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PARSHA WEEKLY

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WORLD MIZRACHI Picture of the Week

Every week, Bnot Sherut Bodedot come together to learn in the Mizrachi Tzemach David Women's Learning Hub, where they enjoy shiurim by leading educators as well as a delicious dinner.

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.



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Celebrating Vulnerability

From Trepidation to Celebration



Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

How is it possible to celebrate the most joyous of all festivals – Sukkot – only a few days after the somber and serious Days of Awe?

How do days of such intense and unmatched joy appear in the calendar in the same month as the impassioned and fervent Days of Judgement and Atonement? Do the dichotomies of Tishrei – days of fear and joy, trepidation and celebration – have some type of overarching theme that weaves the contradictions and contrasts together?

I believe the answer lies in understanding the sense of vulnerability at the heart of human life.

Days of Awe

There is no more intense feeling of vulnerability than over the *Yamim Nora'im* – The Days of Awe. The very name conjures up trepidation for the Great Days of Judgement, when the world in general, and our lives in particular, hang in the balance. The image is powerfully captured in the *Mishna* that says every creature passes before G-d to be judged, one at a time, and humanity's fate is determined over these days.¹

This sense of vulnerability has been particularly acute as we emerge from three years of Israel's longest war with over 2,000 thousand dead – civilians and soldiers together. A collective delegitimization campaign against Israel around the

globe has been unleashed, threatening Jews everywhere, including repeated attacks on Jewish communities across the western world, including an attack on a synagogue this Yom Kippur in Canada. As we begin 5787, Israel's threats remain existential with the Iranian regime of the Ayatollah still in place and as well as the mounting global campaign to discredit the very moral foundations of the state of Israel. An inescapable feeling of vulnerability seems part and parcel of the reality of life. A sense of unease, angst and anxiety often follows suit.

Vulnerability is linked to a lack of control. When we feel we are in control of our lives, things are stable, predictable and permanent. The moment we lose control, we begin to feel an uneasy sense of instability, unpredictability and transience. We are now vulnerable. Things can change for the worse in a moment and life, G-d forbid, can cease in an instant.

The author of the haunting *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer captures this sense of human transience and vulnerability with some powerful imagery: "like a broken shard, like dried grass, like a faded flower, like a fleeting shadow, like a passing cloud, like a breath of wind, like whirling dust, like a dream that slips away."

All these images describe the tenuous fabric of the human condition. Grass, flowers, shadows, clouds, dust... all are susceptible to external elements that can dry them up, blow them away or make them disappear in the blink of an eye.

Their predicament is volatile and unstable and their similarity to our own fragility is strikingly all too close.

Because the stark truth is that the vicissitudes of life guarantee we will profoundly encounter this existential reality at different times in our lives.

The Turning Point

Somber? Most definitely. Depressing? Not at all.

The festivals of the month of Tishrei offer a strong spiritual response to this unavoidable vulnerability. Yes, we do have an inevitable fear and concern, awe and trepidation over the *Yamim Nora'im* – we are being judged and our fate is being decided.

But this is only part of the story.

When we fully accept our vulnerability and life's fleetingness – and embrace them – an amazing transformation occurs. We are able to celebrate them. This is precisely the point of the immediate transition from the Days of Awe to the days of unbridled celebration on Sukkot.

No, our vulnerable state has not miraculously vanished within the space of four days. What has changed is our attitude. Having accepted vulnerability as an unavoidable reality, we are now ready to embrace and even celebrate it.

Our sense of vulnerability is certainly no less on Sukkot than it is on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – perhaps even more so. We leave our safe and permanent homes and live for an entire week in flimsy huts and temporary booths – totally exposed to the elements, both natural and man-made. For seven days, we shake the Four Species, all of which have to be severed from the ground and detached from their permanent source of life. As each day of Sukkot passes, they all slowly wilt away in our hands. Pertinently to our theme, the species which degenerates the quickest, the willow, forms the centerpiece of our prayers on the final day of Sukkot, Hoshanah Rabbah. And the *megillah* we read on Sukkot is *Kohelet*, which focuses on this very same theme of

life being vulnerable and transient while celebrating its inherent joy – “All is totally fleeting says Kohelet...” (*Kohelet* 1:2). The key word *Hevel*, appearing multiple times in the opening verses and throughout the book, is best translated as “breath” or “vapor” connoting something fleeting and transitory.

What happened here? How did the very feeling which provoked such concern, anxiety and trepidation suddenly morph into joyous national celebration?

Acceptance and the Shadow of Faith

The answer is two-fold: the power of acceptance and the power of Faith.

Regarding the former Dr. M. Scott Peck brilliantly summarized it in the opening of his bestselling book: “Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult – once we truly understand and accept it – then life is no longer difficult. Because once it is accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters.”²

In our context, after experiencing the intensity of the Days of Awe and internalizing and accepting this reality – that our vulnerable state is an inescapable component of life – we are now ready to celebrate it.

Acceptance and submission are the gateways to transformation. We are now open to the power of Faith.

In our unpredictable and transient world, there is one immutable constant – G-d. It is our unshakeable faith that everything is somehow ultimately for the good. There is Providence in unpredictability and purpose in seeming chaos. This allows us to transform our perspective and trust that the Almighty knows what He is doing.

Such is the transcendent power of faith and belief. It is for this very reason the Zohar calls the *sukkah* “*tzila demehimenuta*,” the shadow (or shade) of faith. Nothing is more temporary and transient than a shadow. It has no existence of its own and can disappear in a moment. Nevertheless,

our temporary *sukkah* is the shadow cast by the most permanent reality of life – G-d, the Creator and Sustainer of all Life. When we understand we live in His shadow and all that happens is somehow a reflection of the purposeful plan of Providence – whether we understand it or not – we are ready to transform.

So as we begin the new year, still very much in the throes of the old, we can change. With our belief that everything is ultimately for the good, we can begin to celebrate the gift of life. We can cultivate peace of mind and faith-based serenity in our unpredictable, vulnerable world.

The anxiety around the vulnerability of human and Jewish life can be accepted and embraced. And then it can even be celebrated.

Wishing everyone a *Chag Sameach* and a healthy, happy and joyous 5787.

1. *Masechet Rosh Hashanah*, Chapter 1, *Mishna* 2.

2. *The Road Less Travelled*, page 1.



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True Simcha



Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

Z'man Simchateinu

Although the *mitzvah* of *simcha* applies to all the *Yamim Tovim*, only Sukkot is specifically designated as “*z'man simchateinu* – the time of our joy.”¹ Of the four instances where the term *simcha* appears in relation to the *Yamim Tovim*, three refer to Sukkot.² What accounts for this elevated level of *simcha*?

The simplest explanation is that Sukkot, also known as *Chag Ha'Asif*, the harvest festival, marks the celebration of a successful harvest.³

Before Hashem

While many cultures observe harvest celebrations, Sukkot is distinct in its focus on the *Beit HaMikdash*.⁴ We celebrate “before” Hashem, recognizing Him as the source of our success. Similar to the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*,⁵ Sukkot involves using harvested produce to praise⁶ and thank⁷ Hashem for our achievements. As we sit in the Sukkah, we recall Hashem's care for us in the desert and acknowledge His ongoing providence.

Simchat Beit Hasho'eivah – Celebrating the Water Libation

Central to the joy experienced in the *Beit HaMikdash* was the *Simchat Beit Hasho'eivah*, the “Water Libation Celebration.”⁸ Each night of Sukkot, *Kohanim* drew water from the Shiloach spring and poured it onto the *Mizbei'ach* the following morning. *Chazal* observe that anyone who did not witness the joy of this ceremony “never saw joy in his entire life.”⁹

Given that this ritual is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah, its centrality to the Sukkot celebration warrants examination. Pouring water, at first glance, seems to offer little reason for celebration. In fact, understanding the context of the ceremony makes it even more difficult

to understand: Sukkot occurs at the end of the summer, when water sources are at their lowest. The water libation ceremony thus serves as a national prayer, beseeching Hashem for abundant water in the coming year.¹⁰ What, then, explains the extraordinary joy associated with this ceremony?

Celebrating Confidence

The *Simchat Beit Hashoei'vah* reveals a deeper dimension of *simcha*. Our rejoicing arises not only from a successful harvest but also from the recognition that Hashem cares for and sustains us. While others may celebrate their achievements without assurance of future success, we understand that our prosperity reflects the strength of our relationship with Hashem, fostering confidence that it will continue.

Pouring our final, precious drops of water onto the *Mikdash's Mizbei'ach* emulates Eliyahu Hanavi's actions at *Har HaCarmel*. He poured four large jugs of the last remaining water, following years of drought, onto the *Mizbei'ach* as a demonstration of his confidence in Hashem's mercy.¹¹

The water libation ceremony embodies this same confidence, demonstrated both by pouring out our remaining water and by wholehearted celebration. We reflect on the past year's successes, recognize their divine source, offer thanks and praise to Hashem, and express faith and optimism for the future.

Just as Eliyahu HaNavi's actions and prayers at *Har HaCarmel* were answered with rain,¹² our celebration and demonstration of faith make us worthy of receiving rain and Hashem's additional blessings.¹³

True Simcha

The successful harvest offers a further, more profound reason for celebration: It signifies Hashem's favor toward us. His

blessings remind us of His affection, and His assistance reflects His satisfaction with us.

While we celebrate our blessings, the most significant aspect is what they reveal about our relationship with Hashem. As Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch states: “The main celebration lies in the fact that everything we have is Hashem's blessing and that Hashem cares for us. This feeling, of Hashem's affection for us, is the purest form of *simcha* in our lives and existence.” The *Midrash*¹⁴ sees this as the meaning of the word “*bo*” in the *pasuk Hallel* uses to describe our Yom Tov festivities: “This is the day Hashem created, we rejoice and celebrate *bo*.”¹⁵ The word “*bo*” can be understood as referring to the day or to Hashem Himself. The *Midrash* explains that both meanings are intended: We are meant to use the former to appreciate and celebrate the latter. The occasion for our celebration is the day and the success it commemorates, but the ultimate goal is to use them to celebrate our relationship with Hashem.

True *simcha* is found in recognizing what is genuinely meaningful in our lives. The Chida similarly describes the *simcha* of sitting in the *sukkah*: “When we see the *sukkah* and remember that we are transient in this world, we can celebrate the fact that we ignore the advice of our *yetzer [hara]* to focus on the meaninglessness of our world.”¹⁶

Celebrating Hashem's Happiness

The Sefat Emet¹⁷ introduces an even higher level of *simcha*, explaining that ideally, our celebration should focus not only on the significance of Hashem's blessings for us but, more importantly, on what they represent for Him. Our attention should be directed toward Hashem's happiness rather than our own.

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When the Chuppah Comes to Our Door



Rabbanit Shani Taragin

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Only days ago we stood in white, fasting and pleading, as close to the *Kodesh Kodashim* as a Jew can come. On Yom Kippur the *Kohen Gadol* entered *lifnai v'lifnim*, the innermost chamber (*Vayikra* 16:2, 12), and in our *tefilot* each of us entered with him. Every year after *Ne'ilah* the same question arises: where does that closeness go when the *shofar* sounds and we return to "ordinary" life? The Torah's answer comes four days later and it stands outside our own front/back door.

Yeshayahu, describing the redeemed *Tzion*, joins two images in one breath: "*ki al kol kavod chuppah, v'sukkah tiheyeh l'tzel yomam*" – "for over all the glory shall be a *chuppah*, and a *sukkah* shall be a shade by day from the heat" (*Yeshayahu* 4:5–6). The canopy and the *sukkah* appear together, as though they were a single structure. *Chazal* saw the same connection. The *Mechilta* d'Rabbi Yishmael (*Parashat Bo*, 14) records a dispute about the first stop of *Bnei Yisrael* as they left Egypt "*Vayis'u Bnei Yisrael me'Ramses Sukkotah*" (*Shemos* 12:37). Rabbi Eliezer understands actual booths (citing *Bereishis* 33:17), the *Chachamim* understand a place name (citing *Bamidbar* 33:6), and Rabbi Akiva teaches that "Sukkot" means nothing other than the Clouds of Glory. His proof is Yeshayahu's verse: *ki al kol kavod chuppah* (*Yeshayahu* 4:5). The Clouds of Glory, in other words, were a *chuppah*.

The *Mechilta* d'Rashbi (*Shemot* 12:37), which records the opinions with the names reversed, adds a remarkable detail. The Clouds of Glory came and rested on the rooftops of Ramses. It illustrates this

with a parable of a groom who brought his canopy to the very doorway of his bride's home, so that she could enter it at once. Hashem did not wait for us to reach *Har Sinai*; the canopy came to Egypt, to the doorstep of a nation still enslaved. We leave Yom Kippur cleansed but still unsure of ourselves, and before the week is out the *chuppah* is waiting at our door.

An ancient *piyut*, a *zulat*, composes the events of *Yetziyat Mitzrayim* as a love story. A fair and pure maiden descends into Egypt, where an arrogant tyrant oppresses her. She cries out, and a messenger is sent to bring her out with wonders. Then comes the climax: "*Hoshivah basukkah b'erez midbarim, v'hichnisah l'chuppah b'chadrei chadarim*" – He settled her in the *sukkah* in the wilderness, and brought her into the *chuppah* in the innermost chambers. The poet then names the four species (based on *Vayikra* 23:40). For the *paytan*, *sukkah*, *chuppah*, and the *chadrei chadarim*, the Holy of Holies, form one continuous movement of love.

The Sochatchover Rebbe (*Shem MiShmuel*, Sukkot 5679) explains why *Chag HaSukkot* is called *zman simchaseinu* by citing *Shir HaShirim* (1:4): "*Hevi'ani haMelech chadarav, nagilah v'nism'chah bach*" – "The King has brought me into His chambers; we will exult and rejoice in You." The *sukkah*, he writes, is the chamber of the King of kings. The Name of Heaven rests upon it (see *Sukkah* 9a), and the various *halachot* reflect the building of the *Beit HaMikdash*. Our joy is the joy of one who has been invited inside.

The *Gemara* (*Moed Katan* 9a) describes the dedication of the First *Beit HaMikdash*.

Shlomo HaMelech celebrated for fourteen days (*Melachim* I 8:65), and the celebration swept straight through Yom Kippur into Sukkot. The people ate and drank on the holy day, "for there is no joy without food and drink," and afterward they worried that they had sinned. A heavenly voice answered: "*Kulchem mezumanim l'chayei ha'olam haba*" – all of you are destined for the World to Come. The *Gemara* then explains the *pasuk* describing how they returned "*l'ohaleihem, s'meimim v'tovei lev*" – "to their tents, joyful and good of heart" (*Melachim* I 8:66). They were joyful, it says, because *nehenu miziv haShechinah*: they had basked in the radiance of the Divine Presence. This is the path of our own *Tishrei*. The *Mikdash* was dedicated in one continuous celebration from Yom Kippur into Sukkot, and then the people carried the light of the *Shechinah* home. The *sukkah* lets us do the same. It brings the intensity of Yom Kippur out of the *shul* and into our homes, our meals, our conversations, and our sleep.

This year the first day of Sukkot falls on Shabbat. The *lulav* and *etrog* stay wrapped (*Sukkah* 42b–43a), and the only *mitzvah* of the day is the *sukkah* itself. At first this can feel like a loss. On second thought, it is a gift. The *arba minim* are something we do: we take, hold, shake, and circle. The *sukkah* is somewhere we are, living under Hashem's canopy (see *Sukkah* 28b, *teshvu k'ein taduru*). Under the *chuppah*, the bride is simply present, surrounded and chosen. On Friday night Shabbat arrives as a bride, *bo'i kallah* (*Shabbos* 119a), and this year she enters the *chuppah* of the *sukkah*. This first day of Yom Tov is an embrace. With nothing to wave and nothing to shake, we can

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Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Nasi, World Mizrahi | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council

Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

I have a secular friend whom I would like to invite to a Shabbat meal, but he will undoubtedly drive a car to get to my house. Is it permissible to invite him?

In general, the prohibition of *lifnei iver* ("placing a stumbling block before the blind") can be understood in two ways:

A) It is an independent prohibition, meaning that even someone who causes another person to violate the prohibition of Shabbat transgresses the prohibition of *lifnei iver*.

B) It is an extension of the prohibition that is actually being facilitated, meaning that when a person causes someone else to violate the prohibition of Shabbat, the one who causes it is also considered to have violated the prohibition of Shabbat; and when someone causes another person to violate the prohibition of stealing, it is as though he himself stole. One can add that the fundamental nature of the prohibition is that we view the person who causes the violation as participating in the forbidden act, and therefore the level of his prohibition corresponds to the level of the actual offense.

Seemingly, the straightforward logic would be understanding A. However, there is also considerable logic to understanding B, and this is what I heard from my Rebbe, Rabbi Lichtenstein zt"l. Understanding B is unwilling to accept that if a person causes someone else to violate the prohibition of stealing, his status would be identical to someone who causes another person to commit murder. Therefore, it makes sense that *lifnei iver* should reflect the particular violation in which he causes the other person to participate.

Does one transgress *lifnei iver* when causing someone to violate a *derabbanan* (rabbinical) prohibition?

Tosafot in *Mesechet Avodah Zarah*¹ writes that *lifnei iver* also applies to a *derabbanan* prohibition. Their proof is that the Gemara says that the law of *lifnei iver* applies to prohibited labor on *Chol Hamoed*, which is a *derabbanan* prohibition.

The Ramban, on the other hand, derives from this passage his position that prohibited labor on *Chol HaMoed* is prohibited from the Torah, and his words imply that *lifnei iver* applies only to Torah prohibitions.

Seemingly, the reasoning of Tosafot is understandable, while the reasoning of the Ramban is difficult. After all, someone who gives another person bad advice transgresses *lifnei iver*, so why should causing someone to violate a *derabbanan* prohibition be considered a lesser offense than giving bad advice?

Rather, there is a distinction between the two cases: when giving bad advice, the one who gives the advice transgresses only if the recipient does not know that the advice is bad. In contrast, when causing someone to violate a prohibition, there is a prohibition even if the person committing the offense knows that he is about to violate a prohibition.

Therefore, if a person causes someone to violate a *derabbanan* prohibition and that person does not know that what he is doing is prohibited, there is certainly a *de'oraita* prohibition of *lifnei iver*, just as there is when giving bad advice to someone who is unaware that it is bad advice. However, if the person being caused to stumble knows that he is about to violate a *derabbanan* prohibition, and the person assisting him enables him to commit the violation, the one providing the assistance transgresses *lifnei iver derabbanan*.

The Rema² writes that it is prohibited to give food to a person whom one knows will not recite a blessing over it, because

of *lifnei iver*. According to this, there would be a serious problem with giving food to soldiers in the army, and similarly, it would be prohibited to give a drink to a technician who comes to repair the electricity, and so forth.

On this matter, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach³ introduced an extraordinary *chiddush*: If one does not give a drink to that technician who is not observant of Torah and *mitzvot*, we will cause him to commit a much greater offense: hatred of religion. By inviting him to Shabbat meals and the like, we will instead bring him closer.

Therefore, it is permissible to give a person who is not observant of Torah and *mitzvot* a drink, because by doing so we save him from a much more serious prohibition. According to him, this is comparable to a person who has an illness in his leg and must have his leg amputated in order to save his entire body. In other words, in the law of *lifnei iver*, one must look at the overall picture and not only at the immediate result.

Nevertheless, Rav Shlomo Zalman's reasoning must be examined. His words make sense only if we view *lifnei iver* as an independent prohibition, because then one can take the overall picture into account. However, if *lifnei iver* is an extension of the existing prohibition, and we view the person who causes the violation as participating in the forbidden act, then the fact that the other person is now eating without a blessing links the giver to that forbidden act. Clearly, in such a case one cannot introduce the consideration of what will happen in the future because already at this moment the recipient is eating without a blessing and the giver, so to speak, is participating in that act.

According to the understanding that the person who causes the violation joins

Continued on next page

בין סוכות לאסיף: הדיאלקטיקה של הביטחון והארעיות

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



חג הסוכות מציב בפנינו מתח מובנה בין שני ממדים שונים המשלימים זה את זה: חג האסיף מצד אחד, וחג הסוכות מצד שני.

מתח זה בא לידי ביטוי מובהק כבר בציורו על חג הסוכות בפרשת המועדות בספר ויקרא (כ"ג, לג-מג). בפרשייה זו, חג הסוכות מתואר פעמיים, כאשר לכל אחד מהציורים יש פתיחה נפרדת, והציור הראשון (פס' לד-לו) מופרד מן השני (פס' לט-מג) על ידי פסוקים המסכמים את פרשת המועדים כולה (פס' לז-לח):

"(לד) דָּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּחֹמֶשׁ עֶשֶׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הִזָּה חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לָהּ: (לה) בְּיוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ כָּל מְלָאכָתָא עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: (לו) שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּקְרְבוּ אִשָּׁה לָהּ... (לז) אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְהַקְרִיב אִשָּׁה לָהּ..."

(לט) אַךְ בְּחֹמֶשׁ עֶשֶׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַסְפְּכֶם אֶת תְּבוּאֹת הָאָרֶץ תִּחַגּוּ אֶת חַג ה' שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בְּיוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן שִׁבְתָּן וּבְיוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שִׁבְתָּן: (מ) וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בְּיוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ עֵבֶת וְעֶרְבֵי נָחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים... (מב) בְּסֻכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל הָאֲזָרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בְּסֻכּוֹת: (מג) לְמַעַן יָדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בְּסֻכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מִמִּצְרָיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם"

ההפרדה בין שני תיאורי החג יוצרת רושם של שני חגים נפרדים, אך פסוקי הסיום חותמים ומלמדים כי זהו חג אחד הנושא בחובו שני עניינים עמוקים. הפן הראשון של החג הוא "חג האסיף", בו הלב מלא בהודיה ובשמחה על כל ה"יש" ועל היבול שנאסף בתום שנת עמל והשקעה. שמחה זו מודגשת בספר דברים (ט"ז, יג-טו): "חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בְּאַסְפְּךָ מִגִּרְנְךָ וּמִיקְבֶּךָ... כִּי יִבְרַךְ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל תְּבוּאָתְךָ וּבְכָל מַעֲשֶׂה יָדְיָךְ וְהִיָּיתָ אֶף שָׂמֵחַ". כחלק מתחושת הודיה זו אנו מצווים לקחת את

ארבעת המינים - "פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ עֵבֶת וְעֶרְבֵי נָחַל" - ולשמוח בהם לפני ה'.

לצד השפע והביטחון הכלכלי, מופיע הפן השני - "חג הסוכות" - היציאה מן הבית אל הסוכה: "בְּסֻכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים... לְמַעַן יָדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בְּסֻכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מִמִּצְרָיִם" (ויקרא כ"ג, מב-מג).

מה משמעות הזיכרון הזה? המפרשים מעניקים לכך זוויות שונות: לפי רשב"ם, הישיבה בסוכה נועדה להזכיר את הקושי והמחסור שחוו אבותינו במדבר: "באוסף את תבואת הארץ ובתיכם מלאים כל טוב... למען תזכרו כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל במדבר ארבעים שנה בלא בלא יישוב ובלא נחלה, ומתוך כך תתנו הודאה למי שנתן לכם נחלה ובתיכם מלאים כל טוב, ואל תאמרו בלבבכם 'כחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה'... לבלתי רום לבבם על בתיכם מלאים כל טוב".

הסוכה מעניקה פרופורציה מוסרית: היא מרסנת את הגאווה האנושית ומזכירה את מקור השפע. לעומתו, רש"י ורמב"ן רואים בסוכה ביטוי להגנה אלוקית פלאית. רש"י מפרש בקצרה: "כי בסוכות הושבתי - ענני כבוד". רמב"ן מרחיב כי הדורות צריכים לדעת את נסי ה' "ששכן אותם בענני כבוד כסוכה... להגן עליהם". עוד מוסיף רמב"ן כי אף לדעה שמדובר ב"סוכות ממש", הזיכרון הוא "שהיו במדבר לא באו בבית ועיר מושב לא מצאו ארבעים שנה, והשם היה עמהם לא חסרו דבר". הסוכה מסמלת אפוא את יד ה' התומכת והמגינה בעת החסר והמשבר.

הישיבה בסוכה מבטאת ארעיות, וחוסר יציבות, לעומת הבית המסמל יציבות, קביעות, סדר, ביטחון, ושגרה. מצד שני, דווקא משום כך לסוכה יש יותר גמישות מהבית, ניתן להקימה במהירות והיא נותנת תחושה של קרבה אל הטבע ואל הבורא.

כאשר אנו יושבים בסוכה, אנו מסבים את תשומת לבנו לכך שאמנם אנו משתדלים לאסוף הרבה דברים

שיתנו לנו תחושת בטחון (כמו בית, הצלחה, כסף, מעמד, כח וכו'), אולם ההסתמכות על דברים אלה היא חיצונית בלבד, והאדם המרגיש תלוי בהם תמיד חושש שהם ייעלמו או יגמרו, וישאירו אותו חשוף, מרוקן וחסר אונים. לעומת זאת, כאשר האדם מחזק את נקודת הבטחון הפנימית ואת החיבור העמוק שלו אל הקב"ה, הוא זוכה לתחושת בטחון אמיתית.

כך, דווקא מצבים של חולשה חיצונית מאירים את הנקודות הפנימיות יותר ומחזקים את האדם לבנות חוסן נפשי ורוחני אמתי, כפי שאומר הרב קוק (מאמרי הראי"ה):

"מוכרחים אנחנו להגיד בגלוי לפני כל באי עולם, שאמת נצחית היא, שדווקא זאת הסוכה, שהיא נבנית דווקא בצורה כל כך קלושה, עד שמצד צורתה החיצונית אינה ראויה לכאורה להיות נקראת אפילו בשם של בית דירה, היא היא הראויה להיות לנו למגדל-עוז ולמבצר..."

המבנה הארעי של הסוכה, שהוא הסמל לחוסר בטחון בעולם הזה, הוא המקום עם הבטחון הכי גבוה מבחינה רוחנית - בו אנו חוסים בצלו של ה' וזוכים להגנתו הגבוה ביותר.

הארעיות של הסוכה מלמדת אותנו שהבטחון האמתי הוא בכחות הנפש שלנו ובקב"ה ולא בקירות אבן או בכח אחר. תודעה זו באה לידי ביטוי גם במזמורי תהלים: "ה' רָעִי לֹא אֶחְסֶר... גַּם כִּי אֶלֶף בָּגִיָּא צִלְמוֹת לֹא אֵירָא רָע כִּי אֶתָּה עֲמָדִי" (תהלים כ"ג); "כִּי יִצְפְּנִי בְּסֻכָּה בְּיוֹם רָעָה יִסְתַּרְנִי בְּסֻכְתְּךָ אֶהְיוֹ" (תהלים כ"ז). חג הסוכות מלמד אותנו לשאת את שני המצבים בעת ובעונה אחת:

בשעה של אסיף, של שפע והצלחה - להודות לה' מתוך הבנה שהטוב החומרי אינו תלוי בכוחנו בלבד, ואינו מובן מאלינו;

ובשעה של קושי וחוסר יציבות - לגלות את החוסן הפנימי, להישען על הקב"ה, ולזכור כי מעל לכול אנו חוסים בצל סוכתו - הגנתו ועזרתו.

Continued from previous page

in the forbidden act of the person being caused to stumble, the act would be prohibited based on something similar to the principle of *ein omrim la'adam chato kedei sheyizkeh chavero* ("we do not tell a person to sin so that his fellow will benefit"). This is indeed what I heard from my Rebbe, Rabbi Lichtenstein, *zt"l*.

Nevertheless, in practice, he, too, tended to rule like Rav Shlomo Zalman and permit it.

Therefore, in practice, Rabbi Lichtenstein, *zt"l*, tended to permit assistance that could lead to *kiruv levavot* - bringing people closer and creating a connection

between them.

● Compiled and Translated by Elan Finkelstein.

1. תוס' עבודה זרה כב. ד"ה "תיפוק"
2. או"ח קסג:ב
3. מנחת דלמה סימן לה

Simply a Sukkah



Sivan Rahav Meir

World Mizrahi Scholar-in-Residence

Have you already sat in a *sukkah* this year? Don't take it for granted. Three years ago, my friend Stephanie Sokol of New York excitedly sent me photos of all kinds of people sitting in *sukkahs*. At first, I didn't understand what was so remarkable. Then she explained.

Through an initiative of NCSY and TJJ in New York, Jewish families who had never built a *sukkah* before were given one of their own, together with a set of the *Arba'ah Minim*.

"In Israel, children grow up knowing all about Sukkot," Stephanie told me. "But here, we are talking about second- and third-generation American Jews who never had that childhood experience. Some simply don't know what a *sukkah* is. We explain it to them, help them build one, and it is amazing to see adults become as excited as children."

She told me about men proudly building their first *sukkah* and posting pictures of it; families inviting friends and relatives to join them there for the first time; a 50-year-old woman making *sukkah* decorations because she had never had the chance to make them as a child; and a grandmother inviting all her grandchildren over to experience something she herself had never experienced at their age.

"For years, we invited people into our *sukkah*," Stephanie said. "This turns the idea around. They receive a *sukkah* of their own, and suddenly they are the ones taking the initiative."

I thought about that story again this year when I heard about a new national organization called The Sukkah Foundation. It was founded by the family behind The Sukkah Project after 30 years of building *sukkahs* free of charge for Jewish families across the United States. In its first year, it hopes to reach 40 to 50 families, sending each of them not only a *sukkah* that can be used for years, but also simple materials

to help them begin celebrating the holiday in their own homes.

There is a great deal to say about American Jewry and the challenges it faces. We often discuss assimilation, Jewish identity, education and continuity — enormous issues with no simple solutions. But maybe there is also a lesson here about where to begin.

Sometimes a Jewish family does not need another lecture about Jewish identity. It needs the experience of building something together. Of decorating it. Of inviting grandparents and grandchildren inside. Of making a blessing for the first time.

Sometimes one positive Jewish experience can open a door. Or, in this case, build one: A *sukkah*.



A tiny *sukkah*, just one meter by one meter, was set up before the holiday in a park in Jerusalem's Gilo neighborhood.

David Michael Cohen, who built it, posted the story behind it inside the *sukkah*:

"A little over two years ago, during summer vacation, my father was visiting in the US when he suffered a severe heart attack. I flew to be with him, thinking I would stay only a short time. Sadly, his condition did not improve, and I remained there for several months, including through the High Holidays.

"On the final day of Sukkot, I was at his side. His condition was serious. I ate some of my meals next to him in the hospital, but it was important to me to eat in a *sukkah* as well. Late that evening, when things had calmed down a little, I left the hospital carrying some food and began searching the neighborhood for a *sukkah* I could use.

"I searched and searched until I finally found a tiny *sukkah* on the street, just one meter by one meter. It was exactly what I needed.

"I knocked on the door of the house beside it and asked permission to use the *sukkah*. The woman who answered told me it

belonged to them and that I was more than welcome to eat there.

"I sat down to eat. I tried to sing a few holiday songs to myself, and to tell the truth, I also cried as I thought about my father's condition.

"Suddenly, I saw someone peering into the *sukkah*. Then he stepped inside.

"It was the young husband of the woman who had given me permission to enter. He asked me why I was crying. I began telling him about my father in the hospital, about everything we were going through, and about the food I had saved because it mattered so much to me to eat it in a *sukkah*.

"As I spoke, I could see him becoming more and more emotional.

"When I finished, he said, 'Now it's my turn to tell you a story.'

"Before Sukkot, there was a flood in our neighborhood, and many homes were flooded. Every year I build a large *sukkah* that fills our entire yard, but this year it was impossible. There was nowhere to build it; everything was still flooded. So we have been spending most of the holiday at my wife's parents' home.

"Still, I had this strange feeling that I absolutely had to build some kind of *sukkah* here. I managed to find just enough *sechach* for a one-meter-by-one-meter *sukkah*. I built the walls on the sidewalk next to our front door. As the holiday approached, my wife kept urging me to leave already for her parents' house. I couldn't understand why it mattered so much to me that there should still be a *sukkah* here. But now I understand. I built it especially for you."

David concludes:

"This year, I built this tiny *sukkah* in Levona Park in Jerusalem's Gilo Aleph neighborhood. It is there for anyone who finds himself stuck without a *sukkah*, or simply needs one.

"May all the blessings recited and *mitzvot* performed there be in memory of my father, Ephraim ben Shlomo and Sultana."

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

CEO, World Mizrahi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

The special “*HaRachaman*” that we add to *Birkat HaMazon* for Sukkot is, הרחמן הוא יקים לנו את סוכת דוד, הנופלת – The Compassionate One – May He establish for us the fallen Sukkah of David.

The use of the *sukkah* as an analogy for dynasty of David HaMelech originates in *Amos* (9:11), where Hashem declares, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אָקִים אֶת־סֻכַּת דָּוִיד הַנִּפְלֶת – On that day, I will establish the fallen *sukkah* of David.

Why is the Davidic dynasty compared to a *sukkah* – a temporary structure? Wouldn’t the term “בית” be more appropriate, like when we refer to “מלכות בית דוד”?

The Radak (*Amos* 9:11) explains that just like a *sukkah* is a source of shelter, the role of a ruling power is to provide shelter, protection and a safe haven for all.

In this fashion, David HaMelech asks Hashem to conceal him “in His *sukkah* on the day of evil” in *Tehillim Perek 27* (*LeDavid Hashem Ori*), as the *sukkah* represents a welcoming refuge from the outside world.

The Maharal differs, and explains that while a house may be strong and powerful, once it falls it is irreplaceable. Even if it is rebuilt identically with the finest detail, it will be known as a replica of the original, but will never assume the status or the symbolism of the original structure.

Our *sukkot* are vulnerable and are only built to withstand normal winds, but were they to fall down and be rebuilt, we would not call the rebuilt *sukkah* a replica – it is the very same *sukkah*. Each year we dismantle and rebuild our *sukkot*, yet we do not view them as new structures – they are a direct continuation and representation of the first time we built them.

So too, the house of David HaMelech is known as a “*sukkah*.” When we re-establish Jewish rule in our homeland, it is not a brand new project, or replica of the past. Our aspirations are for the very same Davidic line to reassume as a direct continuation of our unbroken connection to *Eretz Yisrael* and *Torat Yisrael*.

“*HaRachaman*” – May the Merciful One indeed bless us to witness “את צמח דוד ענדר” – the speedy flourishing of the offspring of David HaMelech, as part of our ultimate redemption.

Chag Sameach!

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh

Mizrahi Melbourne

Whose blessing hints to three different periods of history for the Jewish people?

(Clue: This blessing is the only one of two, that starts with a letter that is different from all the other ones.)

The answer will be in the Parashat Bereishit edition.

A Nail of Faith



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l

This is an extract from 'Faith in the Future', published in 1995.

Many years ago I built my first *succah*. It was almost a catastrophe. It happened like this.

My wife and I were newly married and had just settled in to our new home. One morning, leaving the synagogue, a friend said, “I’m just off to the local timber yard to buy wood to build a *succah*. Would you like to come with me?” Delightedly, I said yes. We didn’t have a car, and I had been wondering how to buy and transport the materials to make a hut. The offer was providential. We went back to his home to get the list of things he required.

The contrast between us, though, could not have been greater. The friend – who was later to become one of Anglo-Jewry’s great rabbis – was superbly organised. He had drawn up architectural plans for his temporary dwelling. It was to be a stand-alone structure with windows and a door, and it was going to require considerable skill in carpentry. He had made a long and precise list of the materials he needed, and was ready to begin.

I was shame-faced. I had no idea how to make anything, let alone a *succah*. In school, I had always come bottom of the class in woodworking, and when it came to practicalities, changing a light-bulb was the limit of my ability. Humbled, I followed him into the car hoping that inspiration would come.

In the timber yard, he rattled off his list of requirements and ended up with an impressive pile of beams and planks and hinges and screws. I settled for an impromptu list of a few sheets of hardboard, some wooden supports and a bag of nails. We went off to our respective

homes and began hammering away.

Before the festival began we visited each other to see the results of our efforts. His was a thing of beauty, a summer house in which anyone could have faced wandering in the wilderness with equanimity. Ours was modest by any standards. I had joined the hardboard to the beams to make three square walls, nailed them to one another, and rested them against the back wall of the house. It looked like a large packing case. There was a hole for a door.

The festival arrived, and as luck would have it, there was a storm on the second night. The wind howled and blew itself into a gale. In the synagogue the next morning my friend sat dejected. His *succah* had blown down. “What,” he asked, “happened to yours?”

“It’s still standing,” I said. He could hardly believe it. His elaborate tabernacle had been overturned while my makeshift hut survived.

“I must come round and see it,” he said. “I don’t understand how any *succah* could have stayed standing after that storm.” So we went to my home together to investigate the mystery. We soon found the answer.

Unlike his, our *succah* did not stand alone. It had three walls, and for the fourth we had rested it against the house. To stop it collapsing, I had joined one corner to the wall of the house with a single nail, and it was that nail which had held firm during the gale.

My friend laughed and said: ‘Now I understand the meaning of Succot. You can plan and construct the most sophisticated building, but if it is not joined to something stable, one day the winds will come and blow it down. Alternative-

ly, you can make an improvised shelter which looks frail and probably is. But if it is joined even at only one point to something immovable, it will hold fast in the worst storm.’

‘That nail in the corner’, he said, looking at it with a smile I have never forgotten, ‘is faith.’

■ ■ ■

This is an extract from the Koren Sacks Sukkot Machzor.

Of all the festivals, Sukkot is surely the one that speaks most powerfully to our time. Kohelet could almost have been written in the twenty-first century. Here is the picture of ultimate success, the man who has it all – the houses, the cars, the clothes, the adoring women, the envy of others – he has pursued everything this world can offer from pleasure to possessions to power to wisdom and yet, surveying the totality of his life, he can only say, in effect, “Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless.”

Kohelet’s failure to find meaning is directly related to his obsession with the “I” and the “Me”: “I built for myself. I gathered for myself. I acquired for myself.” The more he pursues his desires, the emptier his life becomes. There is no more powerful critique of the consumer society, whose idol is the self, whose icon is the “selfie” and whose moral code is “Whatever works for you.” This is the society that achieved unprecedented affluence, giving people more choices than they have ever known, and yet at same time saw an unprecedented rise in alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, stress-related syndromes, depression, attempted suicide and actual suicide. A society of tourists, not pilgrims, is not one that will yield the sense of a life worth living. Of all things people have chosen

to worship, the self is the least fulfilling. A culture of narcissism quickly gives way to loneliness and despair.

Kohelet was also, of course, a cosmopolitan: a man at home everywhere and therefore nowhere. This is the man who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines but in the end could only say, "More bitter than death is the woman." It should be clear to anyone who reads this in the context of the life of King Solomon, the author of the book, that Kohelet is not really talking about women but about himself.

In the end Kohelet finds meaning in simple things. "Sweet is the sleep of a labouring man." "Enjoy life with the woman you love." "Eat, drink and enjoy the sun." That, ultimately, is the meaning of Sukkot as a whole. It is a festival of simple things. It is, Jewishly, the time we come closer to nature than any other, sitting in a hut with only leaves for a roof, and taking in our hands the unprocessed fruits and foliage of the palm branch, the citron, twigs of myrtle and leaves of willow. It is a time when we briefly liberate ourselves from the sophisticated pleasures of the city and the processed artefacts of a technological age, where we take time to recapture some of the innocence we had when we were young, when the world still had the radiance of wonder.

The power of Sukkot is that it takes us back to the most elemental roots of our being. You don't need to live in a palace to be surrounded by Clouds of Glory. You don't need to be gloriously wealthy to buy yourself the same leaves and fruit that a billionaire uses in worshipping G-d. Living in the *succah* and inviting guests to your meal, you discover that the people who have come to visit you are none other than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives (such is the premise of *Ushpizin*, the mystical guests). What makes a hut more beautiful than a home is that when it comes to Sukkot there is no difference between the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor. We are all strangers on earth, temporary residents in G-d's almost eternal universe. And whether or not we are capable of pleasure, whether or not we have found happiness, nonetheless we can all feel joy.

Sukkot is the time we ask the most profound question of what makes a life worth living. Having prayed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to be written in the Book of Life, Kohelet forces us to remember how brief life actually is, and how vulnerable. "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." What matters is not how long we live, but how intensely we feel that life is a gift we repay by giving to others. Joy,

the overwhelming theme of the festival, is what we feel when we know that it is a privilege simply to be alive, inhaling the intoxicating beauty of this moment amidst the profusion of nature, the teeming diversity of life and the sense of communion with those many others who share our history and our hope.

Most majestically of all, Sukkot is the festival of insecurity. It is the candid acknowledgment that there is no life without risk, yet we can face the future without fear when we know we are not alone. G-d is with us, in the rain that brings blessings to the earth, in the love that brought the universe and us into being, and in the resilience of spirit that allowed a small and vulnerable people to outlive the greatest empires the world has ever known. Sukkot reminds us that G-d's glory was present in the small, portable Tabernacle Moses and the Israelites built in the desert even more emphatically than in Solomon's Temple with all its grandeur. A Temple can be destroyed. But a *succah*, even if broken, can be rebuilt tomorrow. Security is not something we can achieve physically but it is something we can acquire mentally, psychologically, spiritually. All it needs is the courage and willingness to sit under the shadow of G-d's sheltering wings.

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sit beneath the *schach*, look up through the branches, and let ourselves be held.

If the *sukkah* is a *chuppah*, then there are people at our tables for whom that image carries a quiet ache. Sons and daughters, friends and neighbors, sit beneath the *schach* while they still wait for the *chuppah* of their own. For them, *zman simcha-seinu* can be a season of mixed emotions. Chazal teach that all of *Am Yisrael* is fit to sit in a single *sukkah* (*Sukkah* 27b). No one sits in it as a guest of lesser standing, and Hashem's embrace surrounds every person under the *schach* completely. The Mechilta's parable also carries a promise. The Groom did not make His bride wait; He brought the canopy to her door so that she could enter immediately. We pray for

that same swiftness for every single man and woman waiting to build a home.

Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon composed a special *Mi Shebeirach* for singles and suggested it be said at *Ne'ilah*, when the gates of Heaven are open wide. Sukkot is the natural continuation of that moment. The judgment of the *Yamim Nora'im* is not fully sealed until Hoshana Rabbah, and the *sukkah* is an extension of the *Kodesh Kodashim* where our prayers are spoken directly to Hashem. This year, let us say it again in the *sukkah*, at our Yom Tov table, together with our families and guests:

מי שברך לרווקים, שיזכו במהרה לזיווג הגון
מי שברך אבותינו, אברהם, יצחק ויעקב,
אבותינו, שרה, רבקה, רחל ולאה,
הוא יברך את כל הזקוקים לזיווג,

שימצאו במהרה זיווג הגון וירא שמים ובעל מדות טובות,

ויזכו להקים בית נאמן בישראל,
בית של תורה, בית של אהבה, בית מלא ברכה ה',
וישלח ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשה ידיהם,
עם כל ישראל אחיהם – ונאמר אמן

As we step into the *sukkah* this Friday night, may we feel what the King has brought us into His chambers (*Shir HaShirim* 1:4). May all who still await their own *chuppah* soon stand beneath it, building a *bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael*, and may we all soon celebrate together, as in Shlomo's days, in the rebuilt *Beit HaMikdash*, *ki al kol kavod chuppah* (*Yeshayahu* 4:5). *Chag Sameach!*

Loshon Hora in the Sukkah



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

The *halacha* requires that one dwell in the *sukkah* for the duration of the *Yom Tov* in the same way one would live in his own home: eating, sleeping, learning, etc. In the language of the Talmud (*Sukkah* 28b), “*teishvu ke’ein toduru*.”

The Talmud (*Shabbos* 133b) speaks of fulfilling all *mitzvos* in an elegant fashion – an elegant *talit*, an elegant pair of *tefillin*, etc. The same certainly applies to the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* as well. In addition to that general *halacha*, making the *sukkah* fancy constitutes a particular enhancement of *mitzvas sukkah* because of *teishvu ke’ein toduru*. We all add drapes, wall paper, carpeting, etc. to our homes to beautify them and make them more comfortable, so the same ought to be supplied to the *sukkah*.

In Yiddish folklore there was a common humorous saying that if one doesn’t speak *loshon hora* at all in the *sukkah*, he hasn’t fulfilled the *mitzvah* because it’s lacking *ke’ein toduru*, since at home we always speak *loshon hora*. This is the historical background of the comment in the *Mishan Brura* (639, note 2) that one must certainly be careful not to speak any *loshon hora* in the *sukkah*. The Talmud (*Sukkah* 9a) derives a *din doraysa* from a *passuk* that just as a *Korban Chagigah* has *kedusha*, so, too,

the *sukkah* has *kedusha*. According to the Ramban, this *passuk* is the source on the principal that all religious articles (e.g., an *esrog* or *tzitzis*) become *huktzah l’mitzvos* for the duration of the *mitzvah*. Because of the sanctity of the *sukkah*, one should avoid discussing *divrei chol*, and certainly *loshon hora*. The *loshon hora* belongs neither in our homes nor in our *sukkos*.

After one has finished eating it is considered disrespectful to the sanctity of the *sukkah* to leave around the dirty utensils which one no longer plans to use (*Sukkah* 29a). Some *poskim* write that it is disrespectful to bring an infant into the *sukkah* who may dirty his diaper.

Towards the end of *parshas Re’eh* (*Devarim* 16:13) the *chumash* records the *mitzvah* to celebrate the *Yom Tov* of Sukkos for seven days during the ingathering season. All summer long it doesn’t rain in *Eretz Yisroel*, and only after Sukkos, when we expect the rains to begin, do we gather in the produce from the fields. This is the literal meaning of the *passuk*’s reference to the ingathering season.

The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 34a) has a tradition that Hashem dictated the Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu in such a way that any given *passuk* may have more than one level of interpretation: “*achas diber Elokim, shtaim zu shamati*” (*Tehillim* 62:12). The Torah

she’be’al peh has an additional level of interpretation on the aforementioned *passuk* in *Re’eh*, which is that we should construct our *sukkos* in such a way that they should be sturdy enough to last for the duration of the seven days of *Yom Tov*, and the *se’chach* we use as the roof should consist of the branches, leaves, and chaff that are separated from the produce (i.e., something that grew from the ground, is now detached, and is not edible for humans; hence not *mekabel tumah*). This additional level of interpretation fits in to all the words of the *passuk* except for “*chag*,” which means “a holiday.” How, then, can the Torah *she’be’al peh* interpret the *passuk* to refer to the construction of a *sukkah*?

The Talmud explains (*Sukkah* 9a) that only Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkos are referred to in the *chumash* as “*chag*,” because “*chag*” indicates an obligation to bring a *Korban Chagigah*, which exists only on these three *yomim tovim*. “*Chag haSukkos*,” therefore, refers to the construction of the *sukkah* which is compared to a *Korban Chagigah*. Just as the *Korban Chagigah* is sacred, so the *sukkah* is endowed with sanctity after we sit in it to fulfill our *mitzvah*. Because of that sanctity we must treat the *sukkah* with proper respect.

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As beings created to serve Hashem and fulfill the objectives He establishes for us, our ultimate success is measured by the *nachat* we bring Him.¹⁸ His blessings indicate that we are achieving this purpose. This is the true cause for celebration: Our happiness should stem from His happiness.

During this *Chag Sukkot*, we should recognize that our blessings originate from Hashem and celebrate the many dimensions of their significance.

1. See *Mishneh Torah* (*Sukkah* 8:12), which speaks of a *simcha yeteira* on Sukkot, in contrast to the regular level of *simcha* on other *Yamim Tovim*.

2. *Vayikra* 23:40, *Devarim* 16:14,15. “*V’samachta b’chagecha... v’hayita ach sameach*,” often sung on the *Yamim Tovim*, actually describes Sukkot specifically.
 3. *Shemot* 23:16 and *Vayikra* 23:39.
 4. *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:43, based on *Vayikra* 23:40. This is also why Sukkot is described as “*Chag Hashem*” (*Vayikra* 23:39; see also *Devarim* 16:15). *Vayikra* 23:40 is the basis for the fact that (*min haTorah*) the *Daled Minim* are taken seven days only in the *Beit Hamikdash* (*Sukkah* 41a). See Rambam (*Sefer Hamitzvot*, *Aseh* 169) who connects the taking of the *Daled Minim* to the *simcha* of Sukkot.
 5. Note the parallel between the *pesukim* that describe the *simcha* of Sukkot with the *Daled Minim* (*Vayikra* 23:40) and those that describe the bringing of *Bikkurim* (*Devarim* 26:2,11).
 6. This is why we take the *Daled Minim* during, and integrate them into, *Hallel*.

7. See Rashbam and Ramban on *Vayikra* 23:39 and Ritva on *Sukkah* 53a.
 8. Rashi, *Sukkah* 50a.
 9. *Sukkah* 51b.
 10. *Rosh Hashanah* 16a.
 11. *Melachim I* 17:34–35. See also *Shmuel II* 23:16.
 12. *Melachim I* 17:45.
 13. *Sefer HaChinuch* 325.
 14. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:30:2 and 31:3. See also Zohar 3:105a.
 15. *Tehillim* 118:24.
 16. *Simchat HaRegel*, *Limud Aleph*, *L’Chag HaSukkot*.
 17. *Sefat Emet*, *Sukkot* 5643. See also Ritva, *Sukkah* 53a; *Magid Mishneh*, *Sukkah* 8:15; *Be’er Mayim Chayim*, *Bechukotai* 26; and *Sefer HaChinuch* 325.
 18. *Berachot* 17a.

The Aravah on the Aron Kodesh



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

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Hoshana Rabbah is a day of *chivut arava* (the custom of taking willow branches and striking them on the ground a number of times). The *Gemara* talks about the striking of the *arava* which is in *Maseches Sukkah* 44a-b, and there is a dispute whether the *chivut arava* is a *din* of *Neviim* or a custom. The *nafka mina* is whether one makes a *beracha* on banging of the *arava*. As you know, we *pasken* that this is a *minhag*, and therefore, we do not make a *beracha*.

Obviously, the *arava*, which is a hidden *mitzvah* and is not spoken about *b'feirush*, is something that is clouded in *sod*, in mystery. Yet there are many who give it the following basic explanation, and I am quoting now from Rav Moshe in the *Kol Rom, Sukkos, Maimar Zayin*. He is not the first and not the only one who describes it as follows:

It says in *Vayikra Rabbah* (Parsha Lamed, Piska Yud Beis) that the four *minim* are representative of the four types of *Yidden*. Jews who have both taste and a pleasant smell, those who have taste without a pleasant odor, those without a taste, and those who have neither.

דְּבַר אַחֵר, פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר, אֱלוֹי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מֵה אֲתֵרוֹג זֶה יֵשׁ בּוֹ טַעַם וְיֵשׁ בּוֹ רִיחַ, כִּף יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בְּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם שֵׁשׁ בְּהֶם תּוֹרָה וְיֵשׁ בְּהֶם מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים. כִּפֶּת תַּמְרִים, מֵה הַתְּמָרָה הַזֶּה יֵשׁ בּוֹ טַעַם וְאֵין בּוֹ רִיחַ, כִּף הֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בְּהֶם שֵׁשׁ בְּהֶם תּוֹרָה וְאֵין בְּהֶם מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים. וְעֵנָף עֵץ עֵבֶת, אֱלוֹי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מֵה הָדָס יֵשׁ בּוֹ רִיחַ וְאֵין בּוֹ טַעַם, כִּף יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בְּהֶם שֵׁשׁ בְּהֶם מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים וְאֵין בְּהֶם תּוֹרָה. וְעֵרְבֵי נָחַל, אֱלוֹי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מֵה עֵרְבָה זֶה

אֵין בְּהֶם טַעַם וְאֵין בְּהֶם רִיחַ, כִּף הֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בְּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם שֵׁאֵין בְּהֶם לֹא תּוֹרָה וְלֹא מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, וּמֵה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עוֹשֶׂה לָהֶם, לֹאבְדֹן אֵי אֶפְשָׁר, אֲלֹא אִמֵּר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יִקְשְׁרוּ כָלֶם אֲגָדָה אַחַת וְהוּא מְכַפְּרִין אֱלוֹי עַל אֱלוֹי.

Obviously, the one who has taste and a pleasant odor is the *esrog* which represents *Talmidai Chachamim*. The opposite extreme is the *arava* which neither has a fruit with a taste nor does it have any type of scent that a person would enjoy. The *zechus* of *Am Yisrael* is where we all come together and that is symbolized by the *Arba Minim* that *Kulam Yachad*.

Hoshana Rabbah is the last day of the *Yemai Hadin*. It is the last day of *Sukkos* when *Nidonim Al Hamayim*, and on that last day we take the *arava* separately. As if to say that the *arava* itself, the least of the significant of *Klal Yisrael*, the ones who observe the least, they are the ones that also have a *kiruv*, a closeness to HKB"H. As long as they want to be connected to the rest of *Klal Yisrael* as was symbolized by what took place on all the different days, as long as they want to be part of *Klal Yisrael*, they have a *chashivus* onto themselves.

Today we see sometimes, and it is most pronounced in children, and is true about adults as well, but young men sometimes don't feel that the learning is for them. Perhaps their intellect is not enough, or even if they are very bright but they fall behind, and they don't feel a sense of *hatzlacha* in their learning. Such people often allow it to affect their *frumkeit* and

if they are not learning well, their *davening* and *bentching*, even dressing as a *fruma Yid* – these things fall by the wayside.

The great Jew is the one who despite not feeling a good sense in his learning, not having a *sipuk* or satisfaction in his learning, and doesn't have necessarily extraordinary *maisim tovim*, but he keeps himself connected to *Yiddishkeit*, he keeps himself connected to the *haddas* and the *lulav* and the *esrog*, he keeps himself connected. These are really the greatest Jews in the *Galus*. The ones who stay with it despite the fact that the society around them doesn't hold them to be great people.

We know *Olam Hafuch Hu*, this world is an upside down world. There are people who think that they are not *chashuv* and they really are. Perhaps this is why we throw the *aravos* onto the *Aron Kodesh*. The custom by *Klal Yisrael* is to decorate the *Aron* with the *aravos*, *dafka*. Nobody throws the *lulav*, the *hadasim* and certainly not the *esrog* onto the *Aron Kodesh*. Only the *arava*.

The *arava* is the decoration. It is the one who really through great beauty connects, and that is the striking of the *arava*. The *arava* which is a tool in serving HKB"H becomes the centerpiece of the hidden meaning of everything that takes place on these very extraordinary days.

The Secret of Sukkot's Timing



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

What exactly is Sukkot doing at this time of the year? All the other festivals are linked to specific times in Jewish history. Pesach commemorates the Exodus from Egypt, which actually took place on the 15th day of the month of Nissan. Shavuot, commemorating the giving of the Torah, took place 50 days later. Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, falls on the first two days of the Jewish new year. But the timing of Sukkot is less apparent. The Gemara explains that Sukkot commemorates a 40-year period of Divine protection under the miraculous "Clouds of Glory," and not a single event. So, why now? Why aren't we celebrating Sukkot three months from now, rather than in the thick of this intense concentration of festivals?

The key to answering this question lies in the integral connection between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur on the one hand, and Sukkot on the other. To understand that connection, we need to delve into the nature of the four species that we take in hand on Sukkot. These four species are the *etrog* – the fruit of a citron tree; the *lulav* – a date palm branch; *hadass* – leafy boughs from a myrtle tree; and *aravah* – leafy branches from a willow tree. On each day of Sukkot, we bring these four species together, say a dedicated blessing and shake them in a specific way.

Our sages ask – what is the common denominator in the requirements of all four of these species? We know we bring them together because they are so different – in taste, in smell and in structure; but what is the one requirement that is common to them all?

Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that the common denominator is their connection to water. All four species must be fresh and cannot be used when dried out. Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that this represents life. When we bring these four species together, we celebrate and give thanks to Hashem for the fact that we are

more alive than ever. And we are saying that we are now ready to dedicate that life to Hashem in His infinite wisdom and kindness.

And now the connection to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur becomes so clear. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we pray for many things. We pray for a good year, for a sweet year, and we pray for all of G-d's blessings. But, most fundamentally, we pray for life itself. The words of the *machzor* are filled with so many rich examples. We ask Hashem: "The King, who desires life" to "remember us for life" and "write us in the book of life."

Chayim, chayim, chayim. Life, life, life. Over and over again – that is what we pray for. Because we never take its privilege for granted.

And so comes along Sukkot, immediately after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and you know what we give thanks to Hashem for? For the very fact that we're alive. For the fact that we have breath in our lungs and energy in our bodies – that is what we are thankful for. And that is why we bring together the four species, as fresh as can be, filled with as much moisture as possible, and we thank G-d for the life that He has given us. We take them and we say the blessing of *shehechyanu*: "Thank you G-d, Who has sustained us and kept us alive to reach this point." Taking this idea one step further, it's not only about gratitude for being alive. Yes, we are incredibly grateful, but Sukkot is a declaration of what we plan to do with this new life. We take the four species, we bow before G-d and we sing *Hallel* – recognising the infinite greatness and magnificence of G-d, dedicating our gift of life to Him. And we do that through the Torah, which is the gateway to life.

The Torah is the Torah of life. It says in the Torah (Leviticus 18:4): "You shall keep my statutes and my laws that a person should do them and live by them." The Ramban explains that the Torah is the blueprint for how to live life in this world

in our interactions with other people. And what is the best possible way to do that? Through the values and the principles and the laws of the Torah, which guide us on how to be a mensch, to be kind to people, to interact in good conscience with people. And it goes even deeper and further than this. By dedicating our lives to Him – by taking opportunities to fulfil G-d's *mitzvot* – we unlock the gift of another life... life in the World to Come. As Rashi says on that verse "...and you shall live by them" – this refers to *Olam Haba*, the World to Come. The *mitzvot* that we do in this world enrich us with life in the World to Come. And here's the really fascinating thing. The Hebrew word for life is *chayim*, which is plural. We never speak about life, but lives. And I came across an amazing explanation of this in a book by the brother of the Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Avraham Ben Shlomo Zalman. He explains that the word *chayim* is plural because it refers to two lives, life in this world and life in the World to Come. Whenever we refer to life, we refer to both.

As Sukkot comes in, we give thanks to Hashem for life, not only in this world, but for the infinite life He has allowed us in the World to Come. And we give thanks and praise to Him for the Torah that He has given us – the gateway to life. Sukkot is known as the "festival of the time of our joy." We are filled with joy and gratitude for the gift of life and the Torah, which is its gateway.

Notice, the Hebrew word for water, *mayim*, just like life, *chayim*, has no singular. We only refer to waters, never water. When we speak of water, we don't only speak of physical waters, but of Torah – the "water" that connects us to our spiritual source.

This Sukkot, as we bring together the four species, let us recognise and celebrate the infinite gift of life we are reminded of when holding the *lulav* and *etrog*. Let us dedicate ourselves to Hashem and His Torah – the source of all life and all blessing.

Succah – The Meeting Place of Kodesh and Chol



Rabbi Shalom Rosner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Machon Lev International program

The Gemara in Avoda Zara¹ presents a powerful allegory about the future judgment of the nations. The nations will argue before Hashem, complaining that they never had the opportunity to fulfill *mitzvot* and demand a second chance. Hashem grants them the *mitzvah* of *succah*.

The gentiles build their *succah*, but on that day the weather is warm and sunny, making it difficult to sit inside. Frustrated, they destroy the *succah* and abandon the *mitzvah*. Hashem scolds them for their failure. But since discomfort exempts one from sitting in a *succah* (*mitzta'er patur min haSuccah*), did they act improperly? The answer is: although they were exempt, their disrespect in destroying and mocking the *mitzvah* was not justified.

Why did Hashem select the *succah* – of all 613 *mitzvot* – as the test for sincerity for the other nations? The Gemara explains it is because a *succah* is simple and inexpensive to build. But perhaps there is a deeper meaning to this *mitzvah* that underlies its choice.

The Succah and Kodshim (Sanctified Items)

Several Gemarot derive *halakhic* principles about *succah* by comparing it to *kodshim* (sanctified items). Let us explore these parallels and then seek to understand the connection between *succah* and *kodshim*.

The Number of Meals in the Succah

The Gemara in Succah² discusses how many meals one must eat in the *succah* during the holiday. Rabbi Eliezer teaches one should eat fourteen meals – two a day, day and night. The Rabbis disagree, holding that there is no fixed number beyond eating at least a *kezayit* (olive's bulk) on the first night. A snack or drink does not require a *succah*.

Rabbi Eliezer bases his view on the verse “*Teishvu ke'ein taduru*” – “live in the *succah* as you live in your home.” Since we normally eat two meals a day at home, so, too, in the *succah*. The Rabbis interpret it differently, allowing skipping meals at home, so one can also skip them in the *succah*.

Tosafot, quoting a Yerushalmi, offers another source for Rabbi Eliezer's view: a *gezeira shava* (verbal analogy) between the seven days in the *succah* and the seven days the *Kohanim* were commanded to dwell in the *Mishkan*. Since the *Kohanim* sat day and night in the *Mishkan*, so, too, the *succah* requires day and night residence – hence, at least two meals.

But why link the *succah* to the *Mishkan* beyond a shared phrase?

The Height of the Succah

The Gemara³ derives the minimum *succah* height – ten *tefachim* – by comparing it to the Aron (Ark), which was nine *tefachim* tall, plus the *kaporet* (cover), one *tefach* more. Hashem spoke from atop the Aron, totaling ten *tefachim*. This comparison ties the *succah* to the holiness of the Aron.

The Material of the Skhakh

The Gemara⁴ states that the *skhakh* (*succah* covering) must be from something that grows from the ground, is detached, and cannot become *mekabel tumah* (ritually impure). Rabbi Akiva explains this by connecting the word “*chag*” in the verse “*Chag HaSuccot Ta'aseh Lekha*” to the *Korban Chagiga*, the pilgrimage sacrifice brought on holidays. Since the *Korban Chagiga* cannot become impure, so too the *skhakh* must be impervious to impurity. Again a connection between a *korban* and a *halakha* related to *skhakh*.

No Benefit Derived from the Succah

The Gemara⁵ prohibits deriving benefit from a *succah* beyond its use during the

holiday. For example, one cannot dismantle the *succah* and use its wood for fire. The Gemara explains: “*K'sheim shehal shem shamayim al Chagigah, chal shem shamayim al haSuccah*” – just as the *Korban Chagiga* is sanctified, so is the *Succah*.

Kodesh and Chol – The Paradox of the Succah

My Rebbe, Rabbi Michael Rosenzweig, taught that the *succah* embodies holiness (*kodesh*) but also contains many laws highlighting its mundane (*chol*) nature. The *succah* is a temporary dwelling – a home for eating, sleeping, relaxing, and hospitality during the week. It contrasts with the *Mikdash*, the permanent holy sanctuary where Hashem's presence rests. The phrase that most captures the *mitzvah* of *succah* is *תשבו כעין תדורו* – live in your *succah* like you live in your house – including all the everyday activities.

Putting this together, the *succah* is a magical space where holiness and mundaneness merge. It is a home, but one infused with sanctity. Every moment in the *succah* is a fulfillment of a *mitzvah*, every minute sanctified. Sitting beneath the stars, one contemplates the Creator. The *succah* teaches the essence of Jewish life: to sanctify the mundane.

The Kotzker Rebbe explained: G-d desires *anshei kodesh* – holy people – not *malakhei kodesh* (holy angels). He already has enough angels; what He wants is sanctified human beings who live in this world and elevate it. Yom Kippur is an extreme day of holiness – fasting, white garments, pure awe. But it comes only once a year. Succot follows Yom Kippur as the time to bring holiness into daily life and dwellings.

The Lesson of Succah for the Nations

Why offer the *mitzvah* of *succah* to the nations? To teach them the Jewish

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The Final Journey of an Eved Hashem



Michal Horowitz

Teacher, Lecturer & Author of “Able: Living With A Disability, A Torah View”

On Simchas Torah, we conclude our annual journey through Chumash with the reading of V'zos Ha'bracha. The end of Sefer Devarim and the finale of the Chamisha Chumshei Torah speaks of final blessings, parting words and poetic prophecies. And the finality of death.

After forty years of leadership and dedication to his people, after decades of journeying through desert lands to reach the Holy Land – for after all, this was the purpose of Moshe's mission! (see Shemos 3:8) – after 515 tefilos uttered to be allowed entry into Eretz Yisrael; alas, it was not meant to be. Because of the sin of Mei Merivah (Bamidbar 20), Moshe was banned entry into the land of Israel.

Moshe died alone on the eastern side of the Jordan River, never to cross into Eretz Yisrael. Even in death, he did not merit *kevura ba'Aretz*. Each year our heart is pained as we read of Moshe's demise. And yet, even as he ascended to his death atop Mt. Navo, he did so with alacrity and purpose, to fulfill the command of G-d.

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm teaches, “The great hasidic thinker R' Zvi Elimelech Shapiro explains that we must dedicate not only life but also death towards the spiritual goal of executing G-d's will. According to the author of the kabbalistic work *Asara Ma'amarim*, Adam, who represents collective man, was given not one but two commandments. The first one is well known: ‘But of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat’ (Bereishis 2:17). What is not so widely known is that the rest of the verse also constitutes a commandment: ‘For in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.’ That is not only a prediction but also

a commandment: If you violate the negative ‘you shall not eat,’ then you must perform the positive commandment, ‘you shall surely die!’ This is not only a fact of nature – it is a divine commandment.

“In that case, the Bnei Yissaschar continues, the Jew must approach death with kavana (intention), even as he does in the case of any other positive commandment. It is for this reason that the Torah tells us that ‘so Moshe the servant of Hashem died there.’ Moshe was an *eved Hashem* – a servant of G-d – not only in his conduct of his life, but also in the manner of his death – even as he dedicated all his life to G-d, so did he respond to the summons to die with the same inner participation and dedication.

“Thus, he explains the verses in our sidra: ‘Go up onto this mountain of Avarim... and die on the mountain where you will go up’ (Devarim 32:49-50). Note that the Torah does not say ‘and you will die on the mount,’ but ‘and die.’ This form is the imperative rather than the future. G-d does not merely inform Moshe that he will die. He commands him to do so! Death as the last *mitzvah*!

“...If one had spiritually died a long time ago, then physical death is as devoid of dignity as was one's life. There are people who live without dignity, and they are (as if they are already) dead. And there are people who not only live with dignity, but die with dignity – and such people deserve the epithet *ovdei Hashem*, servants of the L-rd!... As we say right before reciting the Shema, ‘*ki heim chayeinu v'orech yameinu*’ – the words of the Torah are our life and the length of our days – and even beyond it” (Derashot Ledorot, Deuteronomy, p.135-140).

An *eved Hashem* not only lives to serve G-d, but also dies to serve G-d. This brings to mind the Gemara that records the details of the death of the great Tanna, Rabbi Akiva (Brachos 61b):

When the Romans took Rabbi Akiva out for execution, it was the time for the recitation of the Keriya Shema. As they were raking his flesh with iron combs, he was accepting upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. His students, witnessing this scene, exclaimed, “Rebbe, are you so devoted to G-d, that as you are being murdered, you are able to declare and accept His Oneness?” Said Rabbi Akiva, “All my life, I was pained over the command to ‘Love the L-rd G-d with all your soul’, which means: even if He takes your soul! And I said to myself: when would the opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah come to me? Now that it has come me to fulfill, shall I not fulfill? He elongated the recitation of the word אחד, G-d is One, until his soul departed with the word “One.” A heavenly voice emanated and said, “fortunate are you Rabbi Akiva, that your soul departed with the word ‘One.’”

This, then, is the final lesson of Moshe Rabbeinu, as we close Sefer Devarim. To be G-d serving and G-d fearing is not only in life, but also in death. *Avodas Hashem* is in this world and unto the Next World. While this is a level that giants amongst us live on, it is important to know that there is such a level and it is attainable to those who strive to reach it.

May we always merit to sanctify G-d's Name as we live, so that we will be blessed with the *arichus yamim* and *shanim* that was granted to Moshe, to fulfill our mission unto the final day – and beyond.

The Double Musaf on Succot



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

In Parshat Pinchas (Bamidbar chps. 28-29) we find a complete list of all the *korbanot musaf* 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 **Succot**), i.e., Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Shmini Atzeret, we offer an identical *korban musaf* – 1 “*par*,” 1 “*ayil*,” and 7 “*kevasim*.”

On each of the “*shalosh regalim*” (except **Succot**), i.e., *Chag ha'Matzot* and Shavuot, we offer an identical *korban musaf* – 2 “*parim*,” 1 “*ayil*,” and 7 “*kevasim*.”

The *musaf* of Succot is quite different, each day the amount of “*parim*” changes (from 13 down to 7), and each day we offer 2 “*aylim*” 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 Succot is also celebrated (13+12+11+10+9+8+7=70). [See also *Zecharya* chapter 14, *haftara* on first day Succot.]

However, the extra “*ayil*” and “*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 “*aylim*”; instead of 7 “*kevasim*,” we bring 14 “*kevasim*.” This indicates that there must be something “double” about Succot.

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

3 “*parim*” [2+1];

2 “*aylim*” [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.

This may reflect the double nature of **Succot**. 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, just as we do on all of the other Tishrei holidays.

This “double nature” is reflected by the two times in daily *davening* on **Succot** when we hold the *lulav* and *etrog*, during:

1) **Hallel** – to **thank** G-d for the harvest of the past year;

2) **Hoshanot** – to **pray** to G-d in anticipation of the **new** year.

Similarly, this “double nature” may also reflect the **two** reasons that Chazal [see *Succah* 11b] give us for sitting in the **succah**.

1) **Succot 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) **Succot k'neged anannei ha'kavod** – representing G-d's **shchina** which protected *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert.

This may reflect a more spiritual aspect of the holiday, as we attempt to re-live an intimate relationship with Hashem.

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understanding of sanctifying the mundane. Other cultures often see holiness as separate from ordinary life – the Pope, for example, is celibate, seeing family life as unholy. Judaism teaches the opposite: holiness permeates all of life. The *Kohen Gadol* must be married to serve on Yom Kippur. Life itself, in all its facets, is a vehicle for sanctity.

Zman Simchateinu – The Time of Our Joy

Succot is called *zman simchateinu* – the time of our joy. Our greatest joy comes from fulfilling our purpose: sanctifying

the mundane. We are not holy only in the synagogue or study hall, but in the office, at the table, on vacation, and in our homes.

Conclusion

The *succah* reminds us that holiness is not confined to sacred spaces or lofty moments but resides in the daily realities of our lives. It invites us to transform the ordinary into extraordinary, the fleeting into eternal.

Imagine each of us carrying a portable *succah* in our hearts – a shelter of *emunah*, *chesed* and *kedusha* wherever we go. In a

world that often separates the spiritual from the practical, we are called to bridge that gap and reveal Hashem's presence in every moment and place.

May this Succot inspire us to live as holy dwellers in a mundane world, to sanctify every breath and every action, and to bring light, joy, and holiness wherever we stand.

1. *Avoda Zarah* 2b-3a
2. *Succah* 27a
3. *Succah* 4b
4. *Succah* 11a
5. *Succah* 9a

Hag HaSukkot: Teshuva Me'Ahava



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The Torah (*Vayikra* 23: 33-44) commands us to observe the Festival of Sukkot. However, the structure of the commandment is somewhat curious. It begins by describing the beginning and end of the Festival, and how one should not work on the first and eight days. Afterwards, the Torah returns to the first day and describes other aspects of the Festival.

How are we to understand the order of these verses? Why does the Torah divide the commandment to observe the Festival of Sukkot in this manner? The Seforno explains that the Torah describes what all the Festivals have in common, i.e., not doing work and the *korbanot*, and then describes the uniqueness of the day, i.e., the festival on the eighth day, the *arba minim* and the *sukka*.

The Torah returns to the topic of the *korbanot* in *Parshat Pinhas*. In this *parasha*, the Torah focuses on the various *korbanot* offered on each Festival. Regarding Sukkot, the Torah teaches that on the first day thirteen bulls are brought, and twelve on the second day, until the seventh day

upon which seven are brought-- seventy bulls in total. The rabbis teach us that these seventy bulls correspond to the seventy nations. The Jewish people pray for the welfare of the nations of the world on Sukkot.

In addition to the seventy bulls, fourteen sheep (*kevasim*) are offered each day, totaling ninety-eight during the seven days of Sukkot. Some explain that these ninety-eight sheep correspond to the curses directed towards the Jewish people. The *Kedushat Sion* writes that if one counts the words of the curses of *Parashat Ki Tavo*, there are 676 words. Interestingly, as it is clear that the curses are the result of our sins, it is not surprising that the total numerical value of the letters of the word *avonot* (sins), spelled out, equals 676.

What emerges, therefore, is a relationship between the ninety-eight sheep offered on Sukkot, and our *avonot* (sins). It appears that the sheep on Yom Kippur are meant to atone for the *avonot* (sins), for which there are 676 words of Divine curses. These ninety-eight sheep protect us from the curses of *Parashat Ki Tavo*.

However, we might ask, if Yom Kippur is understood as a day of atonement, why do the Jewish people need to be forgiven on Sukkot as well, days after Yom Kippur?

The commentaries teach us that *teshuva* can atone for the sins of the past. The sins are no longer viewed as rebellious, purposeful acts, and therefore the person is not punished. This type of *teshuva* is known as *teshuva me'yirah*, repentance done from fear, and this is the *teshuva* of Yom Kippur. However, there is another type of *teshuva* – *teshuva me'ahava* – *teshuva* done from the love of G-d. The rabbis teach us that when one repents due to one's love of G-d, his sins are then viewed as good deeds. On Sukkot, the Festival of *simha*, we perform *teshuva me'ahava*. On those days, the ninety-eight sheep, which correspond to the curses of *Parshat Ki Tavo*, represent the sins (*avonot*) which are atoned for on Sukkot due to our *teshuva* of *ahava*, reflected by the *korbanot* of Sukkot. It is this happiness, and atonement, which explains the unique experience of Sukkot.



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Becoming Members of Hashem's Household



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

The Torah commands the entire Jewish people – men, women, and children – to gather on Sukkos after the *Shmita* year to hear the king read from *Sefer Devarim*. This *mitzvah*, known as *Hakhel*, is intended “so that they should listen, learn, fear Hashem...and observe to do all the words of this Torah” (*Devarim* 31:12). Rebbeinu Bachaya explains that *Hakhel* takes place immediately after Yom Kippur because, having undergone the purification of Yom Kippur, the Jewish people are spiritually elevated and prepared to reaccept the Torah on a higher level than at any other time of year.

To understand why Sukkos is the ideal time for this reacceptance, we can examine the unique relationship with Hashem that Sukkos reveals. During Sukkos in the *Beis Hamikdash*, seventy bulls were offered over the seven days, beginning with thirteen on the first day and decreasing by one each day. Rashi (*Bamidbar* 29:36) explains that this teaches us *derech erez*, proper conduct toward a guest. He compares it to someone hosting a guest: on the first day he serves his finest food, then gradually serves simpler meals.

At first glance, this seems strange. Why would feeding a guest less and less demonstrate proper hospitality? The answer is that the guest gradually stops being a guest. At first, there is formality: the host prepares special meals, fresh towels, a bed, and everything necessary to make the guest comfortable. But as the days pass, the guest becomes part of the household. He feels at home, and those formalities are no longer necessary.

This is the message of the decreasing number of bulls on Sukkos. After the

purification of Yom Kippur, Hashem reveals that our relationship with Him is becoming increasingly natural and intimate. We move from being “guests” in Hashem’s home to becoming members of His household – His children.

One meaning of *atzeres* is absorption. On Sukkos, and especially on Shemini Atzeres, we become increasingly “at home” with Hashem. We are therefore prepared to absorb and accept the Torah at *Hakhel* not merely as visitors, but as His children.

The Alter Rebbe once explained why his teachings from the Maggid of Mezritch differed from those of the Maggid’s other students. The other students learned as students; he learned alongside the Maggid’s son, Reb Avraham, the Malach. The Alter Rebbe explained that a rebbe teaches a student through garments, explanations, and parables, while Torah transmitted from a father to his son can be given with a far greater directness because of their closeness and love.

So, too, when we accept the Torah as Hashem’s children, our relationship with it is fundamentally deeper than when we approach Hashem merely as guests. Dovid Hamelech expressed this aspiration: “Let me dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life” (*Tehillim* 27:4). Living in Hashem’s house is far greater than merely visiting His palace.

This idea also connects to the role of parents. The mother often creates the warmth and atmosphere of the home, allowing children to feel secure and truly at home. Perhaps this is reflected in the words of *Mishlei* (1:8), “Do not abandon the Torah of your mother.” Our parents give

us our first experience of what it means to belong to a home, helping prepare us to feel that we, too, are children of Hashem. Perhaps this is why Yizkor is said at this time. As we remember the parents who gave us our first sense of home, we can appreciate how they helped us learn to feel at home in Hashem’s house as well.

The Brisker Rav was once asked about the phrase in the *Yom Tov Amidah*, “Bestow upon us, Hashem our G-d, the blessing of Your *Yomim Tovim*.” What is this “blessing” of Yom Tov? He answered that the Torah says regarding Sukkos, “And you shall rejoice on your *Yom Tov*...and you will be only joyful” (*Devarim* 16:14–15). Rashi explains that this is not merely a command to rejoice, but a promise. The “blessing of Your *Yomim Tovim*” is the promise that anyone who sincerely attempts to purify himself during Elul, Rosh Hashana, and Yom Kippur will become part of Hashem’s household on Sukkos. He will then become a fitting vessel on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah for Hashem’s presence through his joy in Torah. Because we are part of Hashem’s household, we merit the joy that is the “blessing of Your *Yomim Tovim*,” for “might and joy are in His place” (*Divrei Hayamim I* 16:27).

There is a beautiful story about two students of the Maggid of Mezritch, Rav Yaiva and Reb Zusha. One Sukkos, Reb Zusha stayed with Rav Yaiva in the freezing Ukrainian weather. When they went to sleep in the *sukkah*, Rav Yaiva brought blankets and a cot, but Reb Zusha refused them, saying that he wanted nothing separating him from the *schach* or the holy floor of the *sukkah*. After a while, Reb Zusha called out, “Tateh, it’s a little cold in here. Could the Tateh make it warmer

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Are You Afraid To Change?



Rabbi YY Jacobson
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Charlie Boswell was a great athlete who became blind during World War II while rescuing his friend from a tank that was under fire. When he returned to this country after the War, he decided to take up a sport that he had never tried as yet – golf. Years of practice and determination led him to win the honor of National Blind Golf Champion no less than 13 times.

One of his heroes was the great golfer Ben Hogan, so it truly was an honor for Charlie to win the Ben Hogan Award in 1958. Upon meeting Hogan, Charlie was awestruck and told the legendary golfer that his greatest wish was to have one round of golf with the great Ben Hogan. Hogan was duly honored, after all, he knew Charlie as the great blind player that he was, and truly admired his skills.

But suddenly Boswell blurted out an unexpected challenge. “Would you like to play for money, Mr. Hogan?” “Charlie, you know I can’t play you for money, it wouldn’t be fair!” said Mr. Hogan. Boswell did not flinch. Instead, he upped the ante. “Aw, come on, \$1,000 per hole!” “I can’t. What would people think of me, taking advantage of you and your circumstance?” replied the golfer who indeed was able to see. “Chicken, Mr. Hogan?” “Okay,” blurted a frustrated Hogan, “I’ll play. But I warn you, I am going to play my best!” “I wouldn’t expect anything else,” said the confident Boswell. “You’re on Charlie. I’ll tell you what. You name the time and the place!” A very self-assured Boswell responded: “Fine. 10 o’clock... tonight!”

■ ■ ■

“You shall take for yourselves, on the first day [of Sukkot],” instructs the Torah in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, “the magnificent fruit of a tree, the frond of a date-palm, branches from the thick-leaved tree,

and willows of the brook.” These are the familiar “four kinds” – the *esrog* (citron), *lulav* (palm frond), *hadassim* (myrtle twigs) and *aravos* (willow twigs), which we celebrate and shake during the Sukkos festival.

The Torah, however, does not explicitly name the four kinds, identifying them instead through allusions and double-entendres. Take the citron for example: The Torah states, “you shall take for yourselves the magnificent fruit of a tree,” or in the original Hebrew: “*pri eitz Hadar*.” There are many beautiful fruits. Why was the citron chosen? In a brilliant interpretation, the Talmud reads the phrase “*pri eitz Hadar*” (“the magnificent fruit of a tree”) as a reference to the *esrog* (citron) since the Hebrew word *hadar* (“magnificent”) can also be read *ha-dar*, “that which dwells,” so that the phrase also translates as “the fruit that dwells on its tree from year to year.” Unlike other fruits, which wither and fall off after a single season, the *esrog* continues to grow on its tree throughout the entire year, enduring and growing with each season change. The citron is the only fruit on our planet “that dwells on its tree from year to year.”

It is a fascinating fact: The *esrog* can remain fresh and alive on a tree for five years, and just continue to grow with each season and each year, becoming bigger and bigger. This sets the *esrog* apart from all other fruits, which rot or fall off the tree after its particular season has passed. Yet here is an important question. Why does the Torah refer to the citron in this roundabout way, as “the fruit that dwells,” rather than stating its name directly? The answer is it is this quality of the citron – its ability to weather change and grow from it – which the Torah is attempting to teach us concerning our own lives.

The year is a microcosm of human life. The bud and bloom of youth, the fruitfulness

of maturity, the autumn of one’s later years, and the wither of winter – all find expression in the seasons of a year. A year includes mundane days and exciting days; success and failure, blessings and challenges, straight balls and curve balls; warm and passionate experiences, as well as cold and frozen encounters. In short, the year incorporates the full spectrum of human experience and emotion.

This is the deeper significance of the Torah’s description of the *esrog*, teaching us about how humans ought to mirror the *esrog*. The *esrog* is one who “dwells in his tree from year to year:” one who weathers all changes and fluctuations, whose integrity, growth and connection with his or her source and nucleus are not compromised by any of life’s vacillations. Many people do well in particular “seasons.” For some, when life is sunny and warm, they thrive; for others, when life is cloudy and cold, they function well. Dark days bring out the best in them. Regardless, they are fully alive only in one season; when you take them out of their “comfort zone,” when you remove them from their “natural habitat,” they often wither away or become detached from the tree, from their source of life. When life’s waterfalls transport them to new and unexpected situations – they often lose their core, their vitality, their truthfulness, their steadfastness and courage. The Torah teaches us to become like an *esrog*: to learn how to endure the diverse seasons of life. And even more, just like the *esrog*, to learn how to grow and develop from each season and change in our life. For in truth, every new experience in life, affords us the opportunity to discover new horizons.

This year, when you shake the *esrog*, try to emulate it.

Sheltering Together In Divine Presence



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Founder, Tzama Nafshi

Author of the *Baderech* series

As the Baal Shem Tov haKadosh sat in his *sukkah*, a great tumult raged outside.

In the early days of the Chasidic movement, some of its revolutionary practices, as well as the spiritual awakening of the followers of the Baal Shem Tov, drew prejudice, strife and legal controversy. While detractors and opponents were always on the lookout for an opportunity to attack the *tzadik* and undermine the fledgling movement, this time it seemed there was good reason to make their claims.

The Ba'al Shem Tov had constructed what looked to be a highly questionable *sukkah*, stitching together a patchwork of materials that seemed to barely pass even the minimal *halachic* requirements. The rickety looking hut relied on so many *kulahs* in Jewish Law and all the loopholes detailed in *masechet Sukkah*, it was barely recognizable to the rabbis who were now gathering at the *sukkah*, ready for a confrontation, and to accuse him of blatant laxity in *halacha*.

A debate ensued between the scandalized scholars and the *tzaddik*. They summoned a variety of sources and opinions denouncing the *sukkah*, while the Baal Shem Tov calmly defended it on each count. Finally, the *rabbonim* of Brodt bluntly declared it to be *pasul* and a spiritual danger to the community.

Seeing that his explanations had fallen on deaf ears, the Ba'al Shem Tov closed his eyes, entered a meditative state and began to pray. The *rabbonim* were unsure how to react. At that moment, a piece of paper fell from the *s'chach*, a note signed by no less than an angel from heaven, *Matat Sar haPanim*, attesting to the validity of the *sukkah*: "The *sukkah* of the Baal Shem Tov is kosher!"

Opening his eyes, the Baal Shem Tov then began an instructional shiur, explaining

the intricate laws of constructing a *sukkah*, listing the various 'leniencies' that he had relied on, such as *dofen akumah*, *gud achis mechitztah*, *gud asik*, *lavud*, *avir*, and others. He also detailed how each particular *halacha* and its structural application related to a different spiritual state and level of observance.

"There are many different types of Jews in *Klal Yisrael* of varying levels of education, knowledge and observance. The *sukkah* is kosher," concluded the Baal Shem Tov, "and so are the *Yidden*."

■ ■ ■

"For seven days... all who belong to the people of Israel will live in *sukkos*"

(Vayikra, 23:42)

...This teaches that it is fitting for all of Israel to sit in one *sukkah*.

(*Sukkah*, 27b)

"One ought to bind themselves and be focused on being part of the entire *klal*... and strive to fill their home with great love and *shalom*, so that their love shine outward and spread forth; In that way, it will be considered as if all of Israel dwells together in one *sukkah*." (Reb Nosson of Breslov, *zy'a*)

■ ■ ■

Zeman simchaseinu, the *simcha* of the Festival of Sukkos, flows forth from the *Yamim Noraim*. Our exuberant joy is framed by the gravity and *achrayus* of our committed relationship with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. The celebration of Sukkos is an invitation for us to actualize our declarations and intent. It is a call to Divine intimacy, welcoming us into the ineffable embrace and union between *Am Yisrael* and *Hashem Yisborach*.

Knesses Yisrael, Hashem's beloved *Kallah*, is summoned to enter:

"The King has brought me into His chambers, we will be joyful and happy together." (*Shir haShirim*, 1:4)

Beneath the stars and sky, under a canopy held up by poles and prayers, and the 'chuppah' of *s'chach* hovering over us, we are a royal bride and Groom entering into a covenant of *Kidushin*, sanctity and exclusive commitment. As a bride and groom fast in preparation for their new beginning, we fast on Yom Kippur. Just as they celebrate a week of '*sheva brachos*', we celebrate seven days in the *sukkah*, rejoicing in our new state of union. At each of the seven festive meals we welcome *panim chadashos*, 'new faces': the *Ushpizin Kadishin*, different holy guests each night, who join us in celebrating our wedding. The *Navi* describes the *ananei ha-kavod* as a *chuppah* that covers us from above and envelopes us in Divine love:

"Hashem will create a cloud by day and smoke with a glow of flaming fire by night hovering over the shrine and meeting place of Har Zion; Indeed, over all the glory shall hang a canopy, and it shall serve as a *sukkah* for shade from heat by day and as a shelter for protection against drenching rain." (*Yeshayah*, 4:5)

The Baal haTurim (*Vayikra*, 23:42) invokes the specific term *chuppah*, and suggests an additional aspect to the *ananei haKavod*. They imply intimacy and loving connectivity, the manifestation of a marital bond in which two individuals become one. Sheltering together in Hashem's Presence, we are bonded together, and become one in the *sukkah*.

■ ■ ■

In the tradition of the Baal Shem Tov, the day after Yom Kippur is referred to as *Gott's Numen*, 'God's Name'. Having spent *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* addressing the *Ribbono Shel Olam* with the honorific *haMelech haKadosh*, we begin to use the more intimate and familiar name, *haKeil haKadosh*. These four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos are days of closeness,

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Exalted Entourage

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

There is a well-known custom of inviting seven special guests, seven shepherds of our nation, into our *sukkot*, one on each night of Sukkot. According to the Zohar, each of these precious shepherds – Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon and David – is considered a day to which the holiday is dedicated, and all of Israel then joins them.

Do these shepherds actually come to grace our *sukkot* as guests? How do we incorporate that concept to impact our celebration? And why do we invite these special guests on Sukkot rather than on Pesach, the other seven-day holiday?

The Otzrot HaTorah, citing the Shelah HaKadosh, writes that with such exalted guests, we must practice decorum in the *sukkah*, and keep our speech Torah-based so our guests will feel comfortable. The Belzer Rebbe adds that the great wives of these leaders accompany them too. The Netivot Shalom notes they have come from *Gan Eden*, a place of total spirituality, to visit us on this physical earth. That is one of the reasons why they can only come to a temporary abode like the *sukkah*. While the walls of our permanent homes absorb all the improper speech and untoward behavior of the entire year (says the Minchat Michael), the walls of the *sukkah* are inherently holy, and the *s'chach* is the shade of G-d's protection.

The walls of the *sukkah* represent the Clouds of Glory that surrounded us at

Sinai and then descended on the *Mishkan*. As such, they represent the bond between the physical and the spiritual. The clouds, like the *sukkah*, are a temporary manifestation of G-d's presence, and we can achieve that state through our service to Him. The ultimate bond, however, is achieved in the World to Come, from where our guests have come to visit us on this holiday. When we sit in the *sukkah*, we are basking in the joy of being in G-d's presence. Therefore, if one experiences discomfort while in the *sukkah*, one is exempt from sitting there, while one should attempt to "live" in the *sukkah*, catching up on one's reading and Torah study in this holy environment.

According to the Netivot Shalom, while the covenant between Hashem and *Bnei Yisrael* was originally forged at Sinai and the Clouds of Glory surrounded us at that time, that covenant is renewed every year when the world is recreated on Rosh Hashanah. Then we can again draw His presence down to us as we try to repair the world anew.

Each of these leaders renewed something in the world. Each year, as the world is being recreated, we draw upon these characteristics to help us repair the world, and we ask that these seven come down and impart their energies to us as individuals so we can work on our mission as G-d's nation. We do not need their help on Pesach, but on Sukkot, when we've just started rebuilding the world, we can use

their help with chesed and gevura and all the other traits they embody.

Sukkot is called *z'man simchateinu*, the season of our joy, for it is the only holiday the Torah commands us multiple times to be joyous. Otzrot HaTorah cites the Zohar who picks up on this nomenclature. Every time we celebrate a *simcha*, we are joined by our parents, and G-d brings the departed souls of the previous generations to celebrate with us. How can we acknowledge their presence as our guests? By inviting the poor to our *sukkah* or giving them financial, spiritual or emotional support we are taking what we would otherwise offer these guests and giving it to others. If you keep your celebration focused only on yourselves, the *ushpizin* want no part of it and leave. After all, the whole concept of *ushpizin* is inviting guests. Your spiritual high must be grounded in reality and must include those less fortunate. It is, after all, *Chag HaAsif*, the holiday of gathering the wheat, but the gathering should also include gathering people together in joy.

Let us make our special guests feel welcome. Make each one the center of the conversation of the night dedicated to him. The point of Sukkot is to give hope to people, for just as the Clouds of Glory surrounded us in the desert, so does G-d's presence surround us throughout our lives, and He sends down some majestic mentors and role models to help us on our journey.

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for Zusha?" Miraculously, the *sukkah* became warmer. This happened several times, until Rav Yaiva was sweating and had removed all his blankets. Finally, he begged Reb Zusha, "Zusha, please stop davening! The whole *sukkah* will burn

down!" *Chassidim* would conclude that had Rav Yaiva not stopped him, Reb Zusha might have warmed the entire world.

May Hashem, likewise, warm us with the closeness of His presence, allowing us to feel truly at home in His house. And may

that closeness make us proper vessels to receive His Torah with truth, enabling us to reach new heights in our learning, acceptance, and observance throughout the year.

The Sukkah of Those Returning from Captivity



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

“**A**nd all the congregation that had returned from captivity made *sukkot*.”

For many people in the country, this year's *sukkah* will be their first *sukkah* in three years.

People who were evacuated from the north and the south and returned home this year; people whose permanent home became rehabilitation wards, and who were guests – *ushpizin* – in hospital rooms; and, of course, those who returned from captivity.

I remember how we stood on Hoshana Rabbah, exactly one year ago, three thousand women at the International Convention Center, simply shouting the names of those who were due to return the next morning, after two years in captivity. “When the Lord returns the captivity of Zion, we will be like dreamers; then our mouths will be filled with laughter.”

What is this laughter?

The *Gemara* tells us that in the future, the nations of the world will ask to undertake a *mitzvah* that will also earn them redemption, and the Holy One, Blessed Be He, gives them the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*. But then He brings the sun out of its sheath – a scorching sun – and “each and every one kicks his *sukkah* and leaves... Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, sits and laughs at them, as it says: ‘He who sits in heaven laughs; the Lord mocks them.’” (*Avodah Zarah* 3a)

Why did the Holy One, Blessed Be He, not give the nations the *mitzvah* of Shabbat, which is certainly no simple *mitzvah*? Why not the laws of *kashrut*, or the laws of modesty – laws that restrict a person and demand so much from him? Apparently, the test that merits true redemption is *דיוקא* the one that involves physically leaving the home. Will you also there know

how to remain people who are sensitive to others, connected to something spiritual, hopeful? Will you remain, even in unbearable heat, people who provide shade for others and save others? Will you know, far from any settled place, how to sit in the shade of faith?

The three difficult years we have endured have taught us a profound lesson about the redemption of the soul: even the safest home in the world can, in a single day, become a temporary dwelling, while a temporary dwelling under the most difficult conditions can reveal precisely the permanent home within the heart – the one that travels with us wherever we go.

“And one must believe and know that this temporary dwelling – the *sukkah* – is the permanence and the essence of life in all places, and this itself is the point: that the temporary dwelling should be more [deeply rooted] than all the permanent dwellings in the world. For the essence of freedom from Egypt, from the house of bondage, is that the soul should not be bound to physicality, and that it should be able to leave its permanent dwelling... so that they will know that through this *mitzvah* one can merit knowing and cleaving to the aspect of freedom that existed at the Exodus from Egypt.” (*Sefat Emet*, 5653, Sukkot)

The *Sefat Emet* explains something extraordinary here: A *sukkah* can easily look like a child's game, a wooden house that we build and decorate once a year. You have no idea, the *Sefat Emet* would say, what superhuman spiritual power is etched into your children as they sit in the *sukkah*. A day will come when every person will feel, to one degree or another, the ground beneath him trembling, his *sukkah* collapsing. But then, his childhood *sukkah* will awaken within him and build walls around his broken heart that protect

it from the wind; shade in the middle of nowhere; a roof through which the stars can be seen – even dozens of meters underground.

For many people in the country, one fallen *sukkah* is etched into their hearts – the one that stood alone three years ago on Simchat Torah. But it seems that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, chose *דיוקא* that final image, from so many homes, to accompany those who were evacuated, abducted, or hospitalized far from their homes for such a long period – a picture that would remind them that only buildings can be broken, but a *sukkah*, “even though it has fallen, is still there – a *sukkah* remains upon it.” (*Maharal*)

“And they spread the word throughout all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying: Go out to the mountain and bring olive branches, and branches of myrtle, and branches of leafy trees, to make *sukkot*! ... And the people went out and made *sukkot* for themselves, each on his rooftop and in their courtyards... And the entire congregation that had returned from captivity made *sukkot* and dwelled in *sukkot*... And there was very great rejoicing... And they observed the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day, a solemn assembly, as prescribed.” (*Nechemiah* 8:15–17)

This is a description of people returning from captivity, rebuilding their *sukkot*, and then? “On the eighth day, a solemn assembly, as prescribed.”

On the coming Shemini Atzeret this year, it will finally become clear who prevailed in the judgment of history: those who could have so easily kicked at faith and walked away from it, but chose to sit in its shade – and the One who sits in heaven, with all His precious hosts surrounding Him, those who cried with us through three long years, will finally laugh.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin

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Author of the book *Kohelet: A Map to Eden* (Maggid)

In *Parshat Zot HaBracha*, Moshe blesses the tribes before his death and gives Yosef's tribes a blessing filled with images of fertile land and rich produce.

מִמְּגֵד תְּבוּאֹת שֶׁשֶׁשׁ... מִמְּגֵד גֶּרֶשׁ יְרֵחִים

"With the bounteous yield of the sun,
and the bounteous crop of the moons."
(*Devarim* 33:14)

The word מִמְּגֵד stands out because it appears five times in Moshe's blessing to Yosef. The noun is uncommon in Tanakh, but in this passage it becomes the repeated word for Yosef's abundance: the bounty of the heavens, the yield of the sun, the crop of the moons, the best of the ancient mountains, and the fullness of the earth. It is translated in several ways, including "bounty," "best," "sweetness," and "choice produce." Some explain it more broadly as "blessing," especially because Yosef's blessing here resembles Yaakov's blessing in *Bereshit* 49:25. In *Devarim* 33, however, the word stays close to the land: valuable growth, fine crops, prized fruits.

The meanings across Semitic languages support that sense. The Hebrew noun מִמְּגֵד means "choice thing" or "excellence," related to Aramaic מְגִדָּא, "fruit" or "something precious," and Arabic *majd*, "glory" or "honor." The common thread is something valued and excellent, which is why מִמְּגֵד can describe produce without becoming only an agricultural term.

This may also connect to the English word "almond." Almond comes through Old French and Latin from Greek *amygdalos*, "almond tree," a word whose origin is uncertain. One proposal connects *amygdalos* with Hebrew מְגִדָּא, "divine fruit." This is uncertain, but consistent with the biblical use of מִמְּגֵד for prized produce. The almond shape lent its name to other things in anatomy as well: the same Greek word lies behind English "amygdala," the almond-shaped part of the brain, and older medical usage compared the tonsils to almonds, a parallel Hebrew preserves, since שֶׁקֶד can refer to both.

The Arabic cognate *majd* appears in place names too. Majd al-Krum, a Galilean town, is sometimes translated as "watch-house

of the vineyard," connecting it with מְגִדָּל, "tower," while the Hebrew reading, "glory of the vineyards," connects it with the מִמְּגֵד family instead.

The word מְגִדָּל has its own later path. The Aramaic form behind Magdala meant "tower," and this place name produced Magdalene, "woman of Magdala." Tearful depictions of Mary Magdalene in medieval art gave the derived word its emotional coloring, and from there "maudlin" passed into English as a term for weepy sentimentality. Magdala also survived in locations such as al-Majdal and Migdal near the Sea of Galilee.

The place name Megiddo may belong near one of these word-families, and its origin is debated. One explanation connects מְגִדָּו with מְגִדָּוִים, "troops," while another connects it with מְגִדָּא because of the agricultural richness of the region. Either way, the name carried far: Megiddo stands behind "Armageddon," from מְגִדָּו הָר or הָר מְגִדָּוִין, a real place that became a later symbol of final conflict.

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corresponding to the four letters of our Beloved One's name, שֵׁם הוי"ה, the Tetragrammaton. And perhaps this is the source for Rebbe Pinchas of Koretz's statement that the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos are a particularly auspicious time for a wedding (*Imrei Pinchas*, 7:91). We are Hashem's pure, radiant *kallah*, walking toward the *chuppah*, where we will circle Him with *hakafo*s of joy, remove our veil and see each other face to face.

There is much we can learn from the Ba'al Shem Tov's *sukkah*. In cultivating

and creating *yichud*, in building a shared dwelling place together, we are called to focus on the *tov*, the good that is there, not what is lacking. *Yiddishkeit* provides the tools to construct a life of holiness and joy and a home that is suffused with love, firm on the foundations of *ayin tovah*, inclusivity and *Ahavas Yisrael*. Such a home is surrounded by *aneini haKavod* all year 'round, and filled with mutual respect and peace.

It is indeed "fitting for all of Israel to sit in one *sukkah*"; there is nothing more

beautiful – and precious to Hashem – than individuals uniting, coming together in love and friendship. May we all merit to celebrate together during these auspicious days, to give ourselves over to the purity of Yom Kippur and the intimacy of the *sukkah*. May all be blessed to build homes filled with שלום ורעות, אהבה ואחוה.

■ ■ ■

Excerpt from newly released Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah, (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786)



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