



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY



SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED SUKKOT  
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### ISRAEL Parsha Picture

Hakafot Shniyot in Yerushalayim  
Picture courtesy of Yeshivat Hakotel

כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה  
וּדְבַר ה' מִירוּשָׁלַיִם

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# Celebrating Vulnerability

## From Trepidation to Celebration



**Rabbi Doron Perez**

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

**H**ow 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 Noraim – 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.<sup>1</sup>

This sense of vulnerability has been particularly acute as we emerge from 2 and half years of the most damaging global pandemic in over a century. A tiny mutating microscopic virus has wreaked havoc in every corner of the earth. This invisible foe has infected over 600 million people and caused over 6 and a half

million deaths worldwide, with over 11,000 deaths in Israel, particularly affecting the elderly and infirm. Waves of widespread sickness have profoundly altered our religious, social, financial and communal lives for over almost 3 years. As we begin 5783, a wave of terror in Israel has been gaining strength the threat of a nuclear Iran remains real. An inescapable feeling of vulnerability seems part and parcel of the reality of life.

Why does a sense of vulnerability make us feel uneasy and even anxious at times?

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 Noraim – 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



### In our unpredictable and transient world, there is one immutable constant – G-d.

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.”<sup>2</sup>

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.

Wishing everyone a Chag Sameach and a healthy, happy and joyous 5783.

1. Masechet Rosh Hashanah, Chapter 1, Mishna 2.
2. The Road Less Travelled, page 1.

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# The Center of The Circle



## Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

The *hakafot* are a central feature of Chag HaSukkot and the one practice common to both Sukkot and Simchat Torah.<sup>1</sup> On the seven days of Sukkot we also sit in the *sukkah* and take the *lulav* and *etrog*. Though we exit the *sukkah* and put down the *lulav* on the eighth, we continue circling the *bima*.

### Sukkot – Torah in the Middle

The *hakafot* of Sukkot commemorate the *hoshanot* around the *mizbeach* in the Beit Hamikdash.<sup>2</sup> Lacking sacrifices today, we encircle a Sefer Torah held on the *bima*.<sup>3</sup> The focus on the Sefer Torah expresses the centrality of Torah within our lives.

### Simchat Torah

On Simchat Torah, of course, we hold the Torah in our arms as we dance around the *bima*. With the Torah no longer at the circle's center, we wonder what we are encircling?

I believe there are two answers to this question.

### Celebrating Our Relationship With Hashem

The gemara (Taanit 31a) tells us that Hashem will one day arrange a circle of *tzaddikim* in Gan Eden who will dance around and point to Him in the circle's center. One can see our Simchat Torah *hakafot* as a similar, futuristic celebration of Hashem at the center of our lives.<sup>4</sup>

The *yehi ratzon* we say before the *hakafot* also expresses this notion. We ask Hashem to allow the *hakafot* to 'break down' the 'iron wall'<sup>5</sup> that separates between us so that we can fully connect to Him and His Torah.<sup>6</sup>

After circling the Torah during Sukkot, on Simchat Torah we take it in hand. Together with it, we celebrate the relationship it facilitates between us and Hashem.

### The Children – Our Future

A second explanation is that the circle is meant to focus on our children. The Rashba<sup>7</sup> mentions a Simchat Torah custom to adorn children with the Torah's silver crowns and walk the children into the place where the Sifrei Torah are kept.

Focusing our Torah and Torah celebration on our children celebrates our passing of the Torah heritage on to future generations. By dancing with and around our children, we pray that they, too, will live by the Torah and pass it on to their children. As we say every day in the *birkot haTorah*:

ונהיה אנחנו וצאצאינו וצאצאי אבותינו וצאצאי עמך  
בית ישראל כולנו יודעי שמך ולומדי תורתך לשמה.

The Torah reading for Simchat Torah includes the pasuk

“תורה צוה לנו משה, מורשה קהלת יעקב”<sup>8</sup> This pasuk – the first one we teach young children as soon as they learn to speak<sup>9</sup> – identifies Torah as our eternal communal inheritance; we commit to pass it from generation to generation.<sup>10</sup>

The Jewish People have had highs and lows, moments in which we seemed doomed to disappear. Our focus on our children and persistence in raising them with Torah values has ensured our continued survival.

We recently experienced such a moment during and after the Holocaust. A beautiful story immortalized by a popular song powerfully expresses this idea:

I met a man last Sunday, who was on  
his way back home  
From a wedding in Chicago, and was  
traveling alone  
He said he came from Vilna, a survivor,  
I could tell  
And I helped him with his suitcase, he  
could not walk very well

A steward gave us coffee as we settled  
on the plane  
And I asked why he bothers; at his age  
there'd be no blame  
He said, “No *simcha* is a burden, though  
I miss my dear late wife,”  
and then he shared with me a story  
that has changed my view of life

I remember liberation, joy and fear  
both intertwined  
Where to go and what to do, and how  
to leave the pain behind  
My heart said, “Go to Vilna,” dare I pray  
yet once again  
For the chance to find a loved one, or  
perhaps a childhood friend

It took many months to get there, from  
the late spring to the fall  
and like I, many others, close to four  
hundred in all  
and slowly there was healing, broken  
souls now mixed with light  
When someone proudly cried out,  
“Simchas Torah is tonight!”

We ran as one toward the shul, our  
spirits in a trance  
and we tore apart the barricade — in  
defiance we would dance  
but the scene before our eyes shook us  
to the core  
scraps of *siddur*, bullet holes, blood-  
stains on the floor

Continued on page 7

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# Shemini Atzeret – From the Mikdash to the Mundane



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Chaza”l chose the haftarah reading from Melakhim Aleph chapter 8 (verses 54-66) to be read on *Shemini Atzeret*, as a means of properly channeling our sentiments at the end of the Sukkot festival. The theme of the haftarah addresses Shlomo HaMelech’s consecration of the Beit HaMikdash, the dedication of the bridge between Hashem’s heavenly transcendence and worldly immanence, and the ensuing challenges that will face Am Yisrael. The people, after experiencing fourteen days of sanctity, return to their homes and must learn how to incorporate “Mikdash-mindset” into their daily lives.

The celebration of the dedication of the first Mikdash was conducted by Shlomo during the seven days prior to Sukkot, and on each day peace offerings were sacrificed and eaten, including on Yom Kippur. The Talmud (Moed Kattan 9a) explains that initially the people were nervous regarding the permissibility of eating on Yom Kippur and were alleviated only after returning to their homes after Sukkot – *“On the eighth day he dismissed the people, and they blessed the King and went to their homes, rejoicing and delighted of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had wrought for David His servant and for Israel His people.”*



**Shemini Atzeret is necessary as a means of solidifying the religious celebration of Sukkot so that its messages will be inculcated in our hearts and minds throughout the year.**

(8:66) The joy of the people experienced in the Temple radiated as they returned to their homes and according to ChaZa”l, heard a heavenly voice declaring that the sin of eating on Yom Kippur was forgiven. This passage was chosen to set the tone for balancing the physical and spiritual dialectic felt on *Shemini Atzeret*.

Rav Ovadiah Seforno (Vayikra 23:36) explains that the term “atzeret”, meaning restraint, refers to the day one lingers in the environs of the Temple as a corrective to the physical excesses of the previous week. Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (*Ha-Ketav Ve-Ha-Kabbalah, Bamidbar 29:35*), explains that “Atzeret” refers to the restraining of the spiritual lessons

of the holiday within the hearts of the celebrants. *Shemini Atzeret* is necessary as a means of solidifying the religious celebration of Sukkot so that its messages will be inculcated in our hearts and minds throughout the year. Both agree that *Shemini Atzeret* serves a counterbalance to the natural human tendency to be distracted by mundane, physical matters which may detract from our spiritual values and focus.

The haftarah chosen by ChaZa”l reflects this message; the experience of Am Yisrael in the days of Shlomo HaMelech, celebrating the seven-day dedication ceremony of the Beit Hamikdash followed by seven days of Sukkot, highlights the conflict between the physical and spiritual sides of man. Following the religious intensity of Rosh Ha-Shana and Yom Kippur and the physical celebrations of Chag Ha-Assif (Sukkot), *Shemini Atzeret* reminds us to pause and reflect, to restrain our physical pleasures and maintain our spiritual “highs” throughout the mundane and routine.

*Chag Atzeret Sameach!*

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council

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

**Question: Do the arbat haminim have kedushat shvi'it this year? How does this affect the process of buying arba minim?**

Answer: Each of the species have different halachot and therefore need to be addressed separately:

Etrog: An etrog is an edible fruit, and therefore it is clear that it can have kedushat shvi'it. In determining an etrog's status as shvi'it, there is a machloket whether we calculate from chanita (beginning of the fruit's formation, like other fruits), or from when it is harvested (like vegetables). While the Rambam holds the latter opinion, most Rishonim assume that it is determined by chanita. Nevertheless, the Chazon Ish writes that we are concerned for both opinions, and therefore any etrog that was either formed or harvested in the 7th year has kedushat shvi'it.

On Sukkot of the seventh year there is never an issue because the etrogs are almost always harvested before the seventh year. This year, the eighth year, presents a question as we are using etrogs that were developed and harvested in the seventh year. According to all opinions, there is kedushat shvi'it with the etrogs we are using this year.

There are two options for etrogim. One can fulfill the mitzvah of the four species while using an etrog with kedushat shvi'it. The kadosh etrogim are sold through Otzar Beit Din. After Sukkot, one should not directly throw the etrog away. Rather, one should eat it or place it into a bag and then dispose of it. Somebody who generally keeps the etrog for a while after Sukkot should ensure to get rid of it before the time of biyur (end of third year of the

shmittah cycle) if it still fitting to be eaten at that point (Shabbat Ha'aretz)

Alternatively, one can buy an etrog that is heter mechira. Rav Moshe Feinstein writes that even those who do not generally rely on the leniency of heter mechira can do so for etrogim. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that hechsherim for etrogim generally means that they are kedushat shvi'it.

Lulav: The Gemara (Sukkah 40a) explains that there is kedushat shvi'it for a lulav. Rashi proves this because a lulav can be used as a broom for a house. The Rambam disagrees, claiming that a lulav is just like a tree which has no kedusha. Many Achronim paskin like the Rambam. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach writes that nowadays there is no kedushat shvi'it according to all opinions, as nobody uses a lulav as a broom. Therefore, lulavim can be cut and sold normally without any limitations.

While we mentioned that the etrog should be disposed of carefully because of its shvi'it status, this is generally how we dispose of all of the four species (unrelated to their shvi'it status) after the chag and not in a disgraceful manner.

Hadasim: Most Achronim assume that spices can have kedushat shvi'it based on a Yerushalmi Shvi'it 7:1 (Chazon Ish, Shevet Halevi). Therefore, many consider hadasim to be shvi'it as well due to their fragrance (Chazon Ish).

However, most Achronim (including Minchat Yitzchak, Minchat Shlomo) write that hadasim of the four specific do not have kedushat shvi'it as they are not cultivated for the purpose of their smell but rather for the mitzvah. Therefore, one can pick and buy hadasim regularly. Even for those

who are stringent, the concern only arises with selling, but picking hadasim for personal use would not pose a problem. Additionally, the issue would only be for hadasim that were harvested in the 7th year.

Aravot: According to all opinions, aravot have no kedushat shvi'it and one may harvest and sell regularly.

**Question: Can etrogim that are kedushat shv'it be bought/sold outside of Yisrael?**

Answer: The Mishna in Shvi'it teaches us the prohibition of bringing kedushat shv'it produce to chutz la'aretz, and the Rambam quotes this lehalacha. Achronim mention different cases which warrant exceptions to this prohibition. One example is the Maharsham, who writes that bringing shvi'it produce overseas is permitted when it strengthens the development of the land. He writes that this is certainly the case regarding exporting etrogs. Additionally, Otzar Beit Din has the ability to decide that not all etrogim are needed in Eretz Yisrael which gives them the ability to be exported. There are some who are machmir to only export heter mechira, but even according to those opinions, shvi'it etrogim that have already been brought overseas can be used. In practice, it is permissible to buy kedushat shvi'it or heter mechira etrogim in chutz la'aretz.

● Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.

# תקציר פרשת וזאת הברכה

הרבנית שרון רימון



ודן זוכים לברכת הצלחה במלחמה הכוללת הן את ברכת הארץ והן את ברכת יעקב – ברכת השלטון על האויבים. וכלל הברכות מכילות בנוסף את ברכת הארץ (כברכה והבטחה לקשר כלכלי), ואת ברכת הקשר המיוחד בין עמ"י לקב"ה, המתבטא בעיקר בקבלת התורה ובהגנה של ה' על עמ"י במלחמת כיבוש הארץ.

משה, מנהיגם של בני"י ואביהם מצד אחד, ו"איש הא-לוהים" מצד שני, ממשיך את דרכם של אבות האומה המברכים את בניהם לפני מותם, וממשיך גם את דרכו של הקב"ה לברך את עולמו בכלל ואת בני האדם בפרט. התורה פותחת בברכת ה' לעולם ולבני האדם, ומסתיימת בהעברת הברכה האלקית לכל שבטי ישראל, אשר כל אחד מקבל את הברכה הראויה לו באופן ספציפי וביחד הברכה לעם ישראל כוללת את כל הברכות, ומתוך ברכת עם ישראל אמור להתברך העולם כולו, כברכת ה' ליעקב: "ונברכו בך כל משפחות האדמה ובזרעך" (בראשית כ"ח, יד).

בברכה הניתנת לנח עם יציאתו מהתיבה. ברכות אלו מיועדות לכלל המין האנושי.

עם בחירתו של אברהם, הוא מקבל מאת ה' את ברכת הזרע, שהיא ברכת הפרייון וריבוי, ובנוסף לכך הוא מקבל גם את ברכת הארץ ואת הברכה הרוחנית – הברית עם ה'. ברכות אלה מיועדות למשפחת אברהם (ולא לכל האנושות), ומציבות את אברהם כמקור לברכות לבני האדם האחרים, כתוצאה מהקשר המיוחד בינו לבין הקב"ה המעניק לו את היכולת לברך אחרים: "והיה ברכה... ונברכו בך כל משפחות האדמה" (בראשית י"ב, ג). ברכות אברהם עוברות ליצחק בנו, אשר מעביר אותן ליעקב לפני מותו. גם יעקב מברך את בניו לפני מותו, אך נראה שרק אל יוסף הוא פונה אישית בלשון "ברכה", ואת שאר הבנים הוא מברך בברכה כללית בסוף דבריו.

משה מעביר את ברכות האבות אל בני"י, ולשון "ברכה" מופיעה בדבריו אל כמה מהשבטים – יוסף ורואבן זוכים לברכת הריבוי והפרייון, לוי ובנימין מתברכים בברכת הרוחניות, ואילו יהודה, לוי, יוסף

התורה מסתיימת עם פטירתו של משה רבנו, גדול הנביאים והמנהיגים שקמו לישראל. נתינת התורה היתה בדרגת נבואתו הייחודית של משה, ומכאן ואילך, הקשר עם ה' והדברים שייאמרו וייכתבו יהיו בדרגת נבואה רגילה, ולא בדרגת תורה.

לפני פטירתו, מברך משה את ישראל כשם שאב מברך את בניו לפני מותו. יחסו של משה אל ישראל לאורך כל שנות מנהיגותו, החל מיציאת מצרים דרך כל הנודים במדבר – הוא כיחס אב לבניו, וכשם שאב מברך את בניו לפני מותו, כך משה מברך את בני"י.

אלא, מכיוון שהתורה איננה סיפור חייו של משה אלא היא תורת ה', אין מדובר בפרידה אישית ממנהיג דגול גרידא, אלא הברכות כוללות גם רובד עמוק יותר, של ברכה אלקית.

מרגע בריאתו של העולם מלווה אותו ברכת ה', אשר בלעדיה אין לעולם קיום. ה' מברך את האדם בברכת הפרייון, ומברך את השבת בברכה רוחנית. לאחר המבול מתחדשת ברכת ה' לאדם ולעולם,

Continued from page 4

Turning to the eastern wall, we looked on in despair  
There would be no scrolls to dance with — the holy ark was bare  
Then we heard two children crying, a boy and girl whom no one knew  
and we realized that no children were among us but those two

We danced round and round in circles as if the world had done no wrong  
from evening until morning  
filling up the shul with song.  
Though we had no Sifrei Torah to clutch and hold up high,  
**in their place we held those children  
Am Yisrael chai  
....the Jewish People WILL live on....**

(A Man From Vilna, Journeys)

Let us ensure this Sukkot and Simchat Torah to fully appreciate the great gift of our children and our responsibility to help them appreciate the beauty of our Torah and the great *zechut* of passing it on to their children in the future.

1. See Rema (Orach Chayim 569:1) who links the *hakafot* of Simchat Torah to those of Sukkot and may imply a thematic relationship (והכל משום שמחה).
2. Mishnah Sukkah 4:5. See Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 560:1), who connects our *hakafot* to the ones performed in the Mikdash.
3. See Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) who mentions the custom to include a Sefer Torah.
4. A paradigm for this can be seen in David HaMelech who, when dancing in front of the Aron Hakodesh, is described as dancing before Hashem (Shmuel II 6:16). See Mishneh Berurah O.C. (669:11), who quotes the pasuk as a paradigm for the *hakafot* of Simchat Torah. The connection between the

- hakafot* and the future circle of *tzaddikim* is reinforced by the fact that one of the *pesukim* we recite to introduce the *hakafot* — “*Hinei Elokeinu zeh, kivinu lo v'yoshi'einu*” (Yeshayahu 25:8) — is the *pasuk* the Gemara (ibid.) tells us the *tzaddikim* will recite when pointing to Hashem at the center of the circle. See also Shir Hashirim 1:31, which connects the celebration of Hashem's salvation (described in the end of the *pasuk*) to a celebration of our relationship with Hashem Himself.
5. Based on Yechezkel 4:3 and the Talmud Bavli, Berachot 32b.
  6. See Yerushalmi (Sukkah 19a), which connects the *hakafot* around the Mizbei'ach to the circuits made around Yericho which caused its wall to fall. This may also be why brides encircle their grooms seven times under the chuppah.
  7. Responsa (Meyuchasot l'Ramban) 260.
  8. Devarim 33:4.
  9. Talmud Bavli, Sukka 42a.
  10. See Ramban on the *pasuk*, explaining that the *pasuk* promises that the Torah will never be forgotten by the children of the Jewish people.

# The Book of Life



**Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir**  
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

**O**n Shabbat during Sukkot we read Megillat Kohelet. In our crazy times, the profound words of Shlomo HaMelech carry a lot of significance: “Everything has its season and there is time for everything under the Heaven: a time to give birth and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot... a time to cry and a time to laugh, a time to eulogize and a time to dance... a time to hug and a time to avoid hugs...”

In our confusing reality, we try to do everything at once. Career and family and marriage and relationships and studies and hundreds of WhatsApp messages in between all that. Kohelet reminds us of a simple truth: one needs time for everything. Stop creating chaos in your reality. There are times for that, and there are other times. There's permitted and forbidden, right and wrong, and it's important to discern the difference and be cognizant of what you're doing and when. For each area of our lives to blossom and flourish we need to learn to differentiate and distinguish between what's important and what's more important.

As a child, I was a library girl, with membership to three or four different libraries around town. Reading and learning were always associated with a librarian who whispered: “Shhh” (usually the whisper was louder than the chatter being silenced). But on Simchat Torah, with the holiest book of all, and without any librarian silencing us, we dance in the synagogue and on the street, declaring the greatness of this book.

Why do we dance with closed Torah scrolls on Simchat Torah? After all, aren't we supposed to study the Torah and not sing with it? The Lubavitcher Rebbe explained

it this way: “Even before understanding the Torah, the main thing is the holiness of the Torah!” This is precisely the difference between a storybook, or a math textbook, and the Torah. The goal is not just study and research, but the mental connection, and the joy, excitement and love. People dance in the town square because the Torah is not a library book, but a book of life.



Elad Atias from Ma'ale Adumim just turned 13. He suffers from epilepsy, a learning disability, and autism. The following was written to me by his mother, Gali Atias, on the occasion of Simchat Torah that begins tonight:

“From the day Elad was born, I dreamed about his Bar Mitzvah day. I dreamed that his condition would improve, that perhaps he would get well and even have an aliyah to the Torah. As the long-awaited day approached, I had to update my dream, but he would still have a Bar Mitzvah like everyone else. Once, in a conversation with the parents of another handicapped child, I heard them say they would prefer to erase his Bar Mitzvah day from the calendar. This thought accompanied me for years yet, on the contrary, we decided that in our case the Bar Mitzvah of Elad would be a celebration that would convey a powerful message.

The question was not whether to celebrate, but how. After all, Elad is so connected to Shabbat and its songs, to Torah, to tradition. Elad taught us so much throughout this journey, a journey of 13 years. He is the best teacher we could have asked for in life. So if he could not have an aliyah to the Torah, the Torah would come to him. We decided to have a Torah scroll written, installed in the synagogue, and

hold a festive ceremony in honor of the event. Elad does not pray with words, but the prayers from his heartbreak through the gates of heaven, and so it was on that special day. The ceremony was full of meaning and rejoicing, taking place in the company of Elad's educational and medical team, his large and supportive family, together with other special needs children like him.

This reminded us that there is a part of the Torah for everyone, no matter who or what he is. Each person has his own letter in the Torah, his own connection to the Torah, and his own part of the Torah. Chag sameach.”



הימים האלה הם ימים משפחתיים מאוד. הנה מחשבה אחת, מפיה של מנחת ההורים הישראלית המפורסמת זיוה מאיר (אימא של ידידיה):

“שמתי לב שפעם כל השירים הכי מרגשים היו בעולם, היו על אימא. בכל הסגנונות. בכל השפות. 'אומי' בערבית, 'מאמע' באידיש, כולם העריצו את אימא. איך דבורה הנביאה אומרת? 'עד שקמתי דבורה, שקמתי אם בישראל'. 'אם בישראל' זה מושג. אם בישראל לא צריכה לזלזל בעצמה, זה מה שדבורה הנביאה מתגאה בו. ופתאום – אימא הפכה למוקד של אשמה. בה אנחנו תולים את כל מה שלא בסדר. אפשר לראות משהי שכל היום עם הילדים ומלאת עצבים בערב, ואפשר לראות משהי שחזרת מהעבודה ואין לה כוח אליהם והיא מחכה רק שהם ילכו כבר לישון, אין נוסחה אחידה ומתכון אחיד. זה מאוד מתאים לימים האלה של תחילת השנה, למצוא מי אני באמת. לא ללכת לפני צרכים חיצוניים של אחרים אלא להתחבר לעצמנו. הרי העולם משקר לנו בלי סוף: בעבודה קל לקבל מחמאות על העבודה שבצענו, ואילו בבית את יכולה לעבוד קשה כל היום ובסוף היום, אחרי כל המאמץ, הילד גם יכול להתחצף אליך מאוד. בחוץ מקבלים פידבקים ומחמאות, בבית לא תמיד כולם מרוצים. זו מלאכת קודש אבל היא לא מוערכת: מה שווה סידור הבית, אם אחרי יום זה מתבלגן? מה התכלית במקלחות לקטנים אם למחרת שוב צריך מחדש את כל הטקס?”

*Continued on next page*

# For the Yom Tov Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**

Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi

Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

**W**ith the reading of the final Parsha of the Torah - V'Zot HaBracha - on Simchat Torah, we celebrate the completion of the Torah reading cycle. Outside Israel, this joyous celebration is a festival of its own, coming the day after Shemini Atzeret. However, in Israel, where there is no need for there to be an extra day of Yom Tov, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are celebrated on the same day.

Whereas the practice in Israel of having one day Yom Tov is clearly the ideal (as is living in Israel in the first place), this combination of celebrations requires explanation. When it comes to celebrating our joyous occasions, there is a clear rule in the Gemara:

“We do not mix a Simcha with a Simcha” (Moed Katan 8b).

From this Gemara we learn not to combine two separate joyous events, but rather celebrate them separately so that no Simcha should detract from another. Every Simcha deserves proper focus and attention without being in the shadow of any other celebration.

Based on this principle, how can we explain the combination of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah in Israel? Is it possible that our practice in the Diaspora of separating Shemini Atzeret from Simchat Torah is more appropriate than the way they are celebrated in Israel?

The answer lies in understanding the source of the Simcha of these festivals.

Why do we celebrate Shemini Atzeret? “Shemini Atzeret” means the “assembly/stopping of the eighth” (day). Rashi explains with a parable:

“I stopped you with me like a King who invites his son to a feast for a number of days. Seeing as the time has come to part, He says, ‘My sons, please, stay with me for one more day, for your parting is difficult for me’” (Rashi, Vayikra, 23:36).

Having spent seven days of Sukkot celebrating with Hashem, we celebrate Shemini Atzeret on the eighth day as a symbol of our special relationship with Him. Our build up to Shemini Atzeret commenced long before Sukkot. Since the beginning of Elul, we have been focused on the necessary practical, emotional and spiritual preparations for our festive season. Shemini Atzeret is the meaningful conclusion of this period, where instead of rushing back to our everyday lives, we spend an extra day celebrating with Hashem.

So why do we detract from this special Yom Tov by combining it with the completion of the Torah reading cycle (and vice versa)?

In truth, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah do not detract from each other, because they are one and the same Simcha. Our special relationship with Hashem and our special relationship with

His Torah are one and the same thing. The Zohar expresses this clearly in numerous places where it states, “The Holy One Blessed be He and Torah are one”.

We cannot divorce our relationship with Hashem from our relationship with His Torah. We cannot expect to come close to Hashem or grow in spirituality if we fail to show commitment to His Torah. The very best way to develop a meaningful relationship with Hashem is to make His priorities our priorities through the observance of Mitzvot, and to learn more about Him and His lessons for our world by learning His Torah.

At the same time, we cannot treat our observance of Mitzvot or Torah learning as purely academic or intellectual exercises. A relationship with Torah and Mitzvot that does not increase our relationship with Hashem is a flawed relationship.

Not only do the Simcha of Shemini Atzeret and the Simcha of Simchat Torah not detract from one another. They cannot exist without each other.

By truly developing our relationships with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, may we merit to take part in the ultimate celebration of Hashem and His Torah with the whole of Am Yisrael celebrating one day of Yom Tov together in Israel.

Chag Sameach!

*Continued from previous page*

אם הן יתחברו אל עצמן פנימה, יעריכו את עצמן על עשיית הדבר הנכון והאמיתי להן - הכול ישתנה גם בחוץ”.

מה שהן עושות. כל עוד הן מבקרות את עצמן, וגם לוקחות על עצמן עוד ועוד משימות ועול ועבודה, וכל הזמן לא מרוצות - אז אף אחד מסביב לא יעריך.

אז כולם מאשימים את האימהות, הן מאשימות את עצמן, ומה עושים? מי יכול לתקן את זה? ובכן, האימהות עצמן. הן צריכות להעריך את עצמן ואת

# Moses' Death, Moses' Life



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

And so Moses dies, alone on a mountain with G-d as he had been all those years ago when, as a shepherd in Midian, he caught sight of a bush in flames and heard the Call that changed his life and the moral horizons of the world.

It is a scene affecting in its simplicity. There are no crowds. There is no weeping. The sense of closeness yet distance is almost overwhelming. He sees the land from afar but has known for some time that he will never reach it. Neither his wife nor his children are there to say goodbye; they disappeared from the narrative long before. His sister Miriam and his brother Aaron, with whom he shared the burdens of leadership for so long, have predeceased him. His disciple Joshua has become his successor. Moses has become the lonely man of faith, except that with G-d no person is lonely even if they are alone.

It is a profoundly sad moment, yet the obituary the Torah gives him – whether Joshua wrote it, or whether he wrote it himself at G-d's behest with tears in his eyes<sup>1</sup> – is unsurpassed:

There has never arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face-to-face, in all the signs and wonders the Lord sent him to perform in Egypt against Pharaoh, all his officials, and all of his land, and in all the acts of a mighty hand and of terrifying power that Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel. (Deut. 34:10-12)

Moses rarely figures in the lists people make from time to time of the most influential people in history. He is harder to identify with than Abraham in his devotion, David in his charisma, or Isaiah in



**Moses has become the lonely man of faith, except that with G-d no person is lonely even if they are alone.**

his symphonies of hope. The contrast between Abraham's death and Moses' death could not be more pointed. Of Abraham, the Torah says:

“Then Abraham breathed his last and died in his ripe old age, aged and satisfied, and he was gathered to his people.” (Gen. 25:8)

Abraham's death was serene. Though he had been through many trials, he had lived to see the first fulfilment of the promises G-d had given him. He had a child, and he had acquired at least the first plot of land in Israel. In the long journey of his descendants, he had taken the first step. There is a sense of closure.

By contrast, Moses' old age is anything but serene. In the last month of his life he challenges the people with undiminished vigour and unvarnished candour. At the very moment that they are getting ready to cross the Jordan and enter the land, Moses warns them of the challenges ahead. The greatest trial, he says, will not be poverty but affluence, not slavery but freedom, not homelessness in the desert but the comfort of home. Reading these words, one is reminded of Dylan Thomas' poem, “Do not go gentle into that good night.” There is as much passion in his words in his hundred and twentieth year as at any earlier stage of his life. This is not a man ready to retire. Until the very

end he continues to challenge both the people and G-d.

What do we learn from the life, and death, of Moses?

1. For each of us, even for the greatest, there is a Jordan we will not cross, a promised land we will not enter, a destination we will not reach. That is what Rabbi Tarfon meant when he said: It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it. (Mishnah Avot 2:16) What we began, others will continue. What matters is that we undertook the journey. We did not stand still.
2. “No man knows his burial place.” (Deut. 34:6) What a contrast between Moses and the heroes of other civilisations whose burial places become monuments, shrines, places of pilgrimage. It was precisely to avoid this that the Torah insists explicitly that no one knows where Moses is buried. We believe that the greatest mistake is to worship human beings as if they were gods. We admire human beings; we do not worship them. That difference is anything but small.
3. G-d alone is perfect. That is what Moses wanted people never to forget. Even the greatest human is not perfect. Even Moses sinned. We still do not know what his sin was – there are many opinions – but that is why G-d told him he would not enter the Promised Land. No human is infallible. Perfection belongs to G-d alone. Only when we honour this essential difference between heaven and earth can G-d be G-d and humans, human.
4. Nor does the Torah hide Moses' sin. “Because you did not sanctify Me...”

(Num. 20:12) The Torah does not hide anyone's sin. It is fearlessly honest about the greatest of the great. Bad things happen when we try to hide people's sins. That is why there have been so many recent scandals in the world of religious Jews, some sexual, some financial, some of other kinds. When religious people hide the truth they do so from the highest of motives. They seek to prevent a *chillul Hashem*. The result, inevitably, is a greater *chillul Hashem*. Such sanctimony, denying the shortcomings of even the greatest, leads to consequences that are ugly and evil and turn decent people away from religion. The Torah does not hide people's sins. Neither may we.

5. There is more than one way of living a good life. Even Moses, the greatest of men, could not lead alone. He needed the peace-making skills of Aaron, the courage of Miriam, and the support of the seventy elders. We should never ask: Why am I not as great as X? We each have something, a skill, a passion, a sensitivity, that makes, or could make, us great. The greatest mistake is trying to be someone else instead of being yourself. Do what you are best at, then surround yourself with people who are strong where you are weak.
6. Never lose the idealism of youth. The Torah says of Moses that at the age of a hundred and twenty, "his eyes had not grown dim, nor his vitality fled." (Deut. 34:7) I used to think these were two complementary phrases until I realised that the first is the explanation of the second. Moses' eyes were undimmed because he never lost the passion for justice that he had as a young man. It is there, as vigorous in Deuteronomy as it was in Exodus. We are as young as our ideals. Give way to cynicism and you rapidly age.

7. At the Burning Bush, Moses said to G-d: "I am not a man of words... I am slow of speech and tongue." By the time we reach Deuteronomy, the book named Devarim - "Words" - Moses has become the most eloquent of prophets. Some are puzzled by this. They should not be. "Who gives man speech? Said the Lord to him... I will help you speak and I will teach you what to say." (Ex. 11-12) G-d chose one who was not a man of words, so that when he spoke, people realised that *it was not he who was speaking but G-d who was speaking through him*. What he spoke were not his words but G-d's words.

That is also why G-d chose a couple who could not have children - Abraham and Sarah - to become parents of the first Jewish child. That is why He chose a people not conspicuous for their piety to become G-d's witnesses to the world. *The highest form of greatness is so to open ourselves to G-d that His blessings flow through us to the world*. That is how the priests blessed the people. It was not their blessing. They were the channel of G-d's blessing. The highest achievement to which we can aspire is so to open ourselves to others and to G-d in love that something greater than ourselves flows through us.

8. Moses defended the people. Did he like them? Did he admire them? Was he liked by them? The Torah leaves us in no doubt as to the answers to those questions. Yet he defended them with all the passion and power at his disposal. Even when they had sinned. Even when they were ungrateful to G-d. Even when they made a Golden Calf. He risked his life to do so. He said to G-d: "Forgive their sin - but if not, blot me out of the book You have written" (Ex. 32:32). According to the Talmud, G-d taught Moses this

lesson at the very outset of his career. When Moses said about the people, "They will not believe me" (Ex. 4:1) G-d said, "They are the believers, children of believers, and in the end it will be you who does not believe."<sup>2</sup>

The leaders worthy of admiration are those who defend the people - even the non-Orthodox, even the secular, even those whose orthodoxy is a different shade from theirs. The people worthy of respect are those who give respect. Those who hate will be hated, those who look down on others will be looked down on, and those who condemn will be condemned. That is a basic principle of Judaism: *middah kenegged middah*. The people who are great are those who help others to become great. Moses taught the Jewish people how to become great.

The greatest tribute the Torah gives Moses is to call him *eved Hashem*, the servant of G-d. That is why the Rambam writes that we can all be as great as Moses.<sup>3</sup> Because we can all serve. We are as great as the causes we serve, and when we serve with true humility, a Force greater than ourselves flows through us, bringing the Divine Presence into the world.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which of these eight ideas speak to you the most?
- Can you add any extra lessons that we can learn from Moshe?
- How can we be like Moshe, teaching others to become great?

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1. For more on this, read Bava Batra 15a.
  2. Shabbat 97a.
  3. Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 5:2.

# The Definition of Simcha



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

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**R**av Soloveitchik suggested that we can derive a halachic definition of *simcha* from a discussion in the Gemara, which questions how a *metzora* must conduct himself on Yom Tov with regard to the restrictions imposed upon him by his *tzara'at*.

Is he forbidden to enter the Israelite encampment, cut his hair, launder his clothes, and greet other people over the course of Yom Tov? Or are the restrictions placed upon the *metzora* superseded by the *mitzvah* of *simcha* that exists on Yom Tov?

The Gemara derives from a seemingly superfluous word, והצרות – “And the person with *tzara'at*,” that even a *Kohen Gadol* is included in the restrictions of *tzara'at*. The Gemara then presents an analogy: “The *Kohen Gadol*’s status during the entire year corresponds to the status of all other people on Yom Tov [with regard to mourning].” Therefore, a *metzora* **must** conduct himself on Yom Tov according to the restrictions imposed upon him by his *tzara'at*, just as a *Kohen Gadol* with *tzara'at* must act in accordance with those restrictions all year round.

The Rav analyzed the Gemara’s analogy in light of how the Rambam describes the *Kohen Gadol*’s essential function. The Rambam writes, “It is the glory and honor [of the *Kohen Gadol*] to remain in the *Mikdash* all day.” Thus, the *Kohen Gadol*’s role is to serve as a constant presence in the Beit HaMikdash, overseeing the *avodah*. Since, according to the Gemara, every Jew on Yom Tov is compared to the *Kohen Gadol*, we see that the definition of *simcha* on Yom Tov is the state of being in the presence of G-d.

This state, enjoyed by the *Kohen Gadol* the entire year and by all other people

on Yom Tov, is described in the *pasuk*, ושמחתם לפני ד' אלוקים שבעת ימים – “And you shall rejoice **before Hashem**, your G-d, for a seven-day period [on Sukkot].” Indeed, whenever the Torah speaks of *simcha*, it connects this emotion with one’s appearing before G-d. On the *Shalosh Regalim*, when one is *oleh regel*, he finds himself *lifnei Hashem*.

The Rav distinguishes between the Beit HaMikdash and a Beit HaKnesset to help illustrate the difference between Shabbat and Yom Tov with regard to the *mitzvah* of *simcha*:

A Beit HaKnesset is **our** house, to which G-d comes to visit. In contrast, the Beit HaMikdash is termed *Beit Hashem*, where we come to visit with Him. In both locations, Man has a ‘rendezvous’ with G-d; the difference between the two locations is whether Man is the visitor or the one being visited.

A similar distinction separates Shabbat from Yom Tov. The Shulchan Aruch rules that while one may not wear weekday clothing on either Shabbat or Yom Tov, clothing of Yom Tov should be superior to Shabbat clothing. The Rav explained that this is because there is an obligation of *simcha* on Yom Tov, as we appear *lifnei Hashem* in the Beit HaMikdash to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *aliyah laRegel*. On Yom Tov, the Jew enters into the domain of G-d, Who welcomes him into **His** home. When visiting the King in His royal palace, a most splendid manner of dress is mandated.

The contrast between Shabbat and Yom Tov is most apparent when each of these days comes into conflict with the concept of *aveilut* (mourning). On Shabbat, unlike on Yom Tov, *aveilut* is observed privately; Shabbat is included in the seven

days of *shiva*. Similarly, Shabbat does not cancel *shiva* or *shloshim* the way Yom Tov does. Tosfot teaches that it is the element of *simcha* on Yom Tov that cancels *aveilut*, and this *mitzvah* is absent on Shabbat.

The Gemara in Chagigah teaches, ה אין עצבות לפני הקב"ה – “There is no sadness in the presence of the Holy One, Blessed be He.”

The Gemara’s source is the *pasuk*, הוד והדר לפני עוז וחדוה במקומו “Glory and majesty are before Him; might and delight are in His place.” There is always happiness and rejoicing before G-d, and so there can be no *aveilut* on Yom Tov. *Simcha* and *aveilut* are mutually exclusive, since being *lifnei Hashem*, in **His** house, is a contradiction to a state of *aveilut*.

On Shabbat, Man does not stand *lifnei Hashem*. For the duration of Shabbat, G-d dwells with Man in **his** abode; He joins him in his pain.

May we merit to stand with *simcha* before G-d in the Beit HaMikdash, speedily and in our days.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Moadim.

1. Mo'ed Kattan 14b.
2. Vayikra 13:45
3. Hilchot Klei HaMikdash 5:7.
4. Vayikra 23:40.
5. See *Nefesh HaRav*, 1994 ed., pp. 314-315.
6. Orach Chaim 529:1.
7. Divrei HaYamim I 16:27.
8. See *Nefesh HaRav*, 1994 ed., p. 157; *Shiurim LeZecher Abba Mari Z"l* I, 1983 ed., pp. 64-68, and II, pp. 188-196.

# Why the Redundancy?



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

**T**his week we will talk about an idea on Shemini Atzeret, and its relationship to the rest of the Yom Tov of Sukkot. In Parshat Re'eh, at the end of the discussion about the holidays, there are a couple of Pesukim that talk about the Mitzvah to be happy on Sukkot. The first Pasuk begins with “וְשִׂמְחָתָּ, בְּחֻגְךָ”, and the following Pasuk ends with “וְהֵייתָ, אֶךָ שְׂמֵחַ”. Although when we sing the popular song on Sukkot, we combine these two Pesukim, in fact they are two separate Pesukim, both referring to the Mitzvah to be happy on Sukkot, and really Yom Tov in general. The question is why do we need two different Pesukim seemingly talking about the same thing, and what can this teach us about the nature of the שמחה on Sukkot?

In terms of the redundancy within the Pesukim, Rashi brings a first suggestion based on the simple read of the Pesukim that על פי פשוט, the first Pasuk is a commandment and the second Pasuk is a promise. Rashi thinks that ושמחת בחגך is the main Mitzvah that commands us to be happy on Yom Tov, and from there the Gemara in מסכת פסחים learns of the obligation to eat meat and drink wine, since “אין שמחה אלא בשר ויין”. On the other hand, the second Pasuk is Hashem merely saying that at the end of day, if we have fulfilled all the Mitzvot and celebrated Yom Tov properly, then we will be happy. The second Pasuk is no longer a מצוה, but rather a הבטחה from Hashem. This is all Rashi based on the פשוט of the Pesukim.

However, Rashi in his second explanation quotes from the Gemara in מסכת סוכה that the second Pasuk is specifically coming to include Shemini Atzeret. The Gemara says that “והיית אך שמח לרבות לילי יום טוב האחרון”. In addition to whatever שמחה is incumbent



**As the holiday season comes to a close, and we have finished with the Yamim Noraim and the first 7 days of Sukkot, the Torah requires a deeper element of simcha on Shemini Atzeret.**

upon us the rest of Sukkot from the first Pasuk of “ושמחת בחגך”, on Shemini Atzeret there is a separate element of שמחה learning from the Pasuk of “והיית אך שמח”. Based on this explanation of Rashi, both Pesukim are referring to a commandment to be happy, just the first Pasuk is referring to the first seven days of Sukkot, and the second Pasuk is referring to the last day of Sukkot. However, both of these points in Rashi need some explanation. What does Rashi mean when he says that לפי הפשט the second Pasuk is a הבטחה, but לפי הדרוש (based on the Gemara's explanation) the second Pasuk is also a command? And furthermore, based on the Gemara's explanation that both are referring to a commandment to be happy, why do we need separate Mitzvot about being happy on the first seven days of Sukkot and being happy on the last day of Sukkot, instead of just having an overall Mitzvah about being happy on all 8 days of Sukkot? Lastly, separate from Rashi's explanation, the second Pasuk is itself confusing, as it includes the word “אך”, which typically acts as a limiting factor. Who or what are we limiting from the שמחה when we say “והיית אך שמח”? Through all of these different questions, perhaps we can arrive

at a deeper understanding of the שמחה of Shemini Atzeret.

The שמחה of Yom Tov in general is that of ושמחת בחגך, which we said teaches us the Mitzvah to eat meat and drink wine. Having a beautiful Yom Tov meal, and in the times of the Beit Hamikdash having the meat of the קרבנות, definitely brings about great joy, yet it is a more surface level joy. To use the wording of Rashi, it is “לפי פשוט”, a more simplistic joy that all can tap into. In essence, this Pasuk encapsulates all the external factors that relate to the happiness on Yom Tov, albeit a very important Mitzvah, yet still more of an external feeling. This aspect applies for the Yomim Tovim. Yet, the Torah is commanding us to have an additional element of שמחה on the last day of Sukkot. As the holiday season comes to a close, and we have finished with the ימים נוראים and the first 7 days of Sukkot, the Torah requires a deeper element of שמחה on Shemini Atzeret. This שמחה is that of “דרוש”, a joy of פנימיות, that requires a deeper appreciation of everything that we just experienced. This is what the Pasuk means when it says “והיית אך שמח”, and this is what Rashi means that on a deeper level, this refers to the שמחה of specifically Shemini Atzeret. This is much harder to tap in to, and for that reason there is a מיעוט, since not everyone can achieve this deeper level of appreciation. Yet, while it is more difficult, it is this that the Torah requires from us on Shemini Atzeret, to look back and the time period that we just went through, and internalize with true happiness all of the spiritual growth that we achieved.

● Edited by Jay Eisenstadt and Ari Levine.

# The Ethics of Etrogim



**Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu zt"l**

Rishon LeTzion, Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

## The \$1,000 Etrog

(Heard from the etrog dealer who used to bring etrogim to Rav Eliahu.)

Rav Eliahu was famous for being able to assess an etrog in seconds. He would check hundreds of etrogim yet despite the huge quantity, he never once said “pasul” (invalid), but only “take another one.”

Only once did I hear him say “pasul.”

A man came in and proudly told the Rav: “I paid \$1,000 for this beautiful etrog!”

The Rav looked at it and asked the man: “If this etrog is pasul, will you get your money back?”

“Yes,” said the man, “I bought it on condition the Rav says it’s kosher.”

“Tell me,” replied Rav Eliahu. “Have you bought your wife some jewelry for the chag? That’s also a mitzvah – וישמח בחגך!”

The man mumbled something and the Rav decreed: “Pasul!”

“Pasul?! How can it be pasul?”

The Rav turned the etrog over and showed the man a very small hole near the stipe, partially covered by the stipe itself. And when the Rav moved the leaf, he revealed signs of a caterpillar burrowing into the fruit.

“You don’t need to splash out \$1,000 on an etrog. It’s fine to buy a mehudar (halachically beautiful) etrog like everybody else for 100 shekels and go make your wife happy with the rest of the money. That’s a positive Torah mitzvah!”

After the man left, we asked the Rav how he had managed to spot that tiny hidden hole. He told us that in Chassidic tradition, אל תבואני רגל גאווה stands for (let not

the foot of pride come to me). “This etrog did not match its mnemonic.”

## The Rav’s Own Etrog

When the dealer brought Rav Eliahu etrogim for himself and his family, he would bring him the very best he had. The Rav would select a few, lay them all out in a line and say, “This one’s the most beautiful, but I won’t take it. I’ll take this one or that one.”

When the dealer asked him why he didn’t take the most beautiful one for himself he replied, “So as not to make Jews feel bad. When they see the Rabbi has an etrog with a slight dent – that he too is not perfect – they will value their own etrog more. They won’t think it’s sub-standard. And they won’t think that Rabbis take the best for themselves and leave whatever’s left for everyone else.”

## Fair Swap

“When I was eight, my father was tragically killed in an accident. When I reached bar mitzvah, I really wanted my own etrog but my mother couldn’t afford it. I saved up, little by little, until I had enough to go to Machane Yehuda and buy my very own etrog in a sealed box which said “mehudar” on the lid! I was overjoyed.

But when I opened the box, the etrog really wasn’t that beautiful. I didn’t know whether I’d been deceived or that I just didn’t know the halachot, so I decided to knock on Rav Mordechai Eliahu’s door (he lived very close to us).

The Rav studied my etrog from all angles... ‘Kasher (kosher).’

‘Only kosher?’ I said. ‘Not mehudar?’

‘Kasher.’

I kissed his hand and left.

I’d barely closed the door when someone came out and said, ‘Excuse me, the Rav asks you to come back inside.’

The Rav smiled at me and said, ‘Let’s do an exchange deal. You give me your etrog, the kosher one, and I’ll give you mine, the mehudar one.’

I blushed and couldn’t stop the tears. I gratefully accepted the Rav’s offer and I was the happiest boy in town.

The next day, I went to daven in Rav Eliahu’s shul. I wanted to see what etrog he would make the beracha on. Lo and behold... mine!

Suddenly, I understood.

## Zionist Etrogim

“Once I visited Rav Eliahu and we were talking about Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzzeira, the Baba Sali zt”l. ‘Come, I’ll show you something,’ said the Rav, and took out what looked like some very thin sticks. ‘What are they?’ I asked. ‘Dry etrogim originally grown in Morocco. The Baba Sali used to send me some every year.’

Then he added: ‘I never made a beracha on them though. I only say a beracha on etrogim from our holy Land. I told that to the Baba Sali and he still sent me his Moroccan ones. But there’s nothing like the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael and the etrogim of our holy Land.’



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# Separation Anxiety



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**  
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

ביום השמיני עצרת תהיה לכם כל מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו. (במדבר כט:לה)

The eighth day shall be an *atzeret* for you; you shall perform no work of labor. (*Bamidbar* 29:35)

The day after the seven-day holiday of Succot is called “*atzeret*.” What is the meaning of this term? On the *pasuk* cited above, Rashi explains that the word means “restriction” – on that day, one is restricted from engaging in work. But if that is the meaning, why isn’t every day of Yom Tov called an “*atzeret*”? Why is this eighth day, Shemini Atzeret, singled out for this title?

Rashi offers a second explanation, *atzru milatzeit* – “They were restrained from leaving.” We are not allowed to leave Jerusalem just yet. This is referring to the halacha of *ta’un lina* – whenever one offers a sacrifice, he must remain near the *Beit HaMikdash* an additional night.

Rashi then offers a third explanation:

ומדרשו באגדה, לפי שכל ימות הרגל הקריבו כנגד ע’ אומות, וכשבאין ללכת, אמר להם המקום, בבקשה מכם עשו לי סעודה קטנה כדי שאהנה מכם.

*In the Midrash Aggada, it states: During the days of the holiday, the nation sacrificed on behalf of the seventy nations, and when they were ready to leave, the Almighty told them, “Please make me one additional meal so I can get pleasure from you.”*

Throughout Succot, *Bnei Yisrael* offered seventy sacrifices on behalf of all the non-Jewish nations. Hashem requested that they remain one more day so they and Hashem could rejoice together – alone. Rashi explains that “*atzeret*” is a term of endearment, as when children are preparing to leave, and their father holds them back, saying, “Your departure is hard for me.” Hashem added one more day because it is hard for Him, as it were,

to take leave of *Bnei Yisrael*. After Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, and Succot celebrations in the *Beit HaMikdash*, it is difficult for Hashem to see us leave.

The *baalei mussar* ask how one more day would help. Doesn’t it just prolong the agony? If you ask any kindergarten teacher what the best way is for a parent to leave a child there for the day, they will say that the best thing is for the parent to depart as quickly as possible. The longer the parent procrastinates their departure, the more dragged out the process is. The child gets clingy and cries, and this makes the separation much more painful. A parent should simply drop off the child and leave. So why does Hashem prolong the departure?

Rav Yitzhak Mirsky (Hegyononei Hala-cha vol 3 p78) suggests that it is hard for Hashem to see us leave because He does not want us to forsake the spiritual level that we have attained over the *chaggim*. The Yamin Noraim are a spiritually uplifting time period. How does one more day help us further strengthen our bond and commitment to Torah? Shemini Atzeret is combined with Simchat Torah (in *Eretz Yisrael*, it is on the same day). By celebrating with the Torah, we attest to the significance of the Torah in our lives. It ensures that we will never “depart” or separate from Hashem as long as we continue to learn and abide by the precepts of the Torah.

On Simchat Torah, we dance with the Torah and encircle the *bima*. Rabbi Yitzhak Isaac Schorr (cited by Rabbi Yitzhak Mirsky) suggests that dancing around

the *bima* symbolizes the connection of the Jewish people with the study of Torah. By dancing around the *bima*, we attest to the fact that the Torah is not left in the *aron*. We don’t just have scrolls. The place of the Torah is on the *bima*, on the place of learning, on our *shtender*. Torah without learning does not connect *Bnei Yisrael* to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. We don’t leave our religion in the *aron* or in the shul. We take it with us, because we celebrate Torah study.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu requests one more day – a day without a *shofar*, *lulav*, or *succah*, a day without an object with which we perform a mitzvah. The day is devoted to celebrating the Torah, the very glue that maintains our connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu throughout the year.

Another possible explanation, suggested by some Hassidic masters, is the way in which one interprets the statement of: “*kasheh alai predatchem*” (your departure is difficult for me). Its simple meaning is that it is difficult for God when we depart Jerusalem and return to our homes. The term *predatchem* – “your departure” – can also mean “your separation.” It does not refer to the departure of *Bnei Yisrael* from Hashem after the Yomim Tovim. Rather, it refers to the separation of the Jews from one another. The term used is *preidatchem* (your separation) rather than *preidatenu* (our separation – between man and God). It saddens God to see us separate from each other, after witnessing our sense of national unity throughout the *chaggim*.

Now, Hashem requests one more day where we can all celebrate together. He

*Continued on page 19*

# V'zos Ha'bracha: A Servant of G-d Unto the Very End



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

**O**n *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 Keriyas 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 ייָהוָה, 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 'Gist' of the Blessings



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

**L**et's review the gist of each blessing Moshe gives in Vezot Habracha, one tribe at a time:

## REUVEN

At first glance, Moshe Rabbeinu's opening remarks to the tribe of Reuven appear to be simply a blessing of 'life': "Let Reuven live and not die, and let his numbers be counted" (Devarim 33:6).

Nonetheless, both Rashi and Seforno explain how these remarks actually relate to the forthcoming conquest of the land.

Rashi explains how this blessing addresses Moshe's concern that Reuven would not receive a nachala at all - as he may have lost that right when Yaakov cursed him (on account of his sin with Bilha), just as he forfeited his claim to the 'bechora'.

Furthermore, the fact that Reuven had already 'set up camp' outside the biblical borders of Eretz Canaan provided yet another reason to doubt whether Reuven would truly become an 'official' tribe of Israel. Hence, Rashi explains that the purpose of Moshe's blessing was to counter these fears, thus reassuring Reuven that he will remain 'alive,' i.e. a full fledged member of the tribes of Israel.

In contrast, Chizkuni offers a 'military' explanation for this blessing. Considering that the tribe of Reuven had recently promised to 'take the front line' in the forthcoming battles to conquer Eretz Canaan, Moshe bestows upon them a blessing of 'life' to help them survive this most dangerous task, praying on their behalf that their 'number' - population - should remain the same after battle as it was beforehand.

## YEHUDA

"Hear Hashem the [battle] cry of Yehuda and help him lead his people. Make his hands strong for him, and help him against his enemies" (33:7).

Clearly, the bracha to Yehuda relates to his military leadership, as Moshe foresees that the soldiers of Yehuda will be particularly enthusiastic and diligent in the conquest of their portion in the Land.

## LEVI

"They shall teach Your laws to Yaakov and Your instructions to Israel; they shall offer ktoret... and whole-offerings on the mizbe'ach. G-d should bless his chayil and favor his undertakings. Help him smite the loins of those who rise against him, and don't allow his enemies to succeed" (33:8-11).

This blessing to Levi focuses on this tribe's responsibility to provide spiritual leadership, i.e. to teach G-d's laws and officiate in His Temple. Interestingly, however, even this function is presented in 'military' jargon.

Whereas all other tribes earned their "nachala", a specific, designated portion of land, shevet Levi was scattered among the various tribes in order to serve as teachers throughout the country. Understandably, then, their blessing relates to their leadership role, rather than their allocated portion of the land.

## BINYAMIN

"Beloved to G-d, He shall allow His Shchina to dwell securely within him. He constantly protects [=surrounds] him, as He rests between his shoulders" (33:12).

This blessing focuses on the special quality of Binyamin's nachala, its designation to house the bet ha-mikdash in Yerushalayim.

## YOSEF [Efraim & Menashe]

"G-d's blessing is given to his land, with the bounty of dew from heaven... with the bounty of the earth in its fullness...

His 'horns' are like those of a wild ox, with them he gores other nations... these are the 'tens of thousands' of Efraim and these are the 'thousands' of Menashe" (33:13-17).

The precise translation of this blessing is somewhat elusive, but it clearly speaks of the bountiful nature of the nachala apportioned to Yosef. It appears that Yosef will bear the responsibility of forming the backbone of Israel's agrarian economy.

The final verse alludes to Yosef's military competence that will grant him victory over enemy nations. Specifically, Rashi understands the final pasuk as a reference to the leadership of Yehoshua - a descendant of Efraim - who led Am Yisrael in their conquest of Eretz Canaan.

## ZEVULUN & YISSACHAR

"Rejoice Zevulun as you go out [to war] and Yissachar in your tents. [Their prosperity will catalyze] a call to other nations to ascend G-d's mountain where they will offer proper sacrifices, for they draw from the riches of the sea and from the hidden hoards of the sand" (33:18).

The opening sentence may refer to Zevulun's military prowess, but the conclusion of the pasuk clearly relates to the importance of his nachala. Their territory was situated along the sea, thus forming Israel's gateway to foreign trade and, consequently, economic relations with other nations. Moshe anticipates that these business alliances will lead to the recognition on the part of those nations of the G-d of Israel - the primary long-term goal of Am Yisrael.

Furthermore, Rashbam understands the 'tents' of Yissachar as a reference to this tribe's involvement in agriculture, while Rabbenu Yosef Bechor Shor associates Yissachar's tents with the cattle industry. All this, too, relates directly to Yissachar's portion: the fertile soil of Emek Yizreel renders it an ideal location for both agriculture and livestock breeding.

## GAD

"Blessed be He who enlarges [the nachala of] Gad. He is poised like a lion to tear off

*Continued on page 24*

# Sukkot and the War of Gog U'maggog



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**

Edmond J Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

**T**he prophecy read as the Haftara for Shabbat Hol Ha'mo'ed Sukkot is from the Book of Yehezkel (chapters 38-39), and it foresees a series of major battles which will take place in the Land of Israel before the arrival of Mashiah. Yehezkel describes how two nations will fight against one another in the Land of Israel, though it will not directly involve the Jewish People.

The Malbim (Rav Meir Leibush Wisser, 1809-1879), his commentary to Yehezkel, explains that these wars will be waged between the kingdoms of Edom (the kingdom founded by Esav) and Yishmael – meaning, between the western, Christian world, and the Arab world. This will occur, the Malbim writes, after the Jewish People return to the Land of Israel, and the kingdoms of Edom and Yishmael will fight against each other for control of Jerusalem. We see this prophecy's fulfillment gradually unfolding in our times, as the Jews have returned to the Land of Israel and established sovereignty there, and tensions are building between the West and the Arab world.

This war will result in an enormous number of casualties and will be followed by the arrival of Mashiah, who will bring peace and serenity to the world, and

under whose kingship all mankind will recognize and serve the one, true G-d.

The question arises as to why this prophecy is read on Sukkot. What connection is there between the war of Gog U'maggog and the festival of Sukkot?

The answer is found in a remarkable observation made by the Gaon of Vilna (Rav Eliyahu of Vilna, 1720-1797) regarding the special sacrifices brought over the course of Sukkot. As the Torah outlines in Parashat Pinhas (Bamidbar 29), a large number of animals were offered as the Musaf sacrifices each day of Sukkot. These included a total of seventy bulls, which, our Sages teach, were offered on behalf of the seventy gentile nations. The sacrifices also included one goat brought each day of Sukkot as a sin-offering. The Gaon of Vilna noted that two different expressions are used to refer to these goats. The goat offered on the first, second and fourth days of Sukkot is referred to by the term "Se'ir Izim," whereas the goat offered on the third, fifth, sixth and seven days is called simply, "Se'ir." The Gaon explained that the word "Se'ir" on its own alludes to Esav, who was also called by the name "Se'ir." The term "Se'ir Izim," by contrast, refers to Yishmael. Now on the first, second and fourth days of Sukkot, a total of 35 bulls were offered (13 on the first day,

12 on the second, and 10 on the fourth). This same number of bulls were offered on the third, fifth, sixth and seventh days (11 on the third, 9 on the fifth, 8 on the 6th, and 7 on the seventh). The Gaon explained that all the gentile nations are aligned with either Edom or Yishmael, such that exactly half of the 70 bulls offered on Sukkot correspond to Edom, and precisely half correspond to Yishmael.

Understandably, then, we read the prophecy of the war of Gog U'maggog on Sukkot – because the sacrifices offered on this holiday reflect the historical tension between the two kingdoms of Edom and Yishmael, who will wage this fierce battle.

Our Sages have taught us that prophecies predicting blessing and prosperity will always be fulfilled, whereas prophecies of calamity and tragedy can be averted through Teshuba (repentance). It thus follows that the dreadful war of Gog U'maggog – which, according to some commentators, will result in 60 million casualties, and according to others, in the death of one-third of the world's population – can be avoided. By reaffirming our commitment to faithfully obey the Mivot, study Torah and perform acts of kindness, we will, please G-d, be worthy of protection from this war as well as from all crisis and hardship, Amen.

*Continued from page 16*

does not want us to go back home and separate from each other. He does not want rifts between us, so He asks for one more day, where we all dance around the Torah,

recognizing that no matter our ideological views, the Torah unifies our nation.

May the addition of Shemini Atzeret enable us to gain strength throughout the

year, to overcome our differences, and to celebrate our shared commitment to the Torah!



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# East, West, North, South – You!



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**  
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

**S**hmini Atzeres is the pinnacle of our march back to G-d which began on Rosh Chodesh Elul and continued through Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos. Chazal teach that the essence of Shmini Atzeres is that it is a time when Hashem says, “It is difficult to say goodbye to you,” when He invites us to a small, private feast only for Him and us, where we can be together, just “Me and you” (Sukkah 55b. Indeed, that is why Shmini Atzeres is called is called the “perfect union” between Hashem and His people (Bnei Yissaschar on Tishrei 13). That is why we say the pasuk (Devarim 4:35) “You have taught us to know...” on Simchas Torah. We thank Hashem for teaching us to know “You,” how to have an intimate “Me and you” relationship with Him.

The seven main elements of the progression from Rosh Hashana to Shmini Atzeres therefore parallel the greatest unification which exists in human relationships, the marriage of a bride and groom, a *chosson* and *kallah*: (1) the *shidduch*; (2) the *vort* (engagement party); (3) the purification of the *mikva*; (4) the *chuppah*; (5) marriage and seven blessings under the *chuppah*; (6) the *yichud*, seclusion, room; and (7) friends and loved ones dancing the *chosson* and *kallah* toward their home. Let us understand how each of these seven elements correspond to the progression from Rosh Hashana to Shmini Atzeres.

Rosh Hashana corresponds to the announcement of the *shidduch*, the engagement of the *chosson* and *kallah*, when the Jewish people, the bride, announces its agreement to the union when it calls out, “Hamelech, The King!” We express our desire to accept Hashem’s Kingship on ourselves and be His people. But just like an engagement is only the beginning

of the unification of the *chosson* and *kallah*, Rosh Hashana is only the beginning of the process of our reunification with G-d.

The ten days of *teshuva* between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur correspond to the *vort*, the engagement party, at which the *chosson* and *kallah* exchange gifts with one another. We also exchange gifts with Hashem. Hashem gives us “Bring us back to you Hashem and we will return” (Eicha 5:21) and we give Hashem “Return to me and I will return to you” (Malachi 3:7). During the days of *teshuva*, we commit ourselves to Him and He commits Himself to us.

And the *kallah*’s immersion in the *mikva* in preparation for her marriage to the *chosson* corresponds to the Yom Kippur experience, which Rabbi Akiva compares to a purifying *mikva* (Yuma 8:9): “Fortunate are you Israel, before whom are you purified and who purifies you? Your father in Heaven! As it says, ... ‘G-d is the *mikva* of Israel.’ Just as a *mikva* purifies those who are impure, so too the Holy One Blessed is He, purifies the Jewish people.” Some Jewish communities even celebrate the bride’s immersion in the *mikva* by holding a Henna celebration. So when the Jewish people emerge from the purifying waters of Yom Kippur, the Torah announces (Vayikra 16:30), “You are purified!”

Following Yom Kippur, we enter the *chuppah* of the Sukkah with our *chosson*. The posts and canopy of the *chuppah* therefore correspond to the walls and *schach*, roof, of the Sukkah, where Hashem and the Jewish people, the *chosson* and *kallah*, build their home together under the *chuppah*. And the seven guests we invite into the Sukkah, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid correspond to the seven honored guests who each say a blessing under the *chuppah*. And the seven

days of Sukkos correspond to the seven days of festive meals the *chosson* and *kallah* enjoy with their family and friends.

Sukkos corresponds to the *chuppah* in another way as well. By waiving the four species in all six directions, we draw down blessings and sustenance from above into our lives. This act corresponds to the *kesubah*, in which the *chosson* promises, “I will work, honor, feed, and support you in the custom of Jewish men who work, honor, feed, and support their wives faithfully.” Just like a *chosson* supports his *kallah*, through the waving of the four species, we draw down Hashem’s support for his beloved *kallah*, the Jewish people.

Then, on Hoshana Raba, we circle the *bima* seven times like the *kallah* circles her *chosson* seven times under the *chuppah*. And then, when the *chuppah* is complete, when the unification between Hashem and His *kallah*, the Jewish people, is complete, everyone begins dancing with abandon as they celebrate the union and escort the *chosson* and *kallah* into their life together. This is the dancing of Simchas Torah, which celebrates the reunification of G-d and His nation and escorts them into their life together as they head into the potential monotony of the daily life of the upcoming winter months and the rest of the year.

But how can we say Yizkor on Shmini Atzeres, remembering those we have lost, on ecstatic occasion of the union between Hashem and the Jewish people, Shmini Atzeres? How can we mar the joy of the culmination of the entire process of the Yomim Noraim with a prayer of mourning for those closest to us who have left the world?

The reality is that as we reengage with G-d, He wants us to remember our human “Me and You” relationships as

*Continued on page 23*

# An Ode to Souls in the Abyss



**Rabbi YY Jacobson**  
TheYeshiva.net

## Fiery Law

In the opening of the portion of *Vezev Habracah*—the final portion of the Torah read on *Simchas Torah*—Moses describes the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people:

He [Moses] said: "The Lord came from Sinai and shone forth from (the land of) Saeir to them; He appeared from Mt. Paran and came with some of the holy myriads; from His right hand He gave them a fiery Law."

Here is how Moses, in his final moments on earth, described the nature of Torah: "Fiery law," or in the original Hebrew, "Eish das."

It is an extraordinary and profound description—the best definition for Judaism. "Fire" and "law" are opposites. Law is all about structure, order and rigid behavior, articulated by the law. That is the function of law: to uphold order in a society, to create boundaries that one may not cross.

Fire, in contrast, is the opposite of structure. It undermines, destroys and disintegrates any arrangement. It is never confined to one place, always swaying, moving, blazing, dancing, consuming something; it breaks down anything that enters into its realm. Try "telling" a fire to maintain order and to be respectful of boundaries, and it will consume you too. By its very nature, fires defy borders. This is why fire represents unrestrained passion, zealotry, and energy, which aspires to break out of the confined mode and strive for more, as a physical flame that is never content and seeks to consume more.

This is the heart of Judaism: it is both "aish" and "das," fire and law, combined in one. The two seem paradoxical, but they are not. On the one hand, Judaism demands a life of precise structure and

order. Every mitzvah and ritual has its time, place, and specific rules. Judaism demands consistency and stability, day in and day out. It keeps us synchronized with the rhythm of time and the passage of seasons; it keeps us aligned with the transitions of light to darkness, and conversely, and to the patterns of the body and the universe. Halacha, Jewish law, is all about specific structure in minute details and specifications. As the countless intricate "laws" that govern the creation of a single cell, Torah governs the life of the Jew.

Yet together with that, Torah is "fire." It challenges us to never stop growing, to open ourselves to the mystery and infinity of life, to transcend our habits and conventions, to re-invent ourselves, and to never stop burning; to continue to explore, grow and climb the mountains of infinity.

The laws of the Torah are, in essence, tools to touch transcendence and infinity. The laws are not there to limit and contain, but rather to free up and express our full potential and glory. It's like tying down the chords of the violin so that it can produce exquisite music.

## The Old and the Young

This is how Torah has the power to attract both the young and the old. Usually, the old folks are more comfortable with "law," believing in consistency, order and stability. While the young are more comfortable with "fire," with passion, idealism, breaking the mold and shaking up the status quo.

Systems that are based either on "law" (America of the 1950s) or on "fire" (America of the '60s), alienate one of the two demographics. Torah, in contrast, is "fiery law," it is both law and fire, hence its power to capture the souls of the old and the young.

## The Endless "Fiery" Quest

A story:

It was *Simchat Torah*, and the disciples of Rabbi Mendel of Horodok, many of whom had journeyed for weeks to spend the joyous festival with their Rebbe, were awaiting his entrance to the synagogue for the recital of the *Atah Hor'eisa* verses and the *hakafot* procession. Yet the Rebbe did not appear. Hours passed, and still Rabbi Mendel was secluded in his room.

Finally, they approached Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, who had studied with Rabbi Mendel in Mezeritch under the tutelage of the Great Maggid. Perhaps Rabbi Schneur Zalman, who was revered and loved by Rabbi Mendel, would attempt what no other Chassid would dare: enter the Rebbe's room and ask him to join his anxiously awaiting followers.

When Rabbi Schneur Zalman entered Rabbi Mendel's study, he found the Chassidic master deeply engrossed in his thoughts. "The chassidim await you," said Rabbi Schneur Zalman. "Why don't you join them for the *hakafot*?"

"There are a hundred meanings to the verse *Atah Hor'eisa*," cried Rabbi Mendel, "And I do not yet fully understand them all. I cannot possibly come out to recite the verse without a proper comprehension of its significance!"

"Rebbe!" said Rabbi Schneur Zalman. "When you will reach a full comprehension of the hundred meanings of *Atah Hor'eisa*, you will discover another hundred meanings you have yet to comprehend..."

"You are right," said Rabbi Mendel, rising from his seat. "Come, let us go to *hakafot*."

Because Torah is not only law; it is also "fire." Part of it must always remain elusive, challenging you to transcend yet again.

# What is the Special Joy on Sukkot?

## Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

**A** key to understanding the core elements of a Yom Tov is to see how Chazal describe the *chag* in our *tefillah*. Pesach is referred to as *Zeman Cheruteinu* (the time of our freedom), Shavuot as *Zeman Matan Torateinu* (the time of the giving of our Torah). Both of these appellations refer to a historical reality reflecting that time. However, Sukkot seems to be the exception; it is referred to as *Zeman Simchateinu* (the time of our joy). In what way does this designation relate specifically to Sukkot if all holidays have a requirement to be in a state of *simcha* (happiness)?

The Vilna Gaon, in his commentary on *Shir HaShirim*, remarks that as a consequence of the Sin of the Golden Calf, *Klal Yisrael* lost the Clouds of Glory that they received upon their exodus from Egypt. The period between the 17th of Tammuz and Yom Kippur was an intense time of *teshuva* (repentance) and desire for reconciliation between the Jewish people and G-d. On the day after Yom Kippur they were commanded to build the *Mishkan*. Between the 12th and 14th of Tishrei, people came in droves to donate materials to build the *Mishkan*. On the 15th of Tishrei, construction began of this special edifice that consecrated the deep relationship between G-d and His people. The Vilna Gaon notes that when Am Yisrael began to build the *Mishkan*, the Clouds of Glory returned. Indeed it is a time recalling a special historical reality; a time of intense joy, when Am Yisrael felt they were finally

forgiven for the Sin of the Golden Calf, and their special relationship with G-d was restored.

Every year, as we sit in the *sukkah*, we are reminded of the gift of the Clouds of Glory and feel the special love renewed at this time. With this we can appreciate Chazal's statement: if it rains on the first night of Sukkot (in Israel) it is a bad omen. The Talmud likens this to a servant who pours a cup of wine for his master, and the master spills it out. Although there are many times we may be prevented from doing *mitzvot* – and for that, we are not held responsible – when it rains, and we cannot sit in the *sukkah*, it is an unfortunate sign that G-d does not desire our *mitzvot* and closeness.

The joy of Sukkot is the joy of *mitzvot*, the joy of connection. We do more *mitzvot* on Sukkot than on any other *chag*. Indeed, the Rambam maintains that the obligation to be joyful in doing *mitzvot* is inferred from the laws of Sukkot. Although *kavanah* (intention) is imperative throughout the year, it is specifically on Sukkot that we need to embrace both the joy of the *mitzvah* with the service of the One commanding us as well.

There is an additional dimension to *Zeman Simchateinu*. When sitting in the *sukkah*, we should not only be thinking of the Clouds of Glory. We should also be thinking about the physical huts that we lived in during our sojourn in the desert. The word “*sukkah*” is derived from “*sechach*,”

the feeble covering of the *sukkah*. The *sechach* can't be connected to anything that grows from the ground, nor can it be positioned under anything else. These halachot bring to mind our total dependence on G-d. The Sefat Emet teaches that when a person completely relies on G-d he can then enter into a state of pure *simcha*. He even likens the *sukkah* to the Garden of Eden, about which we say in the *Sheva Brachot*, כשמחך יצירך בגן עדן מקדם – “As You gladdened Your creation in the Garden of Eden of old.”

Rabbi Reiss, in Pa'amei Moed, encourages us to focus on the imagery of a baby who feels utterly secure in the knowledge that he is being cared for and has no worries in the world. Sitting in the *sukkah*, we are sitting in the צילתא דמהימנותא, that exceptional shade of *emunah*.

The Ari HaKadosh notes that the minimum requirement for a *sukkah* is two walls and a bit of a third one. Rav Pincus takes this idea and tells us to visualize the *sukkah* as a big hug from G-d! Is there any greater joy than feeling we are in the presence of G-d, knowing that He loves us and is here to take care of us, like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden?

Seven days of joy. Seven days of connection. Seven days to strengthen our relationship with G-d and revel in His presence. Seven days akin to *Sheva Brachot*, renewing our union with G-d. What a meaningful expression of *Zeman Simchateinu!*

*Continued from page 21*

well. Some of us have lost those that we love, so we must use *Yizkor* to remember those people with whom we had those relationships. Just like Hashem tells us “It is difficult to say goodbye to you,” he

wants us to remember those we have lost and express the fact that we cannot forget them because separation is so hard.

May we merit the closeness of a *chosson* and *kallah* as we renew our relationship

with Hashem and remember those we have loved who have returned to the world above!

*Continued from page 18*

arm and scalp [i.e. military strength]. He chose for himself the best [nachala]..."

Once again, Moshe's bracha focuses on the unique nature of the given tribe's nachala, Gad's initiative to widen his inheritance in Transjordan, as well as their military capabilities.

**DAN**

"Dan is like a lion's whelp that leaps from the Bashan".

Dan's blessing obviously relates to their military might and the location of their nachala - at the western slopes of the Golan Heights, today the area of Tel Dan and Kiryat Shmona in the Chula valley of the Upper Galil. Anyone who has been on a tiul to the Golan, and visited the old Syrian bunkers that overlooked the Chula valley and the area of Tel Dan and Kiryat Shemona, can easily understand how the

phrase 'yezaneq min ha-Bashan' describes the nachala of Dan.

Additionally, Rashi explains the lion metaphor as a reference to Dan's location on the border, standing guard against enemy intrusion.

**NAFTALI**

"Naftali should be satiated [for his nachala] is full of G-d's blessing, to the west and south (of his brother Dan) he shall/must conquer his land" (33:23).

Again, Moshe's bracha relates to the agricultural potential of this nachala and the conquest of that portion.

**ASHER**

"May Asher be the most blessed of sons, may he be the favorite of his brothers and may he dip his foot in oil. Iron and copper are your door-bolts, and your security should last for all your days" (33:24).

These psukim require further elucidation, but what is clear is that they relate to two unique characteristics of Asher's nachala: its abundance of olive trees (and hence olive oil) and its location on Israel's northern border.

**SUMMARY**

As we review all these brachot, it becomes clear that they all focus on the nature of each nachala and the conquest of the land.

These observations can help us understand the underlying intention of the blessings that Moshe Rabbeinu bestows at this time. Aware of the military capabilities of each tribe and the anticipated geographic division of the land (note 34:1-4), Moshe blesses each tribe - encouraging them to achieve their fullest potential in the forthcoming conquest of Eretz Canaan.

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# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



**David Curwin**  
balashon.com

In Parashat Zot Habracha, the tribe of Binyamin receives Moshe's fourth blessing: יִשְׁכֹּן לְבֵטֶחַ עָלָיו חֹפֵר עָלָיו כָּל־הַיּוֹם וּבֵין כַּתְּפָיו שָׁכֵן:

"Of Benjamin he said: Beloved of the LORD, He rests securely beside Him; ever does He protect him, as he rests between His shoulders." (Devarim 33:12)

Why does Binyamin merit the title "beloved" – יָדִיד?

A clue can be found by another prominent person who got a similar name, Shlomo. His birth is described as follows:

וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שְׁלֹמֹה וְהָאֱהָבוֹ: וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיַד נָתָן הַנָּבִיא וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יְדִידָהּ בְּעֵבֹר ה'.

"[Batsheva] bore a son and she named him Shlomo. The LORD favored him, and He sent a message through the prophet

Nathan; and he was named Yedidya at the instance of the LORD." (Shmuel II 12:24-25).

What do Binyamin and Shlomo have in common? They are both the youngest of their siblings, and despite that rank, they were beloved and chosen for leadership (with Binyamin being the tribe of the first king, Shaul.) As a result, some say a better translation for יָדִיד is "darling," which implies "preferred" and is often used to refer to young children.

A third individual with a name of likely similar origin is David. Noting that he too is the youngest of his brothers, and was chosen to be king, scholars say that his name, דָּוִד, derives from יְדִיד, and not from דָּוִד (as some have suggested.) This latter term either refers to a romantic lover or an uncle, neither of which would make

sense as the source of David's name. It's also noteworthy that one plausible theory claims that like Shlomo, David was not his birth name (which was Elchanan), but only given to him later.

Of course, both the words יָדִיד and דָּוִד derive from a common root meaning "to love." The first implies the affection to a young child and the latter to the love for a spouse. But how then, did דָּוִד also come to mean "uncle"?

One answer is that in biblical times it was common, and in some cases encouraged, for uncles to marry nieces. Others say that the meaning "uncle" came first, deriving from the same baby-talk "dada" that gives us the English "dad." The uncle, representing the loving guardian, eventually gave the root meaning "love" in general.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**  
Mizrachi Melbourne

The top of an Etrog is called a "Pitom." What is the bottom of an Etrog called?

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Ukatz



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Congregation Beth Sholom  
Ramaz  
Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls  
MTA - Yeshiva University  
High School for Boys  
Young Israel of Merrick  
Congregation Beth Torah  
Congregation Etz Chaim of  
Kew Gardens Hills  
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun  
Congregation Ohab Zedek  
Great Neck Synagogue  
Iranian Jewish Center/Beth  
Hadassah Synagogue  
Irving Place Minyan  
Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach  
Kingsway Jewish Center  
Lincoln Square Synagogue  
Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park

North Shore Hebrew Academy  
Young Israel of Merrick  
NYC Department of Correction  
OU-JLIC at Binghamton University  
OU-JLIC at Cornell University  
Queens Jewish Center  
Stars of Israel Academy  
The Riverdale Minyan  
Vaad of Chevra Kadisha  
West Side institutional Synagogue  
Yeshiva University High School for Girls  
Young Israel of Hillcrest  
Young Israel of Jamaica Estates  
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst  
Young Israel of New Rochelle  
Young Israel of North Woodmere  
Young Israel of Oceanside  
Young Israel of Scarsdale

## OHIO

Beachwood Kehilla  
Congregation Sha'arei Torah  
Congregation Torat Emet  
Green Road Synagogue  
Fuchs Mizrachi School  
Heights Jewish Center

## PENNSYLVANIA

Shaare Torah Congregation

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Brith Sholom Beth Israel  
Congregation Dor Tikvah

## TENNESSEE

Baron Hirsch Congregation

## TEXAS

Mayerland Minyan Synagogue  
Robert M. Beren Academy  
United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston

## VIRGINIA

Keneseth Beth Israel

## WASHINGTON

Bikur Cholim-Machzikay Hadath  
Northwest Yeshiva High School  
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation

## VENEZUELA

### CARACAS

Ashkenazi Kehilla  
Mizrachi Venezuela



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