes) to see how to accomplish this in a halachically acceptable manner. [39]There is a fascinating debate discussed by the Shaagas Aryeh in his Turei Even (Megillah 5a) regarding Purim Meshulash, that as the Megillah reading in Yerushalayim is pushed earlier to Friday (matching the rest of the world), whether it is now considered the actual proper time kavvus for Krias HaMegillah, or if it is considered read earlier, before the actual zman. One ramifications of this discussion is would be whether one may read the Megillah on Friday (regular Purim) without a minyan in Yerushalayim this year. Practically, the Pri Chodosh (O.C. 690:14 s.v. v'da), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 60 and 66, and Shaar Hatziyun ad loc. 59), and Rav Chaim Berlin (Shu"t Nishmas Chaim 77), rule that in such a case it must be leined with a minyan, otherwise a bracha may not be recited on the Kriya. The Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 118) concurs, unless there is a specific minhag to do so. On the other hand, the Pri Megadim (O.C. 696 M.Z. 1), Ohr Somayach (Hilchos Megillah Ch. 1:7), Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (Shu"t Salmas Chaim, original edition vol. 1:102 and 103), and Chazon Ish (O.C. 155:2; citing proof from the mashma'os of the Rambam) that in this case, Erev Shabbos is indeed considered "Zmanah," and a minyan is not necessary. See also Minchas Asher (Moadim vol. 2, Purim 34:2). Another potential implication of this discussion, especially according to the mashma'os of the Ran that the gezeira regarding Megillah is applicable due to "Teredos" (Megillah beg. Ch. 4; see also Hagahos Baruch Taam on the Magen Avraham O.C. 692:b who makes a similar point), would be regarding a child who became Bar Mitzvah in Yerushalayim on that Shabbos (or a case of an Oness), if he would need to and perhaps even be halachically permitted to read the Megillah on Shabbos now that he is a halachic man (and not just m'taam chinuch). Since this occurrence is extremely rare, perhaps Chazal were not gozer in such an exceptional situation. Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld is reported to be noteth to allowing this Bar Mitzvah boy to lein Megillah on Shabbos Purim Meshulash (as cited in Shu"t Tzitz Hakodesh vol. 1:55, 3), whereas the Tzitz Hakodesh himself concludes opposed. Similarly, it is reported (Shu"t Shevet Halevi vol. 5:83 s.v. v'agav) that the Brisker Rav and Rav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger had a similar debate as well, with the Shevet Halevi siding with Rav Schlesinger's opinion that the Bar Mitzvah bachur may not lein the Megillah on that Shabbos Purim. To further complicate matters, the Pri Chodosh (ad loc. 6) ruled that the Megillah actually becomes muktzah on this Shabbos Purim. And although the Elya Rabba (ad loc. 13), Machatzis Hashekel (ad loc. 12 s.v. v'da) and Chasam Sofer (Hagahos ad loc. 6 and Shu"t" O.C. 195) argue on his logic (see Mishnah Berurah ad loc. 18), Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld wrote an extensive footnote in his Seder HaPurim HaMeshulash defending the Pri Chodosh's position, concluding that we should certainly follow it as he was the Mara D'Asra of Yerushalayim. [This position seems lesshitaso regarding the kevuyus of Friday as the proper day of Kriyas HaMegillah as per his teshuvos in Shu"t Salmas Chaim: I am not entirely sure how to answer up his opinion as presented in Shu"t Tzitz Hakodesh, except that perhaps to surmise that it was only derech limud.] For more on this topic, see Cheishek Shlomo (Hagahos on Megillah 5a s.v. v'ha), Shu"t Sefer Yehoshua (Psakim U'Ksavim 226), Shu"t Har Tzvi (O.C. vol. 2:127), Mikraei Kodesh (Purim Ch. 52), Halichos Shlomo (Moadim vol. 1, Ch. 21, footnote 2), Halichos Even Yisrael (Moadim vol. 2, pg. 463), and Rav Moshe Mordechai Karp's Dinei Purim HaMeshulash (pg. 35). [40]Parashas Beshalach (Ch. 17:8). [41]Shmuel I (Ch. 15:2). [42]See Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 688:6) and main commentaries. For more details on the hanhagos of a Purim Meshulash, see both Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld's Seder HaPurim HaMeshulash as well as Rav Chaim Pinchas HaKohen's similarly-named Seder HaPurim HaMeshulash (under the auspices of Rav Chaim Berlin), both re-published in 1910. [43]See Terumas Hadeshen (126), Shulchan Aruch and Rema (O.C. 470:2), Ben Ish ChaiBen Ish ChaiYear 1 Parashas Terav, Halachos Im Chal Erev Pesach B'Shabbos Kodesh 1), and Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin's authoritative Ezras Torah Luach (reprinted in Shu"t Gevuros Eliyahu O.C. vol. 1:126, 7). [44]See Yerushalmi (Pesachim Ch. 10, Halacha 1), Rif (Pesachim 16a in his pagination; see also Ran ad loc. s.v. Gemara Yerushalmi), Rambam (Hilchos Chometz U'Matzah Ch. 6:12; and Maggid Mishnah ad loc.), Ramban (Pesachim 15b in the Rif's pagination, Milchamos Hashem s.v. amar), and Rema and main commentaries to Orach Chaim (471:2). [45]See MishnahPesachim (49a; following the shittah of Rabbi Eliezer bar Tzaddok), Gemara Pesachim (13a; following the similar shittah of Rabbi Elazar Ish Bartosa), Rambam (Hilchos Chometz U'Matzah Ch. 3:3), and Tur and Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries to Orach Chaim (444). [46]This author recommends reading chapters 13-16 of Rav Moshe Dov Stein's excellent Aliba D'Hilchasa on Hilchos Pesach and Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos, as it cites all of the backgrounds and potential solutions to the many issues that arise on this complicated day, in a clear and concise manner (as well as with extensive footnotes) for the scholar and layman alike. [47]See Magen Avraham (444:1; citing the Mordechai, Kol Bo, and Bach), Biur HaGr"v (ad loc. end s.v. uv'medinos; "v'chein ikar"). Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (115:4), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. end 8), Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld's Seder Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos (6; in the brackets), Kovetz Igros Chazon Ish (vol. 1:188; he writes that the break should be a half-hour [not to come into a question of bracha she'a'aina tzaricha]), Orchos Rabbeinu (new edition; vol. 2, pg. 65), Halichos Shlomo (Moadim vol. 2, Ch. 8:15), Minchas Asher Haggada (pg. 3:12), and Rav Moshe Mordechai Karp's Hilchos Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos (pg. 95). On the other hand, Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer (Halichos Even Yisrael, Moadim vol. 1, pg. 133:11) was reported to have been uneasy about doing this, as in Orach Chaim 291:3; it is implied that this only works for being considered Seudas Shlishas after Zman Mincha. Hence, he personally would not split his seudos on Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos. [48]By either flushing the remaining crumbs down the toilet (see Mishnah Berurah 444:21) or by throwing them away in a public trashbin if there is an Eruv (see Ben Ish Chai, Year 1 Parashas Terav, Halachos Im Chal Erev Pesach B'Shabbos Kodesh 2 and 3, Aruch Hashulchan O.C. 444:9; and Halichos Shlomo, Moadim vol. 2, Ch. 8:17) and being makfir them and then performing bitul chometz. [49]See Tur(O.C. 444:4; citing his father, the Rosh), ShulchanAruch(ad loc.), MagenAvraham(ad loc. 6), ChokYaakov(ad loc. 6), and KafHachaim(ad loc. 32). [50]There is another minority opinion, albeit one many Ashkenazim do not necessarily concur with - to have the Shabbos morning seudah/os with Matzah Ashira, i.e. Egg Matzah. And although we know that Rabbeinu Tam did use Matzah Ashira for his Seudas Shlishis on Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos (Tosafos, Pesachim 99b s.v. lo and Rosh ad loc. Ch. 10:1), on the other hand, the Vilna Gaon (Biur HaGr"v a O.C. 444:1; see also Moadim U'Zmanim vol. 3:241) cites proof from the Rambam (Hilchos Chametz U'Matzah Ch. 6:12) that it is prohibited. [See also Magen Avraham (471:5), citing the Maharal M'Prague (Gevuros Hashem Ch. 48) and Bach (ad loc.), as well as the Pri Chodosh (beg. O.C. 462),

Chok Yaakov (462:2), Elyah Rabba (471:8), Pri Megadim (M.Z. beg. O.C. 462), Minchas Chinuch (Parashas Bo, Mitzvah 10:7), Shu"t Ksav Sofer (O.C. 92), and Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak (vol. 8:37 s.v. v'chein muchach, v'hinei, and uv'yoseir), as to the acceptability of Matzah Ashira (even with minimal water added to the fruit juice it was kneaded with) being used to fulfill one's Matzah obligation at the Seder (perhaps b'shaas hadchak), and ergo, its reverse application as to its permissibility on Erev Pesach. [The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 444:1 and 471:2) rules that one may eat Matzah Ashira on Erev Pesach and even use it for Seudas Shlishis, whereas the Rema (ad loc. and 462:4; see Mishnah Berurah 462:15 and 471:10) writes succinctly that "Uv'Medinos Eilu" we do not use Matzah Ashira, and one should instead use fruit, meat, or fish for Seudas Shlishis. However, and although contested, many Poskim maintained that exclusively in the morning of Erev Pesach (even when it is chal B'Shabbos), Ashkenazim may indeed use Matzah Ashira for their seudos. See Mahara"ch Ohr Zarua (71), Shu"t HaRadbaz (vol. 1:429), Shu"t Noda B'Yehuda (Mahadura Kama O.C. 21), Shu"t Chelkas Yoav (O.C. 16), Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 444:5; who explains that the Rema meant it is not worth it to do as we do not eat Matza Ashira the whole Pesach unless "shaas hadchak l'tzorechei choleh oh zakein"), Shu"t Igros Moshe (O.C. vol. 1:155), Mikraei Kodesh (Pesach vol. 2:45), and Shu"t Yechaveh Daas (vol. 1:91, 10 and 12). For some, especially for those with small children, this may be a preferable option. Interestingly, the Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 15) writes that the minhag of many in Sefard is similar to the minhag in Ashkenaz, and is also not to eat Matzah Ashira on Erev Pesach. [51]See his authoritative Ezras Torah Luach (reprinted in Shu"t Gevuros Elyahu O.C. vol. 1:126, 7 s.v. b'Shabbos). [52]See Rema and main commentaries to Orach Chaim (444: end 1 and 291: end 5). [53]The Magen Avraham (444:2) cites an alternate view, that of the Shlah citing the Zohar in Parashas Emor, that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai would be Oseik B'Torah in lieu of Seudas Shlishis on Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos. The Vilna Gaon (B'ur HaGr" a ad loc. 1 end s.v. uv'medinos) writes that this shows that the Rashbi held that on this special day, as there is no full proper solution to fulfill Seudas Shlishis after Zman Mincha with bread, "ain takana d'avar klal." Noted Kabbalist and ancestor of the Chida, Rav Avraham Azulai (Hagahos Mohar" a Azulai on the Levush, ad loc. 1) writes that this is the "Mitzva Hayoseir Muvcheres" in this situation, "Iehashlim seudah hahi B'Divrei Torah, k' nizkar B' Zohar." The Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 6) maintains that this proves that on this special Shabbos Erev Pesach there is no actual chiyuv to have a Seudas Shlishis. Just as when Yom Kippur occurs on Shabbos it pushes off all of the Mitzvos of Shabbos, and when Rosh Hashana, Sukkos, or Purim fall out on Shabbos (like this year), the respective Mitzvos of Shofar, Lulav, and Megillah get pushed off, so too when Erev Pesach occurs on Shabbos, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was Oseik B'Torah instead, as the Mitzvah of Seudas Shlishis got pushed off as well. [54]See Tur, ShulchanAruch, and Rema(O.C. 291:2, 3, and 5), and B'urHalacha(ad loc. s.v. lo). [55]As one should not start a seudah on Erev Shabbos or Erev Yom Tov within three halachic hours before shkiya (see Orach Chaim 249:2), and especially regarding prior to the Pesach Seder – as per the Mishnah in the beginning of Perek Arvei Pesachim (Pesachim 99b) and subsequent Gemaras (100b and 107a-b). [56]For more on this topic, see Ba'er Heitiv (O.C. 460:10), Mor U'Ketzia (end 460), Shu"t Sheilas Yaavetz (vol. 2:65), Shaarei Teshuva (ad loc. 10), the Shulchan Aruch Harav's Sheilos U'Teshuvos Hashaychos L'Halichos Pesach (6; end of vol. 3), Maaseh Rav (187), Machatzis Hashekel (O.C. 458:1 s.v. u'divrei), Shu"t Maharshag (vol. 1, O.C. 56), and Shearim Metzuyanim B'Halacha (113:7 and 115:7; he maintains that even if one is makpid on Gebrochts the whole Pesach, kneidlach are still an excellent solution for Seudas Shlishis on Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos). [57]Gemara Pesachim (41a; following Rabbi Yosi's shittah), Rambam (Halichos Chometz U'Matzah Ch. 6:6), Tur and Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries to Orach Chaim (461:4). [58]See Maharil(Drashos, Hilchos Shabbos Hagadol; cited briefly by the MagenAvraham444:2; see also HagahosRavAkivaEiger, end O.C. 471), ChokYaakov(471: 9 and 10), ChayeiAdam(vol. 2, 139:13), DerechHachaim(192:9), PriMegadim(O.C. 471, E.A. 8), KitzurShulchanAruch(113:5), AruchHashulchan(444:5), MishnahBerurah(444:8 and 472:20), Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld's Seder Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos (3), Rav Chaim Pinchas HaKohen's Kuntres Pesach Meivin (6; under the auspices of Rav Chaim Berlin; both re-published in 1910), Shearim Metzuyanim B'Halacha (115:7), and HalichosEvenYisrael(Moadim vol. 1, pg. 133:12). Although there are opinions that one may not eat MatzahMevushales on Erev Pesach, and this is reported to be the Vilna Gaon's opinion as well (for example, see ShaarHatzitzim444:1), nonetheless, several contemporary Poskim contest this understanding and maintain that the Gr" a was referring to whole matzos that were cooked or boiled, not ground up Matzah (Meal) that was mixed with other ingredients and then boiled to form kneidlach (see Rav Moshe Mordechai Karp's HilchosErevPesachShechalB'Shabbos pg. 93). This author heard similarly from Rav Nochum Eisenstein as to his Rebbe, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv's predilection for this shittah as well, prior to the last Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos, back in 5768. [See also the recent sefer HanhagosKabeinu(pg. 188:5) that Rav Elyashiv was very makpid to eat kneidlach made from his Pesach Matzos on Shabbos Hagadol (see also Ba'er Heitiv, O.C. 430:1; citing the Rashal).] Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer (HalichosEvenYisrael ibid.) made a similar point, that perhaps as the Gr" a held that a Seudas Shabbos is contingent on the ability to make Hamotzi [as discussed in a previous article titled "More Common Kiddush Questions: Kiddush B'Makom Seudah"], this is why he would not agree to any other potential solutions on Erev Pesach Shechal B'Shabbos(as he himself wrote in his B'urHaGr" a, O.C. 444:1 end s.v. uv'medinos), but not that he would hold that eating kneidlach is prohibited. Moreover, as cited by the Kaf Hachaim (O.C. 291:32 and 444:12 and 16), the BeisYosef'sMaggid informed him (MaggidMeisharim, ParashasTav s.v. Ohr L'Yom Shlishi Shel Pesach) of the importance of Seudas Shlishis containing "YeheiM'Tavshilla," a cooked food item. [59]See Gemara Beitzah (2a), Rambam (Hilchos Yom Tov Ch. 1:19), Tur and Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries to Orach Chaim (513:1). [60]As per Rav Dovid Heber's Shaarei Zmanim (pg. 194).

**Disclaimer:** This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority. This article was written L'Ilyu Nishmas Shoshana Leah bas Dreiza Liba and l'zechus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yetzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikf'u'miyad! L'Ilyu Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: [yspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:yspitz@ohr.edu). Rabbi Yehuda Spitz serves as the Sho'el U' Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled "Insights Into Halacha". [http://ohr.edu/this\\_week/insights\\_into\\_halacha/](http://ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/). His first English halacha sefer, focusing on the myriad halachos related to food, is due out shortly

<https://www.ou.org/covid19/>

September 30, 2020 3:30 PM EDT

## OU/RCA Guidance for Succot and Simchat Torah

The following is being presented to assist local synagogue and communal leadership in their planning for Succot and Simchat Torah.

The Yamim Noraim season posed unique challenges to all of us, as individuals and as communities. The limitations imposed by the pandemic have been a source of

discomfort and stress, and we are all working to strike the right balance between establishing proper safety and responsibly restoring some feeling of normalcy. It was truly a Kiddush Hashem to observe the commitment of our shuls, rabbis, and lay leadership to provide a safe and compliant environment for so many of their members to be able to experience a meaningful Yamim Noraim in and around their shuls. It was equally inspiring to note their similarly outstanding efforts to serve those members who could not join for in-person services. We hope and pray that HKBH will see this as a profound merit for our community, and that He will see fit to bring a safe conclusion to the pandemic and its challenges.

For now, however, we must plan and prepare for Succot and Simchat Torah, being especially mindful of the recent rise in positive tests in many communities. This uptick is a source of genuine concern, and we must be committed to make every effort to reverse it by proceeding with appropriate caution.

The situation continues to evolve and varies significantly from region to region. As such, these recommendations and guidelines are formulated based solely on information and advice available as of September 30, 2020. As always, shuls and communities – with the guidance of local rabbinic and medical leadership – should follow, at a minimum, the guidelines provided by local and national authorities, including the CDC and local health departments.

Celebration of Succot may continue while conscientiously applying the principles that have governed our behavior thus far. Within the parameters provided by local health departments, shuls may continue to conduct services with masking and social distancing. The communal Succah should be used with similar caution, and the use of shared communal arba minim – which should be held without wearing gloves – should be preceded and followed by hand sanitizing. To conduct the hoshanot with proper social distance, rather than having everyone present join the hakafa at once, it may be most practical to divide into smaller groups that take turns making the circuit around the bimah.

Simchat Torah will present the greater challenge to celebration of the chag as we know it. This special day is typically celebrated by spirited dancing with the Torah, which is something that seems impossible to replicate this year while maintaining proper safeguards. Even without holding hands, and even outdoors, when dancing in circles we are continuously walking into the clouds of droplets generated by the vigorous singing and dancing of others. Sadly, there seems to be no way in which this can be safely accomplished. Similarly, the special moment of Kol HaNearim, when the young children crowd together around the Torah, cannot be safely accomplished in the conventional manner. These are certainly meaningful disappointments.

Nevertheless, while we may be unable to have a typical Simchat Torah, we will be able BEZ" H to celebrate the day. Traditionally, Simchat Torah is not celebrated through Torah study, but rather by demonstrating our ahavat Torah and our kavod haTorah, our feelings of love and admiration for the Torah. Those feelings of love for the Torah and its values are expressed on Simchat Torah by old and young, and by those more and less learned. This remains an attainable goal for this year.

For starters, a basic Hoshanot-like series of Hakafot without vigorous singing and dancing may be conducted, with one group of people designated to hold the Sifrei Torah. This basic ritual may be supplemented as each of us thinks creatively of alternative methods to express our love and admiration of the Torah. What follows are a few such suggestions that are not meant to limit, but rather to encourage, your own creativity.

Please note that in certain locales it may be advised to make the service as brief as possible and to avoid adding the activities below.

Shuls that have secure outdoor spaces available, such as a parking lot, may consider assembling outdoors with masking and social distance and conducting a kumtitz-type gathering there. In line with earlier guidance, it would be prudent to avoid any such extended indoor activity. Note that this format may also be an option to replace the usual Simchat Beit HaShoeiva.

In place of the seven circuits of singing and dancing, consider assigning seven individuals to "sing the praises" of the Torah by sharing a few words expressing how Torah learning or living positively impacts their life. Presenters should not be chosen based on level of scholarship, and could include those who found Torah at some point in their lives, those who have recently adopted a regular Torah learning schedule, or those who can share an inspiring personal story.

Consider what you can plan specifically for the children, including possibly an outdoor Kol Hanearim without the crowding. Simchat Torah treat packages should be prepared and shared with the children either on Yom Tov or at a pre-Yom Tov drive-by.

In addition to the above celebratory activities, communities may choose a modest Torah study initiative that can be inclusive of all members of the community. Consider assigning 54 members to each take a one-minute slot to share something from each of the 54 parshiyot of the Torah. Alternatively, assign 5 members to share something from each of the 5 chumashim.

Consider dividing up an area of Torah learning to be undertaken by members of the community over Yom Tov, celebrating the siyum together on Simchat Torah. Consider a special emphasis on honoring or completing the parshiyot that we missed when shuls were closed. This can be accomplished through a sharing of Torah from those parshiyot, or through using the extra readings and aliyot traditional on Simchat Torah – instead of repeated readings of V'Zot Habracha – to make up the missed parshiyot. This alternative has been approved by our Poskim, Harav Hershel Schachter and Harav Mordechai Willig שליט"א. Communities and individuals should make meaningful efforts to include singles of all ages who live without family, making special efforts to welcome them to their homes and succot in a safe and responsible manner.

We all join in prayer that our communities and our country be spared any further suffering, and that we merit to experience the upcoming festival as zman simchateinu, a true season of joy

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### Interesting Chol Hamoed Questions

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Trick

As a side parnasah, I perform tricks using ropes and knots. May I conduct a show during Chol Hamoed?

Question #2: Treat

May an indigent person work on Chol Hamoed in order to provide his children with treats for Yom Tov?

Question #3: Treasures

I discovered buried treasure on Chol Hamoed, and I'm afraid that if I wait until after Yom Tov someone else might find it. May I dig it up on Chol Hamoed?

Introduction:

Chol Hamoed is included among a very special category of mitzvos called osos – signs that that point out Klal Yisroel's special relationship with Hashem. These signs include both positive and negative commandments. The positive ones include that Chol Hamoed should be noticeably different from ordinary weekdays; it should look like days in which we are celebrating – our dress and our meals should be clearly different from those of a weekday. The signs also manifest themselves in the delineation of which melacha activities are permitted on Chol Hamoed.

The authorities disagree concerning the extent to which dress on Chol Hamoed should be different from weekday garb. Some authorities rule that Chol Hamoed clothing should be on the same level as Yom Tov clothes, which are assumed to be fancier than those worn on Shabbos (Tanya, quoted by Magen Avraham 530:1). A second approach contends that it is sufficient that what one wears on Chol Hamoed is on the same level as Shabbos clothes (Magen Avraham 664:3). A third approach, that of the Mishnah Berurah (Shaar Hatziyun 530:4), concludes that Chol Hamoed dress should be nicer than weekday clothing, but does not have to be as nice as Shabbos clothes. Melacha on Chol Hamoed

The Gemara (Chagigah 18a) implies that working on Chol Hamoed may be forbidden min haTorah, and this is the halachic position of many rishonim (see Biur Halacha 530). Nevertheless, the majority conclude that the prohibition to work on Chol Hamoed is only a rabbinic ordinance. These authorities contend that the allusion in the Torah is not a drosha, that would make it an obligation min haTorah, but an asmachta, a hint, which is not a requirement min haTorah (Tosafos, Chagigah 18a s.v. Cholo). To quote the Rambam, "Notwithstanding that the Torah did not say, in regard to Chol Hamoed, 'Cease from working,' since it is called mikra kodesh and it is the time when the festival korban is offered in the Beis Hamikdash, it is prohibited to perform on it melacha, so that it should not be like the other weekdays that are not at all holy" (Hilchos Yom Tov 7:1). He then emphasizes that the prohibition is rabbinic.

Whether the prohibition of melacha is min haTorah or only miderabbanan, the purpose of Chol Hamoed is to devote one's time to learning Torah (Yerushalmi, Moed Katan 2:3).

The laws of Chol Hamoed are often unclear. Since it is part of Yom Tov, many melacha activities are forbidden. On the other hand, activities that enhance the celebration of Yom Tov are usually permitted. What makes the laws of Chol Hamoed even more unusual is that there are activities that are permitted, such as some types of tzorchei rabbim, communal needs, despite the fact that this work actually decreases the spirit of Yom Tov. Chazal permitted communal needs to be performed on Chol Hamoed (Mishnah Moed Katan 2a), even when there is no Yom Tov need, even when it involves specialized, professional skills, and even when it is a major effort that will impact negatively on the celebration of Yom Tov. For example, it is permitted to mark graves or to pull out kelayim on Chol Hamoed, both of which are projects for which

the community is responsible (Mishnah Moed Katan 2a). The reason this work is permitted is because these projects require availability of labor, and people are off from work on Chol Hamoed.

The Gemara itself notes that the halachos of Chol Hamoed are difficult to categorize, calling these laws akuros ve'ein lemeidos zu mizu (Moed Katan 12a), which Rashi explains to mean: like a barren woman (akarah), there is no "fruit." This is an unusual way to say that one law of Chol Hamoed may not be compared easily to a different one – you cannot usually derive a "fruit," an analytic conclusion, from one category to another. Even categories of melacha that are permitted contain subheadings that are not permitted, and creating clear, general rules is extremely difficult. Please note that, because of space restraints, I am providing only some background to the laws of Chol Hamoed and not a comprehensive work on its laws.

The poskim categorized the rulings of the Mishnah and Gemara, concluding that several types of work forbidden on Shabbos are permitted on Chol Hamoed. These include:

Davar ha'aveid

One of the categories of melacha permitted on Chol Hamoed is called davar ha'aveid, which means that not performing this activity could potentially cause financial loss. In general, this is permitted, provided that no excessive exertion is involved. The reason Chazal permitted this is because otherwise someone might worry about his loss and thereby spoil his enjoyment of Yom Tov (Ritva, Moed Katan 13a). However, working very hard – what I called here "excessive exertion" – would spoil the Yom Tov spirit to a greater extent than his worry does, which is why it is forbidden.

The case of the Mishnah that reflects this principle is a field that does not receive sufficient rainfall and, therefore, requires irrigation. If this field was planted and irrigated before Yom Tov, it may be watered from a natural spring, but not from rainwater (Mishnah Moed Katan 2a). The difference between a spring and rainwater is that the latter requires far more exertion than simply directing the water flowing naturally from the spring to your field. Hoisting buckets of water, which is usually the case when using rainwater to irrigate a field (and is sometimes the case when using a spring, is prohibited on Chol Hamoed, because this involves excessive exertion (see Mishnah Berurah 537:7).

The Mishnah implies that it is permitted to irrigate only a beis hashalchin, a field that requires irrigation, but not a field that receives adequate rainfall for its crops to grow (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 537:1). Why would you irrigate a field that receives adequate rainfall? Because even such a field produces better crops when it is irrigated. This is prohibited on Chol Hamoed, since this is not considered preventing a loss, but providing greater profit, which is not permitted (ibid.). We will return to this principle later in this article.

Here is another type of davar ha'aveid that Chazal permitted on Chol Hamoed. The Gemara (Moed Katan 10b) states that doing even a small amount of business is prohibited on Chol Hamoed. Nevertheless, Rav Papa ruled that someone who has more dates than he can sell as fresh produce may slice open the dates and press them out to dry on Chol Hamoed, even though they will certainly not dry quickly enough to be eaten on Yom Tov. The activity of drying them is permitted because of davar ha'aveid, since the dates may get wormy if he does not begin the drying process when the fruit is ripe.

Tzorchei hamoed

Chazal permitted making and repairing items on Chol Hamoed that will be used to enhance the Yom Tov atmosphere, provided one does not use a skilled method (maaseh uman) to manufacture or repair them. For example, someone who is not skilled in sewing may repair a garment that became torn on Yom Tov, so that it can be worn on Chol Hamoed (Moed Katan 8b, 10b).

Here are some more unusual cases of tzorchei hamoed that later authorities mention: You may tune an instrument in order to play it on Chol Hamoed, if doing so requires no specialized skills (Shu't Shevus Yaakov 1:25). Similarly, it is permitted to swat mosquitoes if they are bothering you (Shu't HaRadbaz #727).

Po'eil she'ein lo mah le'echol

Literally, this means a worker who is so poor that he has nothing to eat. Such a person may work on Chol Hamoed. But is this to be taken literally, i.e., that he has nothing at all to eat, or does it mean that he does not have enough to celebrate Yom Tov properly? This is a dispute between the Magen Avraham (542:1) – who contends that it means that he does not have even bread to eat and water to drink on Yom Tov, but if he does, he cannot work on Chol Hamoed – and the Lechem Mishneh (as quoted by Elya Rabbah 542:3), who explains it to mean that he does not have enough to celebrate Yom Tov properly.

Tie yourself in knots

At this point, we can begin to address our opening question: "As a side parnasah, I perform tricks using ropes and knots. May I conduct a show during Chol Hamoed?" Several issues require clarification. If the entertainer is so poor that he qualifies as a po'eil she'ein lo mah le'echol, he is permitted to perform his show, and people are

doing a mitzvah when they attend. If he does not qualify, we have to research whether any halachic issue is involved when tying specialty knots on Chol Hamoed.

Knotty question

Is there any prohibition against tying knots on Chol Hamoed?

The Gemara (Moed Katan 2b) mentions that melacha is prohibited on Chol Hamoed, because it is tircha, work that takes away from the appreciation of Yom Tov. Does this mean that it is permitted to do melacha that does not involve strenuous activity? One very prominent acharon, the Elyah Rabbah (533:4), indeed rules this way.

Based on the comments of several rishonim, the Beis Yosef (Orach Chayim 540) rules that if your house has a dirt floor and you discover on Yom Tov that the dirt floor has a bump, you may remove the earth creating the bump from the floor on Chol Hamoed. The Beis Yosef writes that even though smoothing a bump constitutes an activity that is prohibited min haTorah on Shabbos and Yom Tov (Shabbos 73b), it is permitted on Chol Hamoed because it is not a strenuous activity. This implies that you may remove the dirt lump from your floor on Chol Hamoed, even if it does not accommodate any Yom Tov need – for example, if you notice the bump as you are leaving the house on Chol Hamoed and are not returning until after Yom Tov. We could then conclude that non-strenuous activity is permitted on Chol Hamoed, even when it is a melacha and has no Yom Tov purpose.

This would mean that our rope showman may perform his activities on Chol Hamoed, even if they involve tying knots in a way that would be a melacha min haTorah on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

Several early halachic authorities seem to support this approach. For example, Tosafos (Moed Katan 10b s.v. Prakmatya) rules that it is permitted to lend money with interest to non-Jews on Chol Hamoed. (It is forbidden min haTorah to charge Jews interest because of the prohibition of ribis.) Although the Gemara prohibits business activities on Chol Hamoed, this means transporting merchandise to the market or opening your store, both of which involve a great deal of tircha (Sefer Yerei'im). Lending money simply means keeping track of your records and making sure that the collateral you receive is sufficient to sell easily for the value of the loan.

For this reason, some recent poskim permit purchasing and selling stocks, bonds and commodities on Chol Hamoed (Debreciner Rav, quoted in Chol Hamoed, page 91).

(However, this work also quotes a psak of Rav Moshe Feinstein that purchasing and selling stocks, bonds and commodities is prohibited on Chol Hamoed.)

Melacha versus business

It is possible that the rishonim who permitted lending money on Chol Hamoed did so only for business activities that do not involve any melacha actions. However, a melacha activity not for the purpose of enhancing the enjoyment of Yom Tov is prohibited, even when it does not involve any tircha. This appears to be the position of the Pri Megadim, who permits removing earth from a dirt floor only when necessary for Yom Tov (Eishel Avraham 540:5, 7). In other words, the Pri Megadim disputes the ruling of the Elyah Rabbah and permits a non-strenuous act only when there is a Yom Tov benefit.

The Chayei Odom seems to have held a similar approach to that of the Pri Megadim, since he forbids tying knots on Chol Hamoed, unless there is a Yom Tov purpose in doing so (Klal 110:11). This ruling would put our rope entertainer out of business on Chol Hamoed, unless his show fulfills a Yom Tov purpose, or if he limits his knots to those permitted to be tied on Shabbos.

It appears that this issue, whether non-strenuous melachos may be performed on Chol Hamoed when they do not fulfill a Chol Hamoed purpose, can be traced to a dispute among early acharonim. The Hagahos Maimoniyos (Hilchos Yom Tov 8:9) cites that the Maharam of Rottenberg prohibited tearing grass out of the cemetery on Chol Hamoed. This is quoted by the Shulchan Aruch and accepted as normative halacha (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 547:12). But what exactly did the Maharam prohibit? According to the Maamar Mordechai, the Maharam is referring to the common custom of pulling up some grass from the cemetery after a burial. The Maharam prohibited this on Chol Hamoed, because, although this involves no strenuous activity, it does not fulfill any Yom Tov need.

On the other hand, several prominent halachic authorities understood that the Maharam meant to ban something very different – mowing the grass on the cemetery property on Chol Hamoed, which is clearly a strenuous activity that does not serve a Yom Tov purpose. These authorities permit pulling up grass after a Chol Hamoed funeral the way it is usually done on other days of the year (Shu't Mabit #250; Elyah Rabbah). We should note that the Elyah Rabbah is consistent in ruling that something non-strenuous is permitted on Chol Hamoed, even when there is no tzorech hamoed; the Maamar Mordechai agrees with the Pri Megadim that you cannot remove a dirt clod from the floor on Chol Hamoed, unless it is for a Yom Tov purpose, and also with the Chayei Odom, who prohibits tying knots if it is not a tzorech hamoed.

We could also, perhaps, prove that another earlier authority also held this way. The Radbaz, who lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was asked whether it is permitted to swat mosquitoes on Chol Hamoed, when they are not bothering you. He

rules that if the mosquitoes are not bothering you at the moment, it is forbidden (Shu't HaRadbaz #727). Although swatting a mosquito is not a strenuous activity, the Radbaz prohibits it if it does not serve a Yom Tov purpose. This would appear to indicate that he also agrees that melacha that has no tircha is prohibited on Chol Hamoed. On the other hand, it would seem that the Mabit and the Elyah Rabbah, who permit pulling grass not for the purpose of Yom Tov, hold that melacha that involves no tircha is permitted on Chol Hamoed.

Buried treasure

At this point, let us discuss our third question:

I discovered buried treasure on Chol Hamoed, and I'm afraid that if I wait until after Yom Tov someone else might find it. May I dig it up on Chol Hamoed?

We noted above that it is permitted, at times, to perform melacha on Chol Hamoed in order to avoid a loss, but not in order to increase profits. This treasure is categorized as increased profit, for which performing melacha is prohibited on Chol Hamoed. So, this case should be treated the same as if you found treasure on Shabbos or Yom Tov -- you must wait until after Yom Tov to dig it up.

Conclusion

Four mitzvos of the Torah are called os, a sign of Hashem's special relationship with us: Bris Milah, Shabbos, Yom Tov (including Chol Hamoed) and Tefillin. Because Chol Hamoed is included in this very special category, Jews should treat Chol Hamoed with great respect. Indeed, the Gemara states that disregarding the sanctity of the Yomim Tovim, including Chol Hamoed, is like practicing idolatry (Pesachim 118a with Rashbam). Some commentators explain that this includes even someone who fails to serve special meals in honor of Chol Hamoed (Bartenura, Avos 3:11). By observing Chol Hamoed properly, we demonstrate that we recognize and appreciate this special relationship between Hashem and Klal Yisroel.



## ***SUKKOT: To KNOW, or to REMEMBER***

Wouldn't make more sense to celebrate Sukkot during the month of Nisan instead of Tishrei?

After all, this is the holiday that commemorates our dwelling in 'booths' in the desert after we left Egypt, and it was in the month of Nisan that we first set up camp in the desert! In fact, Sukkot was even the name of Bnei Yisrael's very first camp-site, during that first week of the Exodus, as Sefer Shmot records:

"And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Sukkot, about six hundred thousand men on foot, beside children..." (see Shmot 12:37-39 / note as well that it was in the camp site of Succot when they first baked matza!)

Furthermore, the sole pasuk in Chumash that explains the historical reason for this holiday emphasizes how we must thank God for His special protection and care in the desert immediately after the Exodus:

"You shall sit in **sukkot** for seven days... in order that future generations may **know** that I made Bnei Yisrael dwell in **sukkot** when I brought them out of Egypt..." (see Vayikra 23:42-43).

Pay attention, however, to the special wording of this pasuk - for it doesn't command us to 'remember' (what happened in the desert), rather - we are commanded to '**know**' ['lema'an **yeid'u** doroteichem' / as opposed to 'lema'an tizkeru']!

In the following shiur, we will show how this distinction can help us better understand the historical reason for the holiday of Sukkot, and appreciate why the Torah instructs us celebrate this holiday specifically during the autumn harvest season [i.e. to coincide with the agricultural holiday of "chag ha-asif"].

## **INTRODUCTION**

As you probably recall, we find both an historical reason, as well as an agricultural reason for each of the three 'pilgrimage holidays' [the 'shalosh regalim']:

- In the beginning of the **spring** ['chag ha-aviv'] we celebrate our Exodus from Egypt = 'chag ha-matzot'
- During the **grain harvest** ['chag ha-katzir'] we celebrate the giving of the Torah = 'chag shavu'ot'
- During the **fruit harvest** [chag ha-asif] we celebrate our dwelling in 'booths' in the desert = chag ha-sukkot.

Now the reason why we are commanded to 'remember the Exodus' in the spring is simple - it's because that event took place in the spring (see Devarim 16:1). Similarly, we received the Torah in the month of Sivan, hence we are to commemorate that event seven weeks later - on "Shavuot".

However, there doesn't appear to be any obvious reason for celebrating 'our dwelling in booths in the desert' specifically in Tishrei. After all, this holiday does not commemorate a single event, but rather an entire time period of our national history - that spanned over forty years. So what makes Tishrei special?

In fact, it might have made more sense to commemorate 'our dwelling in sukkot' in Nissan - together with our commemoration of the Exodus. Certainly, both events are related (and as we explained earlier that Sukkot was first mentioned in Chumash when we left Egypt /see Shmot 12:37 & 13:20!).

Nevertheless, the Torah insists that we commemorate our 'desert experience' six months later, in the month of Tishrei (a month that certainly doesn't lack holidays), and specifically at the time of our grain harvest.

To explain why, we begin with a general distinction which relates to the historical reason for celebrating all of the holidays.

## **REMEMBERING 'WHAT', OR REMEMBERING 'WHY'**

We posit that when Torah instructs us to remember a certain key historical event, God is not interested that we simply remember **what** happened, rather it is more important that we remember **why** that event took place.

[Recall that in our shiur on chag ha-matzot / Parshat Bo, we applied this principle to our understanding of chag ha-matzot and korban pesach; likewise in our shiurim on the underlying reason for the four fast days in Sefer Zecharya.]

Applying this principle to Sukkot, we posit that we don't sit in the sukkah simply to 'remember' [and express thanksgiving] that God provided for our needs during our journey through the desert; rather the Torah commands that we sit in the sukkah in order to remember **why** that entire desert experience was necessary!

Therefore, our shiur will first consider **why** the entire desert experience was necessary. Then, we will show why the summer harvest becomes an ideal time to commemorate that time period of our history. Finally we will explain why we are commanded to **know** these events (not just remember them); and why **seven** days are necessary to accomplish this goal!

## **LIFE IN THE DESERT - A TRANSITION STAGE**

Let's begin by taking a closer look at the Torah's commandment to celebrate Sukkot, noting how the Torah focuses on commemorating the 'desert experience' (and **not** the Exodus itself):

"You shall sit in **sukkot** for seven days... - **in order** that your future generations may know that I made Bnei Yisrael dwell in **sukkot** when I brought them out of Egypt..." (see Vayikra 23:43).

In our shiur on Parshat Beshalach, we explained how Bnei Yisrael's various experiences in the desert [after they left Egypt] could be understood as a 'training' period - initiated by God to help transform this nation of slaves into a nation capable of establishing His model nation in the Promised Land.

Even though this process began with a 'big bang' - i.e. the Ten Plagues, the Exodus, the splitting of Red Sea, etc.- those great miracles were necessary to convince Bnei Yisrael of their total dependence upon God (see shiur on Beshalach). However, that high level of miracles could be considered more of an 'attention getter' than an ideal. Sooner or later, Bnei Yisrael would need to learn to recognize God in their daily lives without the help of miracles. But this required a long 'educational' process that would spiritually prepare them for challenges of daily existence once they would inherit the Land of Israel.

In fact, Moshe Rabbeinu himself provides us with a beautiful explanation of the preparatory nature of the entire 'desert experience'! We need only quote from that speech, delivered to Bnei Yisrael as they prepare to finally enter the land, to understand the purpose of their experiences in the desert:

"All these mitzvot which I command you... keep in order that you live... and inherit the Land..."

**remember** the way that God has led you during your wanderings of forty years in the **desert** - in order to **test** you with hardships to **know** what is in your hearts; whether you would keep His commandments, or not...

\* "He gave you the **manna** to eat... in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, **rather** man lives on the words of God..."

've-yada'ta' et levavecha...'.

[In order that] you should **know**, that just as a father puts his son through hardship (to train him), so too has God put you through hardship" (See Devarim 8:1-6).

Note how Moshe explains how the 'manna' served as a 'training' food for Bnei Yisrael, to teach them in the desert that their food comes from God, so that when they enter the land of

Israel - and make their own food - they will remember that God is the underlying source of their sustenance.

To support these introductory remarks, Moshe continues by explaining **why** this 'testing period' was necessary:

"...for God is bringing you into a good land... a land of wheat and barely, vines, figs and pomegranates, of olive trees and honey...a land where you will lack nothing...

\* **Be careful**, lest you **forget** God and fail to keep His commandments. Should you eat and become satiated, and build fine **houses** and live in them... and everything you own has prospered...

\* **Beware** lest you grow **haughty** and **forget** your God who took you out of Egypt...

\* **Lest** you say: My **own** power and my **own** might have won this wealth for me.

\* **Remember** that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth..." (see Devarim 8:7-19).

It was specifically because daily life in the land of Israel would be without 'obvious miracles' - that this training in the desert was so necessary! As Moshe explains, God is fearful that once Bnei Yisrael cultivate the land and provide for themselves, they may become haughty thinking that 'they did it all themselves' - and hence reminds them how they must always remember 'their lesson' from the desert.

According to Moshe Rabbeinu's speech, this transition period in the desert was necessary to prepare Bnei Yisrael for the spiritual dangers facing their agrarian society, which they are about to establish in the Land of Israel. To recognize the hand of God in a miracle was easy - but to recognize His hand within the nature will be much more difficult.

This background provides us with a very logical reason for the Torah's commandment to celebrate Sukkot on a yearly basis.

As this danger of 'becoming haughty and forgetting God' is so real, it will apply to future generations as well, especially those who never experienced the desert! Hence, the Torah instructs Bnei Yisrael that all future generations must not only remember this 'desert experience', but they must virtually 're-live' [to **know** it] - by living in a sukka for seven days!

### THE MOST FITTING TIME OF THE YEAR

This background also explains the 'advantage' of celebrating Sukkot at the conclusion of the harvest season.

If we are sitting in the 'sukka' to remember why that desert experience was necessary - and if that experience was necessary due to the fear of haughtiness that may stem from economic prosperity - then the 'harvest season' [when economic prosperity is at its highest] is the best time to remember those events, for that is when the fear of haughtiness is greatest!

This fear was not only expressed by Moshe Rabbeinu in his speech (as quoted above in 8:3-12), but see also shirat Ha'azinu (see especially 31:16,20 and 32:13-15!). Our own life experience certainly supports the reality of this fear.

Just as dwelling in the desert prepared Bnei Yisrael for their entry into Eretz Yisrael, so too, our sitting in the sukka prepares us for the spiritual challenges that inevitably surface as we gather our produce & reflect on our 'profits' and wealth.

[See Rashbam on Vayikra 23:43, in contrast to the interpretation of Ramban to that pasuk. Our shiur will follow the direction of Rashbam, noting how he also quotes from Devarim chapter 8!]

Therefore, the Torah commands that we celebrate **Sukkot** at the climax of the agricultural year - as we gather the fruits and 'count our wealth'. It is specifically during this time of year that the spiritual dangers of affluence are greatest. At the height of the harvest season, we must not only 'remember' the lesson of that desert experience, we must actually re-live it, or as the Chumash commands us - we must **know** it.

### KNOWING SOMETHING - In the Biblical Sense

The Torah's use of the phrase 'lema'an **yeid'u** doroteichem' takes on additional meaning when we consider the deeper meaning of the word 'lada'at' - to **know**. As we all remember, the Torah uses this word to describe the intimate relationship between husband & wife: 've-Adam **yada** et Chava ishto' (see Breishit 4:1). [It is not by chance that this word is also used to describe the Tree of Knowledge - 'etz ha-da'at' in the story of Gan Eden.]

Later on in Sefer Breishit, when God takes a 'close look' at the people of Sedom - to punish them for their terrible sins - this type of intense relationship as well is described with the verb lada'at - see Breishit 18:21, [Note also Breishit 15:8 & 13.]

Similarly, in preparation for the Exodus, God wants to make sure that Bnei Yisrael will internalize the message of '**Ani Hashem**' - that He is their God, and the only God: [See TSC shiur on Parshat Va'era / Ani Hashem.]

To emphasize this commandment, note again how the Torah employs the verb lada'at to describe this intense relationship:

"Therefore, tell Bnei Yisrael that I am God, and I will take them out of..., and save them... and redeem them with an outstretched hand... and take them as My nation and I will be their God ---

"**vi-yda'tem** ki Ani Hashem Elokeichem"-

In order that you will **know** that I am the God who has taken you out of Egypt" (see Shmot 6:6-7).

In other words, to 'know something' (or someone) in the Bible entails much more the intellectual knowledge. To know - reflects an intense and very close relationship - to internalize that idea.

This can help us appreciate to meaning of 'lema'an **yeid'u** doroteichem' in Vayikra 23:43. We are commanded to sit in the sukka not just to remember what happened, but to **know** it - i.e. to totally identify with the purpose of that 'desert experience' and its eternal message.

Note as well how Moshe Rabbeinu used this very same word when he explained the purpose of the original desert experience:

"And you shall **know** in your hearts..." [that this was a 'training' experience] (see Devarim 8:5).

This also explains the difference between the mitzvot of Pesach and Sukkot. The mitzvot that we observe on Pesach (and chag ha-matzot) are in order to 'remember' [lizkor] what happened (and why), yet we are not commanded to re-live that experience - for it was a 'one-time' event in Jewish history. In contrast, on Sukkot, we must re-live that 'desert experience' for its underlying purpose is no different today than it was back then - to inculcate the eternal message that man should not become haughty at the height of his prosperity.

### WHY SEVEN DAYS?

This background can also help us understand why the Torah requires that we sit in the sukka specifically for **seven** days. Note that all the agricultural holidays revolve around the number seven.

\* 7 days of chag ha-matzot in the spring;

\* 7 weeks until chag ha-shavu'ot;

\* 7 days of chag ha-sukkot

As we explained in our shiur on Parshat Breishit [perek aleph], the Torah's description of the story of Creation in **seven** days emphasizes that the creation of what we call **nature** was not by chance, nor a 'balance of powers' among a pantheon of gods, but rather - the willful act of one God, for a purpose. Therefore, each time that **seven** is found in Chumash (e.g. Shabbat etc.), it is to remind us that God is the creator of, and master over, all nature.

Thus, it is only 'natural' that we find the number seven prominent in the agricultural holidays, as we thank God for His providence over nature, and recognize that He is the true source of our prosperity.

## FROM SUCCOT TO SHMINI ATZERET

The above interpretation can also help us understand the importance of Shmini Atzeret. As the shalosh regalim come to their conclusion, we add one extra day of celebration, void of any specific mitzva, other than rejoicing with God. Even though it is the 'eighth day' of **Sukkot**, we do not need to sit in the sukka, nor do we need to take the lulav - for the preparatory stage is now over!

On the other hand, we cannot just jump from the desert right back into the Land of Israel. Instead, a time of transition is necessary to wean us from the 'desert environment' back to daily life. [This also emerges as a primary theme in Sefer Yehoshua.]

This may explain why we don't sit in the sukka on this 'final' day of Sukkot, for it represents how we must return to our homes. We keep the essence of our 'desert-like experience' - our closeness to God - and make it the basis of our daily natural existence.

From this perspective, one could suggest that we do not simply **leave** the sukka on **Shmini Atzeret**, rather we bring the sukka into our homes. We then rejoice with the Torah [dancing seven hakafot - just like Yericho!], for its mitzvot - that we received in the desert - enable us to continue the spirit of our 'Sukkot honeymoon' with God throughout the entire year

chag sameiach,  
menachem

## =====

### FOR FURTHER IYUN & some mini-shiurim

#### A. FROM THE SUKKA TO THE HOUSE

Based on the last point in the above shiur, we can explain our custom on Hoshana Rabba (7th day of Sukkot) afternoon to bring our 'keilim' (vessels) **from** the sukka back **into** the house - in preparation for Shmini Atzeret. This may highlight the primary purpose of this Yom Tov, i.e. to move the spiritual message of the sukka into our homes for the remainder of the year.]

[In a similar manner, the 7 days of Sukkot followed by Shmini Atzeret could be compared to the 7 day milu'im ceremony of the mishkan which was required before the special yom ha-shmini dedication ceremony (see Vayikra 8:1-10:1.). Note the from the eighth day onward, the mishkan became functional, but seven day are necessary as **preparation**. [Note also first mishna in Yoma - 7 days before Yom Kippur, the kohen must prepare himself etc.]]

#### B. PRI ETZ HADAR

The conclusions of our shiur may shed light on Chazal's explanation of 'pri etz hadar' (see Vayikra 23:40). Rashi quotes two Midrashim for etz hadar:

- 1) A tree that the 'taste of its fruit' is the same as the 'taste of the tree'.
- 2) A fruit that 'dwells on the tree' from year to year.  
(see Rashi 23:40 & Masechet Sukka 35a)

The first Midrash is quite difficult for it relates to what Chazal refer to as 'chet ha-aretz' - i.e. the 'original sin' of the land during the process of Creation (see Breishit 1:11 / & Rashi on 'etz pri'). Even though God commanded that the land bring forth an 'etz pri oseh pri' - a fruit tree giving fruit - the land brought forth instead an 'etz oseh pri' - a tree giving fruit. Even though there doesn't seem to be much of a difference between these two expressions, Chazal relate this minute change to the manner by which nature appears to 'hide' God, or act itself as a god.

This is a bit difficult to explain, [and the following is an over simplification of a very complex topic] but in a 'nutshell', when the tree gives fruit every year, it appears that the tree itself creates the fruit. When man contemplates this phenomena in nature, that trees 'on their own' can create fruit, he may conclude that trees have their own power - or that there may be some nature god who 'programs' these trees (how else does it know what fruit to make). In other words, man begins to see various powers within

nature, and relates them to many gods (e.g. fertility gods, rain gods, grain gods, sun gods etc.). This leads man to 'worship' these gods to ensure that nature produces the proper produce and provide a successful harvest.

In contrast to this dangerous misconception, God wants man to realize that there is only **one** God behind nature, even though the way that nature works often leads man to a very different conclusion. [See Rav Yehuda HaLevi's explanation of perek aleph in Breishit and 'shem Elokim' in HaKuzari ma'amar rev'i.]

In contrast to all of the other trees that give fruit according to the standard one year agricultural cycle, the **etrog** tree is very different. Instead of its fruit growing in the spring and harvested in the fall like all other trees, the fruit of the **etrog** can stay on the tree year after year, or as Chazal explain 'ha-dar' - a fruit that **lives** on the tree from year to year ['ha-dar ba-ilan mi-shana le-shana']. This special phenomena sort of 'breaks the rules' of nature - indicating that there must be a higher power above nature! By taking specifically an **etrog** on Sukkot, we take a powerful symbol from nature itself to remind ourselves that God is above nature, and He alone controls it.

#### C KOHELET & the Harvest Season

Relate the minhag to read Sefer **Kohelet** on Sukkot to above shiur and Devarim 31:7-13 (mitzvot Hakhel). Carefully compare the end of Sefer Kohelet to Devarim 31:12-13! Note also how Kohelet describes the spiritual problems relating to affluence.

#### D. VE-ACHALTA VE-SAVA'TA - & then what?

Recall how our shiur was based on Devarim chapter 8. In that chapter, review once again 8:10, the famous pasuk that we are learning birkat ha-mazon from, paying careful attention to its context.

Then, review Devarim 31:14-21, noting especially 31:20, and the phrase 've-achal ve-sava...'. Note how these psukim thematically relate to Devarim 32:7-15 in shirat Ha'azinu!

Can you explain the deeper meaning of the contrast between 've-achal ve-sava ve-dashen' and 've-achalta ve-sava'ta u-beirachta'!?

#### SOME ADDITIONAL MINI-SHIURIM

##### I. FROM YOM KIPPUR TO SUKKOT

We are all familiar with the custom to begin work on our **sukka** immediately after Yom Kippur. Although this custom is often understood as simply a great way to 'get off to a good start', ['mi-chayil el chayil'], it may also allude to something more significant

First of all, recall that the original Yom Kippur in Chumash was the day that Moshe came down with the second luchot and middot ha-rachamim. Recall as well that with the help of these **middot**, God had agreed to Moshe's plea that He return His **Shchina** to Bnei Yisrael, even though He had taken it away in the aftermath of chet ha-egel / see Shmot 33:1-8). Nonetheless, the **Shchina** itself, even though God promised that it would return, does not return immediately, rather - only some six months later - after Bnei Yisrael build the mishkan (see Shmot 25:8 & Vayikra 9:1-5!).

In fact, immediately after receiving the second luchot, the first thing that Moshe does is gather the people together and charge them with the building of the mishkan (note Parshat Vayakhel). Even though the **Shchina** is returning, Bnei Yisrael must become active in this process; they must do something to 'receive' the **Shchina**. Just like Moshe had to now carve his own **second luchot** [psol lecha... / see Shmot 34:1 (in contrast to the first **luchot** which God Himself had carved)], in a similar manner Bnei Yisrael must now become more active and build the mishkan.

The mitzva to build the **sukka** immediately after Yom Kippur may reflect this same idea. Just as Bnei Yisrael began to work on the mishkan after (and as a result of) Yom Kippur, we also begin building our **sukkot** in which can 'meet the **Shchina**' in a manner similar to the purpose of the mishkan.

We can also relate this to PART II of our shiur on Yom Kippur in regard to the deeper meaning of **kappara**.



Recall from our shiur on Yom Kippur that one aspect of kappara was to 'protect' man, allowing him to encounter the **Shchina**. If indeed our kappara on Yom Kippur was successful, then we should now be ready to encounter the **Shchina**. Considering that our sitting under the 'sechach' of the **sukka** symbolizes our sitting under the 'clouds of God's glory' in the desert ["sukkot kenegged ananei ha-kavod" / Sukka 11b], then Yom Kippur could actually be considered a **preparation** for Sukkot! To enable us to 'dwell' together with the **Shchina** in our **sukka**, we must first complete the process of kappara on Yom Kippur.

This thematic connection can help us understand many other halachot and customs of Sukkot.

For example, the gemara in Sukka 5b learns the minimum height of the **sukka** - 10 'tephachim' - from the height of the **kaporet**! [Recall last week's shiur which discussed the significance of the **kaporet** in relation to the **Shchina** / see also complete sugya in Masechet Sukka beginning at the bottom of 4b.] In fact, the same shorsh as 'sechach' is found in the pasuk which describes the **keruvim** on the **kaporet**: 've-hayu ha-keruvim...' **sochechim** be-kanfeihem al ha-**kaporet**...' (see Shmot 25:20).

This pasuk clearly shows how the sechach of our **sukka** reflects our dwelling under the **Shchina**.

## II. THE DOUBLE MUSSAF ON SUKKOT

In Parshat Pinchas (Bamidbar chps. 28-29) we find a complete list of all the korbanot **mussaf** which we offered in addition to the daily **tamid** offering in the bet ha-mikdash.

If you make a table of the korbanot for each holiday, you will notice an interesting pattern:

On each of the Tishrei holidays (except **Sukkot**), i.e. Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Shmini Atzeret, we offer an identical **korban mussaf** - 1 'par', 1 'ayil', and 7 'kevasim'.

On each of the shalosh regalim (except **Sukkot**), i.e. chag ha-matzot and Shavu'ot, we offer an identical **korban mussaf** - 2 parim, 1 ayil, and 7 kevasim.

The **mussaf** of Sukkot is quite different, each day the amount of parim changes (from 13 down to 7), and each day we offer 2 eilim and 14 kevasim! [See Bamidbar 29:12-34.]

The additional parim are the most striking difference, and Chazal explain that these are added for the 70 nations for whom Sukkot is also celebrated (13+12+11+10+9+8+7=70). [See also Zecharya chapter 14, haftara on first day Sukkot.]

However, the extra ayil & kevasim also require explanation.

Note, that they are **double** the number that are offered on all of the other holidays. In other words, instead of 1 ayil we bring 2 eilim; instead of 7 kevasim we bring 14 kevasim. This indicates that there must be something 'double' about Sukkot.

The answer may be quite simple. **Sukkot** is **both** one of the shalosh regalim (see Shmot 23:14-17 & Devarim 16:1-17), and a **Tishrei** holiday as well. Therefore, it requires a **double mussaf**. In other words, it should have daily:

3 parim [2+1];  
2 eilim [1+1];  
14 kevasim [7+7].

However, we add an additional 49 parim [10+9+8+7+6+5+4] to reach a total of 70 [49+(3x7)=49+21=70], as explained above.

[Again we find 49 [7x7] related to the shalosh regalim.]

This may reflect the double nature of **Sukkot**. On the one hand it is one of the shalosh regalim in which we thank **Hashem** for our harvest of the agricultural year **which has just finished**. At the same time, we stand in anticipation of the agricultural year **which is about to begin**, awaiting its important rainy season (see shiur on Rosh Ha'shana), just as we do on all of the other Tishrei holidays.

This 'double nature' is reflected by the two times in daily davening on **Sukkot** when we hold the lulav & etrog, during:

- 1) **Hallel** - to **thank** God for the harvest of the past year;
- 2) **Hoshanot** - to **pray** to God in anticipation of the **new** Year.

Similarly, this 'double nature' may also reflect the **two** reasons that Chazal [see Sukka 11b] give us for sitting in the **sukka**.

- 1) **sukkot mamash** - real booths, to protect us from the sun.

This may reflect the aspect of the harvest holiday, where we need to build temporary booths in the field as we gather our fruits in the fields.

- 2) **sukkot** kenegged **ananei ha-kavod** - representing God's **Shchina** which protected Bnei Yisrael in the desert.

## III. NOT BY CHANCE

Regarding for celebrating each of the shalosh regalim.

In our shiur, we discussed the connection between the historical and agricultural reason for Succot. Now we will discuss that connection in regard to the other two shalosh regalim.

The fact that the Torah provides **two** reasons for celebrating **sukkot** should not surprise us. After all, the other two shalosh regalim - i.e. chag ha-matzot & Shavu'ot - also carry both historical and agricultural perspectives:

**Chag ha-matzot** not only commemorates the events of the Exodus from Egypt, but also must be celebrated at the onset of the spring. [See Shmot 13:3-4, 23:14-15, & Devarim 16:1-2.] Consequently, on that holiday the Torah commands us to bring the 'omer' offering from the first barley harvest (see Vayikra 23:10-11).

Similarly, even though chag **Shavu'ot** commemorates the historical event of matan Torah, the Torah presents it primarily as an agricultural holiday (= chag ha-katzir), marking the conclusion of the wheat harvest. [See Shmot 23:16 & Vayikra 23:15-17.]

This phenomena - that each of the shalosh regalim contains both historical and agricultural significance - begs explanation, and suggests that we search for a thematic connection between each perspective - for each holiday.

## THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Recall from our study of Sefer Shmot that God orchestrated the events of the Exodus in such a manner that we would celebrate this event specifically at the onset of the spring. [See Shmot 13:2-3, 23:14-15, & Devarim 16:1-2.]

Thematically, this may suggest that our freedom from bondage reflects only the **first** stage of the redemption process, just as the spring is only the first stage in the yearly cycle of the harvest season.

However, if this assumption is correct, then we should extend this reasoning to the other two holidays as well. One could suggest that Shavu'ot and Sukkot, respectively, each focuses on a certain aspect of the culmination of the redemption process that began with the Exodus. Let's explain how.

Recall how the Torah presented a double purpose for the Exodus from Egypt:

- 1) to receive the Torah at Har Sinai  
"... ta'avdun et Elokim ba-har ha-zeh" (see Shmot 3:12)
- 2) to inherit the Land of Israel  
"...a'aleh etchem...el eretz zavat chalav u-dvash"  
(see 3:17).

[See TSC shiur on Parshat Shmot.]

This double purpose may be reflected in the respective historical aspects of the two 'harvest' holidays that follow the 'spring' holiday. Clearly, **Shavu'ot** - the 'grain harvest' holiday - commemorates the events of **matan Torah**. Hence, we must conclude that **Sukkot** - the fruit harvest holiday - must commemorate in some manner our entry into the Land of Israel.

We discussed this aspect in detail in the above shiur.

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***The CHAGIM in PARSHAT PINCHAS***

As you 'should' have noticed, every time that we doven MUSAF (i.e. on shabbat, rosh chodesh, & yom-tovim), we always include a quote from Parshat Pinchas.

Similarly, the Torah reading on every rosh chodesh and yom-tov is either entirely from Parshat Pinchas, or at least the 'maftir' section!

To understand why, the following shiur undertakes a simple analysis of chapters 28->29 in Parshat Pinchas.

**INTRODUCTION**

Even though we find several presentations of the Jewish Holidays throughout Chumash, their presentation in Parshat Pinchas is quite unique. In fact, our shiur will show how the primary topic of this unit may not even be the holidays! [It will help us understand why these holidays are 'repeated' in Sefer Bamidbar, even though they were already discussed in Parshat Emor /i.e. Vayikra 23.]

We begin our study by identifying the precise unit under discussion and its structure.

**AN ORGANIZED UNIT**

Just about every time that Chumash presents a unit of "mitzvot" - it begins with a very short introductory narrative - the most common form being "va'yadaber Hashem el Moshe lay'mor", or something similar.

This standard format allows us to easily identify chapters 28 & 29 as a unit, as it begins with that opening phrase (see 28:1), and the commandments continue until the end of chapter 29.

Note as well 30:1 we find what constitutes the concluding verse of this unit, for it describes Moshe's fulfillment of God's command in 28:2, that Moshe should command these laws to Bnei Yisrael!

In the opening verse God instructs Moshe (see 28:1-2): **"Command** Bnei Yisrael and tell them - keep the laws of My [daily] offerings..."

In the closing verse (see 30:1): "And Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael [telling them] everything [all the laws] that God had commanded him."  
 [Note a very similar structure between Vayikra 23:1 and 23:44.]

This alone already indicates that all of the laws included between these opening and closing verses forms a unit. [Note how the chapter division of Chumash seems to have made a major mistake here, for 30:1 should really have been 29:40! Note how the 'parshia' break of Chazal is much more accurate (as usual) than the 'King James' chapter division! This 'mistake' probably stems from a misunderstanding of the opening pasuk of Parshat Masei, and how it connects to the last verse of Parshat Pinchas.]

As we browse through the content of chapters 28->29, it seems as though its primary topic is the holidays, for they begin in 28:16 and continue all the way until 29:39. Note as well how these holidays are presented in the order of their lunar dates, i.e. beginning with Pesach and concluding with Succot .

Nonetheless, when we consider that this unit begins in 28:1, we must assume that the first fifteen psukim share the same theme. By taking a closer look, the connection becomes rather obvious, for the first topic is the daily "olah" offering - a lamb - offered once in the morning and once in the evening (see 28:2-8).

These laws are followed by the commandment to offer an 'additional' "olah" every Shabbat (see 28:9-10), and more elaborate "olah" on every Rosh Chodesh [first day of the lunar mon

Now, to determine what thematically ties this unit together, we need only list the topic of each of its individual "parshiot" in search of a logical progression:

As we will see, the progression is very logical:

PSUKIM	TOPIC / The laws of:
=====	=====
28:1-8	the DAILY korban TAMID
28:9-10	WEEKLY korban MUSAF for SHABBAT
28:11-15	MONTHLY korban MUSAF for ROSH
CHODESH	
28:16-25	a special korban MUSAF for CHAG HA'MATZOT
28:26-31	a special korban MUSAF for CHAG SHAVUOT
29:1-6	a special korban MUSAF for YOM TRU'AH
29:7-11	a special korban MUSAF for YOM KIPPUR
29:12-34	a special korban MUSAF for each day of
SUCCOT	
--->	* [note how each day is a separate parshia!]
29:35-38	a special korban MUSAF for SHMINI ATZERET
29:39	the summary pasuk

The progression within this unit is very straightforward. We begin with the DAILY "korban tamid", followed by the WEEKLY "musaf shabbat", followed by the MONTHLY "korban rosh chodesh, followed by the YEARLY schedule of korbanot offered on the chagim, beginning with the first month, etc. It is for this reason that the FIRST pasuk of each of these 'holiday' "parshiot" begins with the precise lunar date.

**THE KEY PHRASE: "AL OLAT ha'TAMID..."**

As you review these parshiot, note how each parshia relates in some manner to the daily "olat tamid". The opening parshia describes it, while each and every parshia that follows concludes with the statement "al olat ha'tamid" or "milvad olat ha'tamid".

The Torah goes out of its way to emphasize that each of these korbanot are to be offered IN ADDITION to the daily OLAH offering! In fact, that is why we call the offering a 'MUSAF'! - The word "musaf" stems from the verb "I'hosif" = to add on. These special korbanot are offered in ADDITION to the daily korban TAMID, and hence their name - a korban MUSAF.

Therefore, this unit begins with the KORBAN TAMID and then continues with the detail of each korban MUSAF that is offered in addition to the daily "olat tamid". Hence, a more precise definition for this unit would be KORBANOT TMIDIM u'MUSAFIM.

Indeed, each of the holidays are mentioned within this unit, but not because the holidays are its primary topic. Quite the contrary; the holidays are mentioned, for on each holiday an 'additional' korban is to be offered.

**BETWEEN EMOR & PINCHAS**

With this background, we can better understand the difference between the presentation of the chagim in Parshat Emor (see Vayikra chapter 23) and their presentation here.

In contrast to Parshat Pinchas whose primary topic is korbanot, the primary topic in Parshat Emor is the holidays. In fact, that is precisely its title: "moadei Hashem..." - God's appointed times (23:1,4)! That unit details the nature and specific laws for each holiday. For example, the prohibition to work, the need to gather ("mikraei kodesh"), and special mitzvot for each holiday, such as: offering the "omer", the "shte ha'lechem", blowing shofar, fasting, succah, lulav & etrog etc. [To verify, review Vayikra 23:1-44.]

[Btw, that parsha **does** include certain korbanot, such as those which come with the "omer" and "shte ha'lechem". But again, those korbanot are special for that day and hence, relate to the special nature of each of those holidays.]

Notice as well that each holiday in Parshat Emor includes the mitzvah of "v'hikravtem ishe la'Hashem" [you shall bring an offering to God/ see 23:8,25,27,36]. However, this commandment appears quite ambiguous for it doesn't specify which type of korban is to be offered.

Parshat Pinchas solves this ambiguity, by telling us precisely what that offering should be. To prove how, note a key summary pasuk found in Parshat Emor:

"These are God's appointed times set aside for gathering IN ORDER to offer a - ISHE LA'HASHEM -, an OLAH, MINCHA, ZEVACH, & NESACHIM, - on EACH DAY - DVAR YOM B'YOMO." (See Vayikra 23:37, compare with 23:4)

What does "dvar yom b'yomo" refer to? Most likely to the precise details for these korbanot as recorded in Parshat Pinchas! [Note Rashi on that pasuk (23:37), that is exactly what he says!] [Using computer jargon, we could say that Parshat Emor is 'indexed' to Parshat Pinchas - or, if each "v'hikravtem ishe" in Emor was in 'hyper-text', it would link to its respective URL address in Parshat Pinchas. [e.g. 23:8->28:19, etc.]

Also, if you look carefully at the names of the chagim in the opening pasuk of each parshia in Parshat Pinchas, you'll notice that each specific name reflects the primary aspect of the chag as it had already been described in Parshat Emor! [That comparison is quite straightforward, but beyond the scope of this shiur.]

With this background, the presentation of the holidays in Parshat Pinchas is quite easy to understand. Each holiday is introduced by its lunar date and name (based on its more detailed description in Parshat Emor). This introduction is followed by the complete details of the korban MUSAF for that holiday, including the type of each korban, and the number of animals that are to be offered. Other than those details (of the korban MUSAF), Parshat Pinchas does not add in any new laws for any of the "chagim".

#### THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF PARSHAT HA'MUSAFIM

Let's return now to Parshat Pinchas to take a look at the actual korbanot and what they're all about.

Even though the korban MUSAF of each holiday is presented in a separate parshia, the set of korbanot for each holidays are quite similar. Note how each set contains:

- \* an OLAH offering of PARIM, AYLIM, & KVASIM;
- \* the appropriate flour & wine offerings,  
[better known as "MINCHATAM V'NISKAM";
- \* and a CHATAT offering of a SEIR IZIM (a goat).

The following table compares the specific korbanot of each chag. [If you have the time (and patience), I recommend that you try to work it out first on your own.]

As you review this table, note how similar most of the MUSAFIM are. However, note as well where and how they differ!

CHAG / OLAT:	PAR	AYIL	KEVES	/ SEIR	CHATAT
ROSH CHODESH	-	2	1	7	1
CHAG HA'MATZOT	2	1		7	1
[same for all 7 days]					
SHAVUOT	-	2	1	7	1
ROSH HA'SHANA		1	1	7	1
YOM KIPPUR	-	1	1	7	1
[same as R.H.]					
SUCCOT (day 1) -		13	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 2)		12	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 3) -		11	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 4) -		10	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 5) -		9	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 6) -		8	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 7) -		7	2	14	1
SHMINI ATZERET -	1	1		7	1

As you study this chart, note how one can easily identify certain groups of holidays. Let's organize them as follows:

#### GROUP ONE: [the 2-1-7-1]

Rosh Chodesh, Chag ha'Matzot, and Shavuot

Note how all three are connected to YETZIAT MITZRAYIM! [Rosh Chodesh - based on Shmot 12:1, and Shavuot can be considered the conclusion of Pesach.]

#### GROUP TWO: [the 1-1-7-1]

Rosh ha'Shana, Yom Kippur, and Shmini Atzeret

Note, that all three are in Tishrei! Since the first two are 'days of judgement', then we must conclude that Shmini Atzeret must also be a 'day of judgement'!

[e.g. "tiflat geshem" etc.]

#### GROUP THREE: [the {13->7}-2-14-1]

The seven days of Succot

This is the most interesting group, for (unlike "chag ha'matzot") even though each day of Succot is the same holiday, for some reason the number of PARIM decreases daily.

#### DOUBLE NATURE

In addition to this obvious division into three groups, there remains another interesting phenomenon in the above chart. For some reason, the OLAH offering on Succot seems to be DOUBLE. On every other holiday we offer one AYIL and seven KVASIM, but on each day of Succot we double that - offering TWO and FOURTEEN instead! Furthermore, in regard to the PARIM, there's an 'explosion'. Instead of either one or two, we find THIRTEEN! More puzzling is the fact that each day we bring one less.

So what's going on with the korbanot on Succot?

One could suggest that Succot should not be considered a separate category, but rather a COMBINATION of the other two. Let's explain why.

On the one hand, Succot could be included in Group One, for that group contains the other two "shalosh regalim" (i.e. Chag ha'Matzot and Shavuot). On the other hand, Succot could also be included in Group Two, for that group contains all of the other holidays that fall out in the seventh month (i.e. "chagei Tishrei"). [Thematically as well, Succot fits into both groups. On the one hand it is a thanksgiving holiday (like the holidays in Group One), where we thank God for our fruit harvest /that's why we recite the Hallel. On the other hand, it is also a time of awe (like the holidays in Group Two), for we anticipate the rainy season which will determine the fate of the forthcoming year/& that's why we recite the "Hoshanot"].

This 'double nature' of Succot can explain why its korbanot are DOUBLE - two AYLIM instead of one; & fourteen KVASIM instead of seven. But what about the PARIM? According to this interpretation, we should only bring THREE on each day of Succot. So why do we bring and 'extra' ten on the first day, an extra nine on the second, etc.

It's rather cute, but if we add up all the 'extras', i.e. 10+9+8+7+6+5+4 we find that we've added 49 [=7x7] PARIM. In relation to the "chagim", finding significance in the number seven (or its multiple) should not surprise us. There are many instances in Chumash when 'seven' relates to our recognition that it God who controls what we perceive as nature (see shiurim on both Parshat Breishit and on Parshat Emor).

Our recognition that God controls nature is most critical on Succot - for it sits at the junction (and 'overlap') of the agricultural year, i.e. at the end of the previous year (the autumn fruit harvest) and beginning of the new year (the upcoming rainy season).

Furthermore, should we add these 49 PARIM to the original 21 PARIM [3x7days], we find that a total of SEVENTY parim are offered during SUCCOT. Chazal point out that these seventy bulls

are representative of the seventy nations of mankind. [See shiur on Parshat Noach and the 'Migdal Bavel 'vort'.]  
[If you want to find additional meaning to the number 7 or 49 [=7x7] in relation to the 7 days of Succot in the 7th month, ask your local kabbalist. - "v'akmal".]

In summary, we have shown how what appears to be a rather monotonous list of korbanot may actually be hiding some very fundamental aspects of the "chagim". Hopefully, next time you doven MUSAF, it will make your tefilah a bit more meaningful.

shabbat shalom,  
Menachem

=====

#### FOR FURTHER IYUN

1. If you are not familiar with the structure of tfilat Musaf, after the standard opening three brachot, we recite a "piyut" which describes our sorrow (& our fault) over the fact that the Bet ha'Mikdash no longer stands (e.g. "mpnei chataeinu", or tikanta shabbat..." etc.). That "piyut" concludes with our wish that the Bet ha'Mikdash will be rebuilt so that we can once again offer the korbanot - then we quote the actual korban from Parshat Pinchas and a brief description of its NESACHIM. This is followed by yet another piyut (e.g. "yismchu b'malchutcha" or "melech rachaman...") and then concludes with the bracha of "kedushat ha'yom" (e.g. "mkadesh ha'shabbat", or "yisrael v'hazmanim").

2. Note that in regard to lighting Chanuka candles, Bet Shammai's shita that we begin with eight and conclude with one is based on a comparison to PAREI ha'CHAG - i.e. the PARIM of Succot.

3. The only korban that doesn't change for any holiday is the "seir izim l'CHATAT". This korban serves as atonement for any possible sin of Am Yisrael in the Mikdash. The "seir izim" is chosen as it is symbolic of the sin of the brothers of Yosef when they used a "seir" to 'cover up' their sin. See Ramban! As its purpose is atonement, only one offering is necessary per set, and hence it is not doubled in Succot as are the other korbanot.

4. See previous shiur on Rosh Ha'shana for a more complete explanation of why Tishrei (at the beginning of the rainy season), serves as a time when all mankind is judged.

5. Note machloket between Ramban (and everyone else) concerning whether this korban MUSAF was offered in the desert or only once Bnei Yisrael entered the land. Relate it to his "shita" of "yeish mukdam u'muchar ba'Torah". [Ramban on 28:1 & on Vayikra 3:2.] Relate this to the above shiur.



SUCCOT • 15 TISHREI 5781 • OCTOBER 3, 2020 • VOL 28 NO. 1  
 SIMCHAT TORAH • 22 TISHREI 5781 • OCTOBER 10, 2020  
 SHABBAT PARSHAT BEREISHET • 29 TISHREI 5781 • OCTOBER 17, 2020  
 SHABBAT PARSHAT NOACH • 6 CHESHVAN 5781 • OCTOBER 24, 2020

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Bereishet - The Sweetest Thing

*"And G-d said, 'Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.' (1:26)*

Here's a thought for when you "dip the apple in the honey." Apparently, a honey-bee's life is around forty days long. In that brief span, it collects pollen sufficient for but one teaspoon of honey. At no point in that honey-bee's life does it think of the tremendous effort expended for such a limited outcome. Like everything in Hashem's world, the bee does its work because, on its level of understanding, that is its purpose, that's what it's here for. The sun doesn't think about shining, the ocean waves do not think about their crashing assault on the beach and the trapdoor spider has no regrets as it sets its lure to seduce its unwary prey.

Everything in this creation does the bidding of its Creator without a second thought. With one exception — Man. Man is the only creation capable of rebellion. Man is the only creature with choice — "in Our image," like Hashem, so to speak. Maybe that's one of the ways we can understand the dictum of our Sages that a person should say to himself, "The world was created for me." (*Sanhedrin 37a*) At every second of my life I have the ability to validate this creation of the world by choosing to serve my Creator with no less commitment than a honey bee.

### Noach - Human vs. Humanoid

*"May G-d extend Yafet, but He will dwell in tents of Shem..." (9:27)*

In a recent Hollywood gangster movie charting the life of hitman Frank Sheehan and labor union leader Jimmy Hoffa, rather than employ younger actors to portray the two characters as younger men, Hollywood used the latest 'de-aging' technology, and two well-known Italian-American films stars — one 76 and the other 79 — shed 40 years electronically. To de-age actors, a visual effects team creates a computer-generated, younger version of an actor's face and then replaces the actor's real face with the synthetic, animated version. Moshe Mahler, who worked for Disney Research for many years, writes that audiences are much more sensitive to distortions in computer-generated faces than to even larger, seemingly more obvious distortions that are present on the body. His research showed that viewers often experience an uncomfortable feeling when they see computer-generated faces that "aren't quite right."

Robotics professor Masahiro Mori hypothesized that as a humanoid becomes more lifelike, an audience's "familiarity" toward it increases, until a point where the humanoid is almost lifelike, but not perfectly lifelike.

At this point, subtle imperfections lead to responses of repulsion or rejection. The effect is stronger if the humanoid is moving.

If today's technology allows actors to shed years, we can probably expect that future technology will allow them to win posthumous Oscars for performances constructed on a computer decades after they have returned to the ground.

"May G-d extend Yafet, but he will dwell in tents of Shem..." Yafet is the father of Yavan, and Yavan translates into English as Greece. The Greeks are the inventors of the drama – the father of the film. Interestingly, there are several stories in Greek literature concerning immortality.

Shem is the ancestor of the Jewish People, who have always proclaimed that immortality is not to be found in works of art or works of computers, but in connecting to the Source of all. Because every mitzvah allows a Jew to turn the present into the future – before it becomes the past.

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## INSIGHTS INTO HALACHA

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### New Beginnings for Shabbat Bereishet

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

It is customary in many *shuls* and *yeshivot* around the world to make a special *kiddush* on Shabbat Bereishet. The question is, "Why?" Why is making a special *Kiddush* on this particular Shabbat such a widespread custom?

Those readily partaking in the *kugel* and *cholent* might just say, "Why not?" But there must be more to it than just indulging in gastronomical pleasures.

Some might posit the reason as a connection to Simchat Torah, or the ending and restarting of the Torah cycle. However, those events were already celebrated on Simchat Torah. If so, what is the deeper meaning of celebrating on Shabbat Bereishet?

I would like to preface the answer with a story I recently heard from Rabbi Yaakov Minkus, a *rebbe* in Yeshivas Beis Yisrael.

Once during the Simchat Torah *hakafot*, the Rabbi of a certain *shul* noticed two congregants just standing in the back schmoozing away the time. Concerned, he approached them and asked them to come join in the traditional dancing. They politely refused. "Rabbi", they told him, "This dancing is not for us. For you, as the Rabbi, to dance with the Torah makes perfect sense. But not for us! You see, to tell you the truth, we didn't learn anything this past year, nor did we set aside any specific time to learn Torah. Any time we had the chance to learn, we spent the time schmoozing and wasting time. So on Simchat Torah we are doing the same. We have no right to dance with the Torah."

The Rabbi replied, "You are right and you are wrong. As you know, there are two different honors that are given out on Simchat Torah: that of the *Chatan Torah* and that of the *Chatan Bereishet*. The *Chatan Torah* is the *aliyah* where we celebrate the concluding of the Torah. This is customarily given to the Rabbi or another *Talmid Chacham* who has made great strides in his Torah learning over the past year. According to your own admission you are correct, you do not have much to dance for.

But there is another aspect to our dancing on Simchat Torah, and that is of the *Chatan Bereishet*. This is the *aliyah* where we celebrate the starting anew of the Torah. Anyone can receive this *kibbud* (honor). So for this aspect of Simchat Torah you should also join in! It's a new cycle, a new starting point. So even if last year you fell short, now is the time to pick yourselves up and get dancing for all the Torah you *will* learn over the next year!"

This starting point, this new beginning is now – Shabbat Bereishet. We see it clearly in this week's *parsha* – Bereishet. Aside from reading about the actual creation of the world from nothingness, which in itself is an excellent example of a new start, there is also the story of Kayin and Hevel (Cain and Abel).

After Kayin murders Hevel in cold-blood, G-d confronts him about his crime. After first denying any wrongdoing or even knowledge of the murder ("Am I my brother's keeper?"), G-d then metes out sentencing, and Kayin finally admits to the crime. He says just three words: (Gen. 4:13): "*Gadol avoni minso*," meaning that "this sin is too great for me to bear."

We then find something astounding. G-d reduces his sentence in half! In verse 12, Kayin's sentence is that of "*Na v'Ned*" – wandering and exile in seclusion. Yet, after his admittance, in verse 16 it states that Kayin settled in the land of Nod, meaning exile and seclusion. What happened to the decree of constant wandering?

*Chazal* explain that we see that Kayin's *teshuva* – even though it was half-hearted and was done only when confronted, and after he at first denied any wrongdoing, and even though he committed such a despicable act causing the potential for mankind for all time to be halved – nevertheless caused his punishment to be mitigated! Not only that, he merited to see seven generations of his own offspring! (One of whom, Na'ama, was a *tzaddeket*, the wife of Noach, through whom mankind propagated after the Flood.)

All due to those three words that he said.

This is a powerful lesson to take from *parshat Bereishet*, the power of renewal and new beginnings.

This is the message we can glean, even from a *Kiddush* on Shabbat Bereishet.

Even if last year we didn't accomplish as much spiritually as we could have or even should have. Even if Elul didn't work out as well as we would have wanted.

G-d is now giving us a chance for a new start, potential for renewal. That is the reason *Klal Yisrael* celebrates on Shabbat Bereishet.

May everyone merit utilizing this message for the upcoming year, and on next Simchat Torah may everyone be able to say that the reason they are dancing is due to their own personal *aliyah* in learning, and that they are therefore worthy of being the *Chatan Torah*!

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Eruvin 58-85

*Rabbi Shmuel bar Inia said in the name of Rav, "Torah study is more important than offering sacrifices."*

- *Eruvin 63b*

*Rav Chisda said, "There will come the days that are long and short, and then we will have plenty of time to sleep."*

This was Rav Chisda's reply to his daughter's amazement at her father's lack of sleep. She noticed that he was not sleeping much, so that he could have more waking time to pursue his Torah study – and asked about his need for sleep.

Maharsha explains how days can be both long and short, as expressed in Rav Chisda's reply to his daughter. "Long," he explains, refers to the eternal of the Afterlife, which is described in the Torah as "the length of days," and is earned by living in accordance with the teachings of the Torah. The ability to earn that reward, however, is available only during a person's life in this world. The Maharsha completes his explanation by teaching that the word "short" said by Rabbi Chisda refers to the lack of any opportunity to earn reward after a person's life in this world is concluded.

Here we gain great insight into Rav Chisda's perspective on life in this world and in the Afterlife – a perspective that explains why he did not "waste time" on sleep when at the expense of earning eternal reward.

- *Eruvin 65a*

*Rav said, "Where a person eats determines his residence in regard to the halacha of eruv (i.e. eruv techumin, to be able to carry an additional 2,000 amahs outside the city on Shabbat)." Shmuel said, "Where a person sleeps determines his residence regarding the halacha of eruv."*

- *Eruvin 73a*

*Rav Yosef said, "There is always room in the stomach for tasty food!"*

This statement on our *daf*, which seems to be the basis for the famous advertising slogan, "There's always room for Jell-O™," is actually a folk-saying that Rav Yosef cited to explain why we eat more on Shabbat than on weekdays.

- *Eruvin 82b*



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# Q & A - BEREISHET

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## Questions

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. Hashem blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from Hashem?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked"?
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that Hashem, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - Hashem saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. Hashem created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god. The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. Hashem commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced; therefore Hashem took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

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# Q & A - NOACH

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## Questions

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did Hashem tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did Hashem postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did Hashem do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to "be fruitful and multiply" directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, "Hashem is bringing a flood," it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - Hashem told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. "Kosher" and "non-kosher" are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Metushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13,15 - People said, "If we see him going into the ark, we'll smash it!" Hashem surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven *amot*.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it's better to eat food "bitter like an olive" but which comes directly from Hashem, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach's disgrace to Cham. And because Cham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Cham's fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against Hashem.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word "Yiscah" is related to the Hebrew word "to see." Sarah was called Yiscah because she could "see" the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

# Q & A - SUCCOT

## Questions

1. According to the Torah, what three basic requirements define a material as valid for use as a *succah* roof?
2. If the *succah* causes discomfort (e.g. it's too cold) to the extent that under similar conditions you would leave your very own house, you are exempt from the mitzvah. Why?
3. What two things are forbidden to do outside of the *succah* all seven days of the festival?
4. What is the absolute minimum number of meals a person is required to eat in the *succah* during the seven day holiday?
5. Besides referring to the tree and its fruit, what does the word *etrog* mean literally?
6. What is the minimum length of a lulav?
7. What is the maximum percentage a person is required to add to the purchase price of his *etrog* in order to obtain one of greater beauty?
8. On the Shabbat that occurs during Succot, we read the Book of Kohelet, in which King Solomon refers to himself as "Kohelet." Why is King Solomon called Kohelet?
9. What prohibition could a person transgress simply by sitting in the *succah* on the eighth day of Succot?
10. We hold a *tallit* over the heads of the people who read the end of the Torah and the beginning of the Torah. Why?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated*

## Answers

1. It must grow from the ground, no longer be connected to the ground, and not be receptive to *tumah* (ritual defilement).
2. Because the commandment of living in a *succah* is to dwell in the *succah* for seven days the same way you dwell in your house the rest of the year. (*Mishneh Berura* 640:13)
3. Eat (an 'established' meal) or sleep. (*Orach Chaim* 639:2)
4. One. Eating a meal in the *succah* the first night of Succot is a requirement. The rest of the festival, a person can eat 'snacks' which are not required to be eaten in a *succah*. (Outside Israel, one must eat a meal the second night of Succot as well. However, there is no requirement to live outside Israel!) (*Orach Chaim* 639:3)
5. Beauty. (*Ramban Vayikra* 23:40)
6. Its spine must be at least 4 *tefachim* (halachic handbreadths).
7. 33.3% (*Orach Chaim* 656:1)
8. Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on Succot after the Sabbatical year. (*Rashi, Kohelet* 1:1)
9. *Bal Tosif*- "Do not add to the mitzvahs." The commandment to live in the *succah* applies for only seven days. To sit in the *succah* on the eighth day with intent to fulfill the mitzvah transgresses "*bal tosif*." (*Orach Chaim* 666:1)
10. It represents the wedding canopy, symbolizing that through the Torah we wed ourselves to Hashem.

*We wish all of Ohrnet Magazine's readers and friends Chag Succot Somayach — May you have a festive, happy and joyous festival of Succot!*

*For much more Succot information and inspiration visit us at [ohr.edu/holidays/succos/](http://ohr.edu/holidays/succos/)*

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### Succot

#### Holy Matrimony

One of most famous passages in the entire Bible reads: “Moses commanded us the Torah, a heritage (*morashah*) for the Congregation of Jacob” (Deut. 33:4). The Rabbis exegetically interpreted the word *morashah* in this passage as if it reads *me’orasah* (“betrothed woman”), which teaches that the Torah’s “marriage” to the Jewish People is akin to a woman’s “marriage” to her husband (*Berachos* 57a, *Pesachim* 49b). In this instance, the word for betrothal is *erusin*, and cognates of that Hebrew word appear throughout the Bible in that context (for example, see Ex. 22:15, Deut. 20:7; 22:23-27; 28:30). Nonetheless, this essay explores the relationship of the word *erusin* to a later Hebrew word for “betrothal” – *kiddushin*. That word and its derivatives appear more frequently in the Mishna than do variants of *erusin*, and, in fact, the Mishnaic tractate that deals with the laws of betrothal is entitled *Kiddushin*. If these two words refer to the same Halachic procedure, does that make them synonyms? If they are indeed synonyms, then why does the Bible use one word, and the Rabbis another?

Before we delve into various linguistic insights concerning the words *erusin* and *kiddushin*, a few points about the Halachic conception of marriage must be clarified. According to halacha, Jewish Marriage is a two-step process. The first step, known as *erusin/kiddushin*, involves the bridegroom “betrothing” his intended wife. At this point, she is halachically considered his wife, and the prohibition of adultery comes into full swing. However, the new couple may not yet live together until the second stage of marriage (called *nissuin*, which is effectuated by *chuppah*).

Thus, when we refer to *erusin/kiddushin* as “betrothal,” this does not mirror the Western concept of “engagement” that colloquially refers to a couple who agreed to marry each other but did not yet do so. Rather, *erusin/kiddushin* refers to the first stage of marriage. Some scholars prefer the term “inchoate marriage,” but it is too cumbersome and obscure for our purposes. In Talmudic times, what we call “engagement” was called *shidduchin*. This is sometimes confusing because in Modern Hebrew the term *erusin* refers to a couple formally becoming “engaged” and declaring their intentions to later get married. However, as Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ex. 22:16) already clarifies, the earlier Hebrew term *erusin* does not refer to this.

In the opening discussion of Tractate *Kiddushin* in the Babylonian Talmud (*Kiddushin* 2b), the Saboraic Sages ask why the Mishna (*Kiddushin* 2:1) refers to betrothal as *kiddushin* instead of using a Biblical Hebrew term. They answer that the term *kiddushin* in the sense of “betrothal” is related to the *hekdes* (“consecrated property”), as one who betroths a woman forbids her from being with anybody else, just as consecration forbids all people from deriving benefit from the property that was consecrated.

Rabbi Yitzchak Vana (a Yemenite Kabbalist who died in 1670) writes that *kiddushin* relates to *hekdes* because just as consecrating property causes one who misuses that property to violate a more serious prohibition than previously so, so does betrothing a woman cause one who illicitly engages her in intimacy to violate a more serious prohibition than had she been single.

The truth is that according to Biblical law a newlywed couple is already permitted to live together once the first stage of marriage (*erusin/kiddushin*) has been completed. However, the halacha remains that, by rabbinic fiat, the couple are forbidden to one another until they complete the second stage of marriage. The Rabbis instituted that a betrothed woman is forbidden to her husband until he finalizes their marriage with *nissuin* (see *Kallah* 1:1 and Rashi to *Kesuvas* 8a).

In light of this, Rabbi Alexander Sender Shor (1660-1737) and Rabbi Elazar Moshe Horowitz (1817-1890) explain the term *kiddushin* as implying a procedure akin to *hekdes* comes into play only after the rabbinic enactment by which a betrothed woman becomes forbidden to her own husband. Accordingly, the Rabbis used the term *kiddushin* to accentuate the point that through *kiddushin* a woman becomes like *hekdes* – forbidden to everyone else in the world (including her husband). By contrast, since the term *erusin* is not loaded with this implication, the Torah uses that term to denote “betrothal.” This makes sense because Biblical law maintains that a betrothed woman is permitted to her husband, so she does not resemble *hekdes*.

We can offer another, similar reason as to why only the Rabbis use the term *kiddushin* and the Bible does not. Rabbi David HaLevi Segal (*Turei Zahav* to *Even HaEzer* 34:2) writes that the mere fact that Jewish Marriage is a two-step process (commencing with *erusin/kiddushin* and finishing with *nissuin*) imbues it with a special holiness (*kedushah*) unseen elsewhere. According to this, we may argue that the Rabbis coined the term *kiddushin* for “betrothal” because they were responsible for instituting this two-step framework, and that *kiddushin* is what kicks off the process. On the other hand, from the Bible’s perspective, “betrothal” is simply called *erusin*, which implies nothing about “holiness,” because from the Bible’s perspective that extra level of holiness which emanates from the two-step process does not yet exist.

*Tosafos* (to *Kiddushin* 7b) mention a halachic difference between one who effectuates betrothal using the terminology of *kiddushin* and one who uses

the terminology of *erusin*. There is a Talmudic principle that even if a man betroths “half” a woman, the betrothal still goes into full effect. However, the Tosafists explain that this applies only to a man who betroths a woman using the terminology of *kiddushin*. Their unspoken logic is that the law of *kiddushin* is comparable to the law of consecrating an animal (*hekdes*). If one consecrates “half” an animal for sacrificial purposes, the halacha follows that the entire beast becomes holy. The Tosafists understood that the same is true concerning *kiddushin*: If one betroths “half” a woman, then the *kiddushin* comes into full effect. However, the Tosafists maintain that this comparison between the two areas of halachah is true only when betrothing a woman using the term *kiddushin*, which is related to *hekdes*. If, however, the groom expressed his nuptial intent using the terminology of *erusin*, then this paradigm is not in play and the betrothal will only take “half” effect (whatever exactly that entails).

Although the Saboraic Sages mentioned above connect the word *kiddushin* to *hekdes*, the Tosafists (to *Kiddushin* 2b) point out that the plain meaning of *kiddushin* relates to *kiddush* in the sense of “preparing” or “designating” something (e.g. see Ex. 19:10, Num. 11:18). The word *kedeishah* (“prostitute”) is a cognate of this root because such a woman is “set aside” or “designated” for a specific purpose (see Rashi to Gen. 38:21 and Deut. 23:18). Others understand that the Hebrew word *kedeishah* as related to the Akkadian word *qadistu*, “woman of special status.” That general definition can apply to both a prostitute and a wife, leading Professor Shamma Friedman (a member of the Academy of the Hebrew Language) to entertain this as a possible etymology for the term *kiddushin*. Either way, these approaches maintain that *kiddushin* is unrelated to “holiness” or “consecration,” *per se*.

The commentators buttress the Tosafists’ point with two arguments. First, in the speech act that contributes to the creation of *kiddushin*, the groom says to the bride “with this ring, you are *mekudeshet* to me...” Rabbi Avraham HaLevi of Barcelona (1235-1303) in *Chiddushei HaRaah* (*Kiddushin* 2b), and Rabbi Yosef Ibn Ezra (1560-1620) in *Atzmot Yosef*, both note that if the term *mekudeshet* was meant in the sense of “consecration,” then the groom would effectively be “consecrating” her to himself. But this



would mean he is *forbidding* her to himself, just like consecrating property renders that property *forbidden*! Since this is certainly not the groom's intention, it must be that *mekudeshet* is a term of "preparing" or "designating." Moreover, Rabbi Eliezer Asheknazi (1512-1585) argues that, grammatically-speaking, if the bridegroom means to "sanctify" her, he should say *mukdeshet*. The fact that the traditional formula instead reads *mekudeshet* indicates that he meant to "set her aside" or "designate" her as a wife, not to "sanctify" her.

Dr. Michael Satlow suggests that the Mishnaic term *kiddushin* is actually a "loanword" from the Greek legal term *ekdosis*, which refers to a bride's father "handing over" the girl to her new husband. While this is a fascinating proposal, it is quite difficult to accept because "handing over" the bride is actually the definition of *nissuin* (see *Ketuvos* 4:5). It is thus quite problematic to argue that this is the etymological basis for the term *kiddushin*. Nevertheless, one could argue that the Rabbis may have adapted/adopted this Greek word, and slightly modified its pronunciation and meaning – as they often did when making use of foreign words.

Let's now turn our attention to the word *erusin* and its possible etymologies. The Yemenite Sage Rabbi Shalom Mansoura of Sanna (d. 1888) explains that *erusin* is an expression of "tying" (similar to the English euphemism for marriage, "tying the knot"). Rabbi Yitzchak Ratzabi offers two ways of explaining this etymology. First, he cites Rabbi Baurch HaLevi Epstein (1860-1940), who writes that the root of *erusin*, ALEPH-REISH-SIN/SAMECH, should be understood as congruent to the root *erez*, ALEPH-REISH-ZAYIN, because the letters SIN/SAMECH and ZAYIN are interchangeable. The latter root refers to something packed tightly (see *Yechezkel* 27:24), like the word *arizah* ("package") in Modern Hebrew, so it makes sense that *erusin* would also refer to the powerful bonds of matrimony. Rabbi Epstein also notes that *erez* is related to *aizor* ("tight belt") by way of metathesis, continuing in the same theme of "tying" something tightly. Alternatively, Rabbi

Ratzabi suggests that Rabbi Mansoura means that *erusin* is related to "tying" by way of a simpler metathesis without replacing any of the letters. If we simply transpose the final two letters of the root ALEPH-REISH-SIN/SAMECH, then we get ALEPH-SIN/SAMECH-REISH, which means "tie" or "bind." A betrothed woman is "tied" to her husband in the sense that the only way she can marry someone else is if he grants her a bill of divorce (or dies).

Rabbi Vana argues that the word *arusah* ("betrothed woman") is related to the Hebrew word *eres* ("poison"), because once a woman is betrothed to another, then she becomes like a poisonous snake or scorpion in the sense that anyone who illicitly approaches her is liable for the death penalty.

Rabbi Ratzabi cites another Yemenite scholar who explains that a betrothed woman is called an *arusah* in the same sense that a sharecropper is called an *aris*. The sharecropper enters a sort of partnership with the owner of the field, and thus retains partial rights to its produce. In a similar vein, a betrothed woman enters into a partnership with her future husband, who at that point only has a partial "claim" over her (in that she is now forbidden to commit adultery), but not a complete entitlement (i.e. if she dies, he does not inherit her property).

Finally, Rabbi Ratzabi offers two suggestions of his own towards understanding the etymology of *erusin*, both of which invoke the interchangeability of the letter ALEPH with AYIN. He explains that the root AYIN-REISH-SIN/SAMECH refers to "mixing," like in the case of *arisah* ("dough") which is mixed/kneaded. In some sense, *erusin* (spelled with an ALEPH) also refers to a "mixture" of sorts, as it represents the joining of man and wife in matrimony. Alternatively, Rabbi Ratzabi connects the word *erusin* to *eres* ("bed"), spelled with an AYIN, as an allusion to the conjugal reasons for marriage.

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu)

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## THE FIFTEENTH AND FINAL MORNING BLESSING: THANKFUL TO BE HELPLESS

“Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids. And may it be Your will, Hashem, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that You accustom us to Your Torah and attach us to Your commandments. And do not bring us to error, or to transgression, or to sin, or to challenge, or to humiliation, and that the Evil Inclination should not rule over us. Distance us from an evil person and from an evil friend. Attach us to the Good Inclination and to good deeds, and force the [Evil] Inclination to be subservient to You. Grant us today, and every day, grace, kindness and mercy in Your Eyes and in the eyes of all who see us, and bestow beneficent kindness upon us. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who bestows beneficent kindness upon His people, Israel.”

The final blessing stands out for two immediate reasons. First, it is uncharacteristically lengthy. And, second, its syntax is different from that of the other blessings. If the blessing would have been comprised of just the opening sentence, it would have effortlessly matched the preceding fourteen blessings, and the blessings would have flown seamlessly one into the other. But it does not.

As we have learned together over the last few months, the sequence of the blessings has carried us higher and higher, to the point where we have reached the elevated level of being able to give strength to the weary. Effective leadership requires foresight and clarity. A successful mentor is one who can offer coherent spiritual, practical and emotional advice. Such a leader requires eyes that see only the truth. Eyes capable of discerning what is being asked – and *why* – so that the appropriate answer can be given. For this reason, the spiritual leadership of the Jewish Nation is described as the “eyes” of the people.

The opening sentence of our blessing spells out this idea straightforwardly and clearly: “Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids.” To be blessed with unerring spiritual vision should be the climax of everything that we strive for. Therefore, we thank G-d for removing the “spiritual cataracts” that

blur our vision and cloud our judgment. And if the blessing were to end here, it would be a perfect finale to the incredible journey that the Morning Blessings have taken us on.

But we have not yet reached the end of the blessing. The final blessing continues, at great length. What makes it even more surprising is that the continuation of the blessing seems to have nothing whatsoever to do with its opening sentence. To compound the issue, however important the concepts mentioned throughout the remainder of the blessing may be, they do not seem to fit into the typical structure of the Morning Blessings. From the get-go, the blessings have been motivating us to move continuously upwards in our spiritual quest to draw closer to G-d. They have been spurring us on to climb another step, and another step – one after the other – using a logical and systematic method. Each step brings us within reach of the ultimate goal, which is to serve G-d to our utmost. And then, as the very pinnacle of our hopes and desires are within reach, our blessing lists an entire series of requests to G-d that seem almost simplistic. Certainly they are all crucial to our spiritual growth and they are absolutely fitting for the Morning Blessings, but why do they appear in the final blessing? They would seem to be more suited to have been mentioned towards the beginning of the Morning Blessings, which deal with the more rudimentary dimensions of our relationship with G-d.

To exacerbate the situation, there is a general rule that whenever we invoke the Patriarchs within prayer, it is an indication that we are about to ask for something that requires more than our own merits alone. Including the Patriarchs in our prayers is an admission that without their merits there is little, if any, chance that our supplications would be answered based solely on merits. And here, after the opening sentence of our blessing, we continue, “And may it be Your will, Hashem, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that You accustom us to Your Torah and attach us to Your commandments. And do not bring us to error, or to transgression, or to sin, or to challenge, or to humiliation, and that the Evil Inclination should not rule over us. Distance us from an evil person and from

an evil friend. Attach us to the Good Inclination and to good deeds, and force the [Evil] Inclination to be subservient to You. Grant us today and every day grace, kindness and mercy in Your Eyes and in the eyes of all who see us, and bestow beneficent kindness upon us. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who bestows beneficent kindness upon His people, Israel.”

Not only do we mention the Patriarchs, but, on reading through the blessing, it seems as if we are asking for their assistance in things that do not seem to be all that difficult to accomplish. We do not seem to require their intervention in these matters. Certainly, learning Torah, not making mistakes, not sinning, not allowing the Evil Inclination to rule over us, not being exposed to evil people nor to evil friends, and being attached to the Good Inclination, are all vital ingredients to our spiritual growth. There is no doubt that they give us the wherewithal to belong to something that is infinitely greater than our physical existence. But to invoke the Patriarchs for such a list would seem, at first glance, to almost be like turning to the President of the United States to take care of a parking violation – effective but exaggerated.

Why, then, does this last blessing in the series – which represents the very pinnacle of our spiritual aspirations – seem to focus on the more foundational concepts? And why is it uncharacteristically long? It would seem to have been more fitting for this blessing to emphasize thoughts that are loftier, and that reflect the heights that we have reached on our voyage. Yet the beauty of this final blessing is that, now, at the very end of our remarkable journey, we are being taught the most fundamental and essential lesson of all.

Without G-d it is not possible to succeed.

We are supposed to live our lives with the awareness that G-d is accompanying us in all that we do. But frequently, and paradoxically, the greater our accomplishments, the more we attribute our triumphs to our own personal acumen. Somewhere along the way, G-d’s participation becomes less and less palpable. And that is a terrible mistake. Because, as our blessing states, without acknowledging that G-d is an integral dimension in our lives, even our most basic responsibilities become almost insurmountable. Or, to put it another way: A “little” humility wouldn’t hurt.

The Torah describes Moses – the greatest person in world history – as the humblest of people (Numbers 12:3). Initially, this seems incongruous. How can those two descriptions coexist harmoniously? Infinite greatness and immeasurable humbleness do not seem to be dimensions that sit easily with each other. More than that, in order for Moses to reach the ultimate level of connection to G-d that he did he had to be absolutely aware – not just of his own personal greatness but of the eternal impact that he will make in the world. And, yet, the Torah, in defining Moses for posterity, chooses to describe him as a humble person. Because knowing one’s greatness is no contradiction to humility. On the contrary, it was precisely his understanding of this point that caused Moses to be so humble. Ultimate humility is achieved only by a person who excels in good attributes but takes no credit for his greatness. A person who realizes that all of their achievements come from G-d cannot be conceited or self-congratulatory. That is why the Torah emphasizes that Moses’ greatness was the source of his humbleness. Judaism is conveying that to reach the level of true humbleness, you must be completely aware of how great you are and of your achievements. But it also requires continual awareness that whatever you have attained, you did so because G-d gave you the abilities and the strength to be able to do so.

And that is the essence of our final blessing. A detailed list of things that I am begging G-d to assist me with. Yes, they seem simplistic, and, at first glance, they sound as if the right place for them should be nearer the beginning of the Morning Blessings than at the end. But, in reality, they symbolize my absolute recognition that as I reach upwards towards greatness, the more completely dependent on G-d I become. With this blessing I am definitively declaring that without continuously “working on” that awareness, I am helpless. And, to reach such a remarkable level of comprehension is the greatest achievement that I can realize.

*Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet on The Morning Blessings by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer*  
[www.ohr.edu/morning-blessings](http://www.ohr.edu/morning-blessings)



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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman*

## Bereishet

### Instinct and Conscience

The story of the first sin is the story of all sins. The animal – in this case the serpent – applies its “logic” to overcome human conscience. The animal is not wrong in following animal logic – the animal instinct is the voice of G-d... to the animal. The serpent urges man to eat from the forbidden fruit, promising this will enlighten him so that he is “like G-d, knowing the difference between good and evil.” (Ber. 3:5). Indeed, animals are endowed with instinct – Divine guidance from within – and can act only in accordance with that instinct. They are “like G-d” and they can do only good and no evil. Animals have only one nature, whose call they must heed.

Not so man. Man’s distinction is his morality, born of the ability to *choose* good and shun evil. He has physical drives but must give them their due only out of a sense of duty, and always acting with moral freedom. His task is not to follow his animal instincts, but to overcome them. An animal acting in accordance with his instincts *follows* them, but a man who does the same – *succumbs*.

Man’s physical nature must, of necessity, be opposed to good and attracted to evil, for only in this way can he properly *choose* good, not *because* of his senses but *in spite* of them. For this reason, the voice of G-d speaks not from *within him*, but *to him*, telling him what is good and what is evil. But there is also a soft, innate voice of G-d within man. This is the conscience, whose messenger is the sense of shame. Shame allows us to rise above the animal instinct and choose good even when it is against our physical gratification. Shame is the faithful guardian of morality. It fortifies the ability to choose good. It allows us to repay debts, return lost objects, and refrain from illicit relationships. (See *Duties of the Heart*, Gate of Reflection, chapter 5.) Shame cautions man *in general terms* to do good and refrain from evil, but does not define *what is good* and *what is evil*. This, man learns only from the voice of G-d, which speaks to him from outside himself.

To the serpent, what is pleasing is good. To an animal, instinct is the Divine voice. The tree was appealing to man’s senses – it appeared good to the *taste*, tempting to the *sight*, and delightful to *contemplate*. (Ber. 3:6) Everything from within him said: “This is good.” But G-d’s word to him told him not to eat the fruit, and *this* was to be the guiding rule for man to distinguish between good and evil – G-d’s word.

Man was placed in paradise not to enjoy its fruits, but to *work and guard it*. (Ber. 2:15) Only by following the rule of G-d, with the aid of his conscience, can he succeed.

- Sources: Commentary, Bereishet 3:1

### Noach

#### Young at Heart — Evil at Heart?

When the flood is over, and Noach, his family and all living creatures emerge from the ark, G-d reflects on the destruction of the land, and states, *I will no longer curse the ground for the sake of man, for the design of man's heart is evil from his youth, nor will I destroy every living thing as I have done.* (Ber. 8:21)

The traditional explanation of this verse is as translated above: G-d's decision to never again bring destruction upon the world is *because* man is bound to be evil from his youth. Rav Hirsch rejects this explanation on logical, textual, and grammatical grounds. First, it cannot mean that G-d has given up on educated humanity, for it is futile. It would not be in keeping with G-d's dignity and majesty to make such a statement about Himself or His creations. Second, a strikingly similar sentiment is expressed above (Ber. 6:5) as the *reason* for the punishment of the flood. It would be absurd for the unavoidable evil designs of man to be both the reasons for punishment and for clemency! Third, the emphasis in the verse is on the two statements, "I will no longer," which flank the parenthetical statement, "*for the design of man's heart is evil from his youth.*" The Hebrew word *ki* can mean 'because' or 'when/if.' Rav Hirsch reads this verse with the second meaning: *If the design of man's heart should again become evil – even from his youth – and the destruction of the generation should be the only way of salvation, nevertheless, never shall I do as I have done.*

The word for youth, *na'ar*, is composed of the same letters as the verb 'to shake' (*l'na'er*). Young people want to develop "out of themselves." Neither good nor bad impressions are permanently absorbed by them. A youth's nature is not yet cloaked by hypocrisy and still 'shakes off' both good and bad impressions.

It is not true that children have a wicked nature and that they aspire to bad. We are not doomed by an evil inclination from youth. While young adults may do evil things, this is generally because they have not yet learned the art of subordinating themselves to a higher calling, the art of self-control and respect for duty. In their quest for independence, they seek to "shake off" these burdens. But it is this independence of will which will ultimately serve them well, when intellectual maturity teaches them to use it for moral development. They can learn to use this same obstinacy in the tenacious and steadfast pursuit of good.

Now, the adults who have not learned this art are the ones who remain addicted to base desire and greed. Once the adolescent quest for independence has passed, he learns to accommodate and conform, and also succumbs to desire and selfishness. The time when evil prevails is usually well past youth.

Our verse speaks of a most unusual era, when even the *young* consciously aspire to evil as their hearts' ideal. Were this to be the case, all hope for the generation would appear to be lost. But even in this desperate era, G-d promises not to bring destruction again. Instead, a new model of the education of man, one that depends on climactic change and dispersion to create a gamut of experiences for mankind, will bring man back to his noble calling.

- Source: Commentary, Bereishet 8:21

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# PARSHA OVERVIEW

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## Bereishet

In the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days.

Adam and Chava – the human pair – are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing "sin," Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain in childbirth. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history.

Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock, and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth.

The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noah. After the death of Sheis, Mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noah, finds favor with G-d.

## Noach

It is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d

resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants, except for the righteous Noah, his family and sufficient animals to repopulate the earth. G-d instructs Noah to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days, the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noah sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later, Noah again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days, Noah sends the dove once more, and this time the dove does not return.

G-d tells Noah and his family to leave the ark. Noah brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noah and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. G-d commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibitions against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noah plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Cham, one of Noah's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noah's three sons, from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended.

The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. This Torah portion concludes with the genealogy of Noah to Avram.

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# SEASONS — THEN AND NOW

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## Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

**T**he commentaries address the question of why the Rabbis chose to finish the Torah and celebrate Simchat Torah on Shemini Atzeret and not on Shavuot, the day when we received the Torah. They explain that when the Jewish People accepted the Torah without first going through it, they were unable to truly appreciate the depth of this gift when they received it on Shavuot. Only once they finished going through the Torah did they really come to the realization of the special present they received on Shavuot. Therefore, the Rabbis chose to finish the Torah on a different day than Shavuot, to mirror the experiences that the Jewish People had when they received the Torah (see the Ben Ish Chai's *Yedei Chaim*, siman 669).

This idea, though, addresses only why Simchat Torah is not celebrated on Shavuot, but it fails to answer why the Rabbis specifically chose to finish the Torah and celebrate the *siyum* on Shemini Atzeret (or the second day of that Chag outside of Israel). Furthermore, in light of the halacha that one shouldn't mix two different celebrations together, why did the Rabbis choose to make Simchat Torah exactly on the same day as Shemini Atzeret?

### One More Day...

Commenting on the verse that refers to Shemini Atzeret as “Atzeret,” literally translated as stopping, Rashi explains:

*Like a king who invited his sons to a meal, when it came time for them to go, the king said, “My sons! I beg of you stay with me one more day, it is hard to be separated from you!”* (Rashi on Vayikra 23:36; see also Rashi on Bamidbar 29:35)

The commentaries ask a basic question on this: How would staying another day ease the parting

from one another? Wouldn't it just simply delay the hardship of having to part? Or, in fact, wouldn't it even make it harder, following another day of close bonding?

### Spiritual Climax

The commentaries explain that through Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Succot, we come closer and closer to Hashem, until reaching a climax of intense closeness on Shemini Atzeret. In fact Sefat Emet points out that the spiritual level that is reached on Shemini Atzeret (and Shavuot) is so high that it cannot be condensed into a physical mitzvah. This is why, unlike other holidays, there is no specific mitzvah that is associated with Shemini Atzeret (other than the offerings brought in the Beit Hamikdash - Sefat Emet, Succot 5637, “*v'hayita ach sameach*”). In a similar vein, the sources tell us that as a result of the close bond between us and Hashem on Shemini Atzeret, it is the most auspicious time of the year for one's prayers to be accepted (see Moed l'Kol Chai 25:1 and Ben Yehoyada on Mo'ed Katan 9a' based on the Zohar, Tzav 32a).

Practically speaking, the work that is demanded from us on Shemini Atzeret is to feel the closeness with Hashem that we developed from all these special days that have just passed, and try to extend that closeness to the mundane days that follow. That is why this day is called “Atzeret” (stopping). On this day, one is meant to *stop* the influences of the 21 days prior from going away, by absorbing the lessons learned and spiritual heights achieved (Shem M'Shmuel, Shemini Atzeret).

### Only Torah

The only way for this to happen is through the Torah. This is because through the Torah, which is

above time and above physicality, even without auspicious times, such as the holidays, and without the means of timely mitzvahs such as shofar and succah, one can still connect to Hashem in a very intense way. It is therefore only through the Torah that we can transfer over the closeness we feel to Hashem on Shemini Atzeret to the mundane days that follow. According to this, it is no surprise that the Zohar, which preceded the custom of finishing the Torah on Shemini Atzeret, says to rejoice with the Torah on this day. Even prior to this day being a time when we celebrate the finishing of the Torah, there was an intrinsic connection between this day and the Torah.

Now we can understand why the extra day of Shemini Atzeret actually eases the departure. On this day we prepare and carry with ourselves the influences of the *Yamim Noraim* and Succot through rejoicing with the Torah. On the day when we reach the climax of spiritual connection to Hashem, we rejoice with the Torah to instill in ourselves the principle that through the Torah we

can reach similar heights even after the auspicious holidays. Now we can also understand why the Rabbis chose to institute the finishing of the Torah specifically on Shemini Atzeret. The rejoicing with the Torah, which helps us retain our intense closeness with Hashem even after the *Yamim Noraim* and Succot, fits the theme of Shemini Atzeret perfectly. It is also clear now why the Rabbis did not worry about the halacha of not mixing two different celebrations by instituting Simchat Torah on Shemini Atzeret. Since the Torah is an intrinsic part of Shemini Atzeret, it is not considered the mixing of two different celebrations, but rather one big celebration (based primarily on Moadim Uzmanim VI *siman* 79 and Siftei Chaim, Moadim I, pp. 345-346).

May we all merit making the most of this auspicious day and carry the closeness to Hashem that we achieved during the High Holidays into the mundane days that follow.

*Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet - Harmony of a Nation - Overcoming Baseless Hatred by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh [https://ohr.edu/Sinat\\_Chinam.pdf](https://ohr.edu/Sinat_Chinam.pdf)*

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### The students, alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

#### An Open Letter from an Ohr Somayach Alumnus

More than ten years ago it was discovered that my wife Linda had a disease known as polycystic kidneys. She was informed that within a few years her kidneys would stop functioning completely and she would require a transplant. To obtain a transplant she would need to find a person who would be willing to donate one of their kidneys to put in my wife's body.

As her kidneys became weaker and weaker and the cloud of dialysis hung over her head, a 53-year-old mother of five children heard of our need and answered our prayers. It was seven years ago that the transplant took place, but the new kidney never functioned properly. Every time a woman gives birth, her body develops antibodies that make accepting another person's organ more difficult. Linda's health began to deteriorate. She had to leave her job due to lack of strength and stamina. Linda spent many

weeks in the hospital. She had no choice but to go on dialysis.

The search for another altruistic donor began, but the doctors and the organizations that help people find donors had little hope. A woman who gave birth seven times and had already received a transplant has such a high level of antibodies that there is hardly a person in the world whose kidney would function in her body.

We made a trip to a hospital in Toledo, Ohio, where many kidney transplants are performed. But our hopes were dashed. We then made contact with the Irgun Renewal in Boro Park, an organization that has arranged 600 kidney transplants. Renewal told us to go to Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx for preliminary tests in case they found a donor for us. Their first piece of advice was to buy American insurance, whatever the cost, in case a suitable donor was found.

They told us to go home and wait. Maybe they would find a needle in a haystack. We waited for close to a year. We were resigning ourselves to the fact that Linda may have to spend the rest of her life doing twelve hours of dialysis a week, and suffer all of the physical and mental stress that dialysis brings.

A month ago, on Motzei Shabbos, we received an email from Renewal saying that they had a match for us. We would have to be in New York in ten days to spend two weeks in quarantine before the hospital would agree to do a transplant. We immediately made travel arrangements. With the help of a friend we found a place to stay in Monsey.

It is a strict policy of Renewal that there be no contact between the donor and the recipient until after the transplant. All we knew about the donor was that he was from Baltimore. He requested from us a letter of *beracha* from Reb Chaim and Elimelech Biderman. We were already in America, and so our sons took care of this matter. Because of his request, we found out that his name is Meir Yitzchak ben Nechama.

Last Wednesday, the 20th of Elul, the transplant took place. The surgeon was an Orthodox doctor from Teaneck, Dr. Stuart Grenstein.

My daughter and I were sitting in the "Kosher Room" in the hospital during the five hour procedure, when a lady walked in and sat down. She told us that her husband was in the process of having one of his kidneys removed and given to a woman, Leeba bas Hadassah. She said that her husband was giving a kidney as a *z'chus* for the *neshama* of his father. We told her who we were, and then I asked her the family name of her husband.

When she told me the family name I was overwhelmed with emotion. I had to leave the room. The first thing I did was to call Rabbi Yehuda Samet (with whom I speak at least twice a week). I was sure he would want to know.

Who is the donor?

Meir Yitzchak ben Ze'ev Kraines.

B"H, the transplant was a success. Linda feels like a new woman and she is steadily recovering from the effects of surgery.

We will be in Monsey for two more months, as my wife has to go back to Montefiore every few days for standard tests and observation.

Ohr Somayach saves lives in many different ways.

Shana tova,

Nachum Hirschel

*Rabbi Simon's note:*

*Not only is the author of the letter an Ohr Somayach Jerusalem alumnus, but the kidney donor, Meir Yitzchak Kraines, is the son of one of our first alumni, Rabbi Ze'ev Kraines, zatzal. Rabbi Kraines was sent by the Yeshiva to Johannesburg, South Africa in the early 1990s to head the community in Sandton, a Johannesburg suburb. He led that community as its Rav for nearly 30 years. He was niftar earlier this year in Israel.*