



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY



PARSHAT HA'AZINU  
SUKKOT  
5783 • 2022

### ISRAEL Parsha Picture






Picture courtesy of Howie Mischel

וְלִקְחֶתֶם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרֵי עֵץ הָדָר  
כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ עֵבֶת וְעֵרְבֵי נָחַל  
וְשִׂמְחֶתֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים:









ויקרא כג:מ

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# Head, Heart and Soul

## Tishrei and the Totality of Jewish Life



**Rabbi Doron Perez**

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

### Head

It is fascinating that the Hebrew for our New Year is Rosh Hashanah – the ‘Head of the Year’ – and not the more obvious term ‘Reishit Hashanah,’ which means the beginning of the year.<sup>1</sup>

So why did our Sages pick this term – the head – to define the first festival of the year?

It seems that the head and mind are the keys to understanding the essence of the day.

On the anniversary of Creation, we aim to envision and recreate in our mind the ideal world we would like to live in and the ideal role we would like to play in it.

It's a time of deep cognitive reflection. We examine our spiritual and mental paradigms, thought processes and mindset as we address the salient issues of life in preparation for the year ahead. It's a time for big picture mind mapping rather than meddling in minutiae. There is no focus on individual actions nor any mention of sin – not one single confession – throughout the lengthy prayer service. We dare not get lost in the detail, lest we fail to distinguish the woods from the trees. It's not a time ‘to be rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic,’ but rather to ensure that we are heading in the right direction. The Shofar is the instrument of the day and the echo of Jewish history calling us to recalibrate our moral course and reset our spiritual compass. Rosh Hashanah is an intense exercise in systematic and strategic spiritual thinking.

### Heart

Yom Kippur is all about Service of the Heart – *Avodat HaLev*.<sup>2</sup>

The ideal exists in our head, whereas actual change happens through the heart. Our inner will – our *Ratzon* – is the engine of personal transformation. Yom Kippur is a day that rotates around the axis of will, want and desire. It demands a detailed spiritual makeover to align our will with the Divine Will in every area of life. That is why *Vidui* – personal confession – is the essence of the day. We strike our chest and heart dozens of times, acknowledging where we have deviated and expressing our deepest desire to return to the right path. Where there is a will, there is always a way back.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; head and heart, ideal and real, macro thinking and micro planning, intertwine to give us unparalleled days of spiritual inspiration.

### Soul

Nevertheless, despite these spiritual peaks, something is sorely missing from this religious equation: *Simcha* – happiness and joy. *Simcha* is the true soul of Judaism, for at its core it is not only a religion but a celebration of religious life.<sup>3</sup>

The *Yamim Noraim* are truly Days of Awe. Throughout the 10 days of Repentance the theme of judgment, of “who will live and who will die,” creates an inescapable mood of sobriety, an undertone of fear and trepidation. Furthermore, in our plea for atonement on Yom Kippur we have ‘afflicted’ ourselves by refraining from

the basic normative life pleasures. In our quest for forgiveness and purity we have necessarily but unnaturally detached ourselves from the fullness of life. This tense and intense time has taken its toll.

And this is the reason why – explains Rav Kook<sup>4</sup> – Sukkot comes immediately after Yom Kippur. We are in desperate need of an injection of joy to reinstate the vigor and vibrancy of life. Spiritual life had become imbalanced through the uplifting yet energy-depleting motif of judgment, fear and fasting. Sukkot restores the balance through a love of life, a celebration of Mitzvot, with the festival's unmatched ambience of joy, joie de vivre and rejoicing in G-d's presence.<sup>5</sup>

### The Festivals of Tishrei – A Coherent Unit

Therefore, if we look at the festivals of Tishrei as one unit, they encompass the complete religious experience in preparing for the year ahead. Through head, heart and soul they engage the totality of life. They express holy life as wholesome and spiritual endeavors as a harmonious aspiration for both body and soul.



### Sukkot restores the balance through a love of life, a celebration of Mitzvot, with the festival's unmatched ambience of joy, joie de vivre and rejoicing in G-d's presence.

Intertwining love and fear, separation and integration, solemnity and celebration, they give us the blueprint to start the year in the best possible way.

1. Reishit is the obvious word as it is not only the first word in the Torah – BeReishit – but it is also mentioned in Devarim (11:12) as 'the beginning of the year' - Reishit Hashanah. Additionally, it is from this verse that the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah, 17b) learns the concept of judgment at the beginning of the year impacting the rest of the year, which forms the biblical basis for Rosh Hashanah being a Day of Judgement. Nevertheless, our Sages chose Rosh Hashanah as the name of the day and hence the name of the Tractate and the universally used name of the festival.

2. Our Sages define prayer as Avodat HaLev – service of the heart (Ta'anit 2a, Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 1:1.) Yom Kippur is a unique day of intense prayer encompassing five distinct prayer services.
3. The verse explicitly states that the root cause of the terrible curses mentioned in Parshat Ki Tavo is serving G-d without happiness and joy – “since you did not serve the Lord your G-d with happiness (Simcha) and with gladness of heart...” (Deuteronomy 28,47). It is clear that scrupulous observance of Torah and Mitzvot yet devoid of Simcha is not a religious life but rather a spiritual curse.
4. Orot HaTeshuva 9:10.
5. The imperative of Simcha on Sukkot is mentioned three times in the Torah, more than any other festival. One famous expression of this is stated in the Mishna (Sukkot 5:1), “That one who has not seen the Simcha of the water-drawing ceremony (which took place every evening on the intermediary days of the festival) has not seen Simcha in his life.” Moreover, Shemini Atzeret is the pinnacle of the Simcha of Sukkot and is solely dedicated to happiness, simply rejoicing in G-d's intimate presence without a need for any command or action; neither Sukkah nor species, as the Talmud learns (Sukkah 48a) from the verse “and only be happy.” It is therefore no surprise that our Sages later instituted Simchat Torah on this festival (on the same day in Israel) as an expression of our joy at our very connection to Torah.



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# Zman Simchateinu - What We Celebrate



## Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
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### Zman Simchateinu

Though there is a *mitzvah* of *simcha* on all Yamim Tovim, only Sukkot is described as '*zman simchateinu* (the time of our joy)'.<sup>1</sup> The Torah mentions the word *simcha* only four times in reference to the Yamim Tovim. Three of them<sup>2</sup> refer to Sukkot. The famous and often sung words – refer specifically to Sukkot<sup>3</sup>.

The simplest explanation of the Sukkot *simcha* is that we celebrate the successful harvest Sukkot – otherwise known as Chag Ha'asif (the harvest festival)<sup>4</sup> – marks.<sup>5</sup>

### Lifnei Hashem

Though similar to the harvest celebrations of other cultures, our's differs in that it focuses on the Beit Hamikdash.<sup>6</sup> We celebrate *lifnei* (before) Hashem because we realize that He is the cause of our success. Much like the *mitzvah* to bring *bikkurim*,<sup>7</sup> on Sukkot we use products of the harvest to praise<sup>8</sup> and thank<sup>9</sup> Hashem for our success. We remember how Hashem cared for us in the desert and realize that he continues to do so today.

### Simchat Beit Hasho'eiva- Celebrating the Water Libation

The focus of our joy in the Beit Hamikdash was the Simchat Beit Hasho'eiva, the "Water Libation Celebration".<sup>10</sup> Throughout each night of Sukkot, the people celebrated the water just drawn from the Shiloach spring before pouring it out on the *mizbei'ach* the next morning. This *simcha* was so unique that Chazal describe it as qualitatively greater than any other.<sup>11</sup>

Why was this ritual, which is not even (explicitly) mentioned in the Torah, the center of the Sukkot celebration? Pouring water seems little reason to

celebrate. Sukkot is observed at the end of the summer when the springs are at their low point. The Water Libation ceremony is, appropriately, a national prayer beseeching Hashem to provide us with more water in the year ahead.<sup>12</sup> Why was this ceremony the source of such extraordinary joy?

### A Deeper Level Of Simcha

The focus on the Simchat Beit Hasho'eiva expresses a deeper level of the *simcha*. We are happy not only as a result of our success, but also because of our realization that Hashem cares and provides for us. Most people celebrate their success, but have no real reason to assume that it will continue in the future. We, however, know that our success signifies the strength of our relationship with Hashem and so we are confident that the success will continue.

When we pour our precious last drops of water on the Mikdash's *mizbei'ach* we are like Eliyahu Hanavi at Har HaCarmel who poured out four large jugs of their last remaining water (after years of drought) on Hashem's *mizbei'ach* as an expression of his confidence in Hashem's mercy.<sup>13</sup>

Each year at the Water Libation ceremony, we express this same confidence by not only pouring out the last of our water, but by also celebrating intensively when doing so. We reflect on our success of the past year, appreciate its source, thank and praise Hashem for it, and celebrate our faith and confidence in the future.

Like Eliyahu Hanavi, whose actions and *tefilot* at Har HaCarmel were answered with rain,<sup>14</sup> our celebration and show of faith make us worthy of receiving rain and Hashem's other *berachot*.<sup>15</sup>

Though it is always easy to focus on what we are missing in our lives, it is critical

that we use Chag HaSukkot to focus upon and celebrate Hashem's great blessings that we often take for granted. May this celebration strengthen our confidence and merit us continued good health, happiness, and *hatzlacha* in the upcoming year.

1. See Mishneh Torah L'Rambam Sukkah 8:12 who speaks of a '*simcha yeteira*' on Sukkot in contrast to the regular level of *simcha* on other *yamim tovim*.
2. Vayikra 23:40, Devarim 16:14,15.
3. Devarim 16:14-15.
4. Shemot 23:16.
5. Vayikra 23:39. See also Sefer HaChinuch 324. Chazal link the celebration to our having received Hashem's forgiveness during the first part of the month of Tishrei (See Midrash Tehilim 102, Sukka 53a, Vayikra Rabba Emor 30).
6. Moreh Nevuchim 3:43 based on Vayikra 23:40. This is also why Sukkot is described as 'Chag Hashem' (Vayikra 23:39. See also Devarim 16:15). Vayikra 23:40 is the basis for the fact that (min hatorah) the daled minim are taken seven full days only in the Beit Hamikdash (Mishneh Sukka 41a). See Rambam Sefer Hamitzvot Aseh 169 who connects the taking of the daled minim to the *simcha* of Sukkot.
7. Note the parallel between the *pesukim* that describe the *simcha* of Sukkot with the daled minim (Vayikra 23:40) and those that describe the bringing of *bikkurim* (Devarim 26:2,11).
8. This is why we take the daled minim during and integrate them within Hallel.
9. See Rashbam and Ramban on Vayikra 23:39 and Ritva on Sukka 53a.
10. 'כל שמחה זו אינה אלא בשביל ניסוך המים (רש"י סוכה נ.).'
11. 'מי שלא ראה שמחת בית השואבה, לא ראה שמחה מימיו (תלמוד בבלי סוכה נא:).'
12. Talmud Bavli, Rosh Hashana 16a.
13. Melachim 1 17:34-35. See also Shmuel 2 23:16.
14. Ibid 45.
15. Sefer HaChinuch 325.

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# Zecharia and Sukkot: Consolation for Corona



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

**T**his Shabbat we will read in Parshat Ha'azinu that when calamity strikes us, we are implored to consider the past and learn messages for the present and future.

*Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee, thine elders, and they will tell thee. (Devarim 32:4-7)*

After two years of celebrating Yamim Noraim with the Corona pandemic looming over our heads and disrupting our daily lives and synagogue attendance, this year behooves us to re-explore universal messages of pandemics of our past in the Torah and the words of the Prophets. As we open the Tanakh we find all-too numerous precedents for plagues and pandemics that have stricken either the Jewish people and/or specific nations ranging from plagues in Egypt though pandemic punishments in the wilderness. Both the Plishtim and people of Yehuda suffered pandemics due to improper interaction with the *Aron Kodesh*, and David Hamelekh faced national disease and demise after conducting a census. There is only one מגפה, however, mentioned in Tanakh with parallel global ramifications and fatalities- and we read of its messages on the first day of Sukkot!

Sukkot is celebrated as a holiday of nature as we enjoy our harvest through the four species and dwell in huts (Ibn Ezra, Vayikra 23:43). Yet ChaZ"al teach us to simultaneously recognize Hashem's supervision through miraculous means such as clouds of glory that sheltered us in the wilderness (see Tannaitic dispute

between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yishmael, Mesechet Sukka 11b).

The haftarah reading on the first day of Sukkot revisits these existential themes as we hear the eschatological prophecy of Zecharia (chapter 14) who sought to encourage the minority Jewish population of *Shivat Tzion* to regain sovereignty in the Land of Israel. He begins his prophecy by describing how HaKadosh Baruch Hu will fight against foreign nations in Yerushalayim - (reminiscent of the Six-Day war),

*For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, but the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall Hashem go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fighteth in the day of battle. (Zecharia 14:2-3)*

and continues to detail miraculous changes in the political and natural spheres as victory will ensue and Yerushalayim will safely dwell. The climax, however, will be a global PLAGUE – מגפה, that will not be overcome through natural means and will elicit a recognition of Hashem's powers. Zachariah then notes that those of the nations who will survive this cataclysmic war and pandemic will be required to go to Yerushalayim every year on the holiday of Sukkot to pay homage to God.

*And it shall be, that who of the families of the earth who do not go up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, upon them there shall be no rain. (ibid. v. 17)*

The message of the pandemic is to teach the world that rules of nature may change and even “super-power” countries must recognize Hashem's kingship. Particularly lands such as Egypt who depend on the Nile River for water must learn that Hashem controls natural forces and supernatural forces, as He may stop the most “natural” phenomenon of rainfall!

Zecharia concludes his vision with a poignant description of horses and pots – symbols of man's efforts to control natural forces through warfare and cooking, which will be transformed into sacred objects dedicated to Hashem's Mikdash. Even household pots will be treated as holy as we recognize divine immanence in every aspect of our lives!

Sukkot is the time to relay this message to the global community; Hashem controls agricultural-natural forces and provides us with seasonal huts and bounty. We are meant to recognize and internalize on Sukkot mankind's vulnerabilities vs. Hashem's powers which extend beyond the natural, providing us with clouds of glory and miraculously supervised rainfall in Israel and throughout the world. Perhaps if we do, then together with the global community in the wake of pandemic, we will merit this Sukkot...

וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ, עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ; בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, יְהִי ה' אֶחָד--וְשִׁמּוֹ אֶחָד.

*And the LORD shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall the LORD be One, and His name one. (ibid. v.9)*

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot

**Question: How do I know if the split tip of my lulav is problematic? Does it make a difference if this happens on the first day or not?**

Answer: The Gemara in Sukkah (32a) discusses the law of the “tiyomet.” Rav Yehoshua Ben Levi teaches that the lulav is pasul if the tiyomet is split.

How do we define the tiyomet? The Rishonim have different understandings.

The Rambam (Hilchot Lulav 8:4) writes: “The natural pattern of growth of the leaves of the lulav is that two grow in pairs, connected at their back. The back of each pair of connected leaves is called the tiyomet. If the tiyomet is split, it is unacceptable.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, each leaf of the lulav has a tiyomet.

According to the Rambam, if the majority of the leaves of a lulav are split more than halfway, the entire lulav is invalid. According to this approach, there is nothing unique about the middle leaf. Even if the entire central twin-leaf is split, the lulav is kosher as long as a majority of the leaves of the lulav are not split. This is the opinion of the Rambam, Rif, and Ramban.

Rashi has a different understanding of the tiyomet. According to him, only the center twin-leaf is called the tiyomet. These are the leaves that stem from the spine. If this entire leaf is split (or possibly even the majority) then the lulav would be forbidden according to Rashi.

In a similar light, Ritva writes that the tiyomet is the center leaf. However, the Ritva writes one opinion that even if this is split partially, the lulav is invalid.

The Shulchan Aruch (OC 645:3) paskins like the Rif and the Rambam, and the Rema (ibid) quotes the opinion that the tiyomet is specifically the center twin-leaf. The Rema seemingly paskins like Rashi, and therefore as long as the center-leaf is not completely split the lulav is kosher. The Bach and the Gra however, write that the lulav is invalid if it is mostly split.

The Mishneh Berurah (645:16) quotes the Gra and writes that it is best to be machmir if the majority of the tiyomet is split. However, the Chazon Ish writes that besh'a'at hadchak one may even make a bracha on this lulav because it is kosher according to the Rambam, Rif, Ramban and others.

Does a split tiyomet invalidate the lulav on all days or only the first? To answer this question, we must first understand why a split tiyomet poses a problem.

Tosfot (Sukkah 29b) writes that a split tiyomet constitutes a lack of “hiddur” required for the four species. The Rishonim argue over whether this invalidation is only on the first day or even on all days. The Shulchan Aruch is lenient and only holds that this is needed on the first day, whereas the Rema requires hiddur for all of the chag. According to the Rema, if we were to take Tosfot’s understanding, the lulav would be pasul for the entire chag.

Rabbeinu Yerucham, on the other hand, explains that a lulav with a split tiyomet is invalid because the lulav is not complete. On the first day of Yom Tov, Chazal teach us based on the word “Velakachtem” that you need to take a complete set (Sukkah 36b). This requirement is only relevant on the first day. The Magen Avraham and

Mishneh Berurah quote Rabbeinu Yonah’s reason, and therefore, a lulav with a split tiyomet would be valid after the first day.

The Rema writes that it is best to take a lulav with a tiyomet that is completely closed. The Chaye Adam writes that this means completely closed, whereas the Taz understands that this means the top should not be open more than three tefachim (8 cm according to Rav Chaim Naeh). If the lulav partially opens, one may glue it closed (Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fisher).

### Summary:

If the tiyomet, which is the center leaf of the lulav, opens up completely, it is forbidden to be used on the first day. If it is mostly but not completely opened, it can be used b’shat hadchak. The lulav is kosher for the rest of the days of Sukkot even if it is completely opened.

If the tiyomet is only partially split, it is kosher lechatchila. However, the best way to fulfill the mitzvah is through getting a spine that is completely closed (Chaye Adam) or at least not more than 3 tefachim (Taz).

**Practical Tip:** How do you identify the tiyomet?

Look at the base of the lulav and find the spine. Follow the spine upwards and track the leaf that emerges from it.

1. Translation from Chabad.org

● Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.

# תקציר פרשת האזינו

הרבנית שרון רימון



ימשיך להיות מונהג ישירות ע"י ה' – עם ישראל – "כִּי חָלַק ה' עִמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבְלֵי נַחֲלָתוֹ". לכן, מיד לאחר סיפור הפלגה מופיעה בחירתו של אברהם, ממנו מתחיל העם הנבחר, ובראשית בחירתו הוא הולך לארץ כנען, ארץ ה', הנבחרת עבור עם ה', עם ישראל. 12 שבטי ישראל יורשים את מקומם של 12 עממי כנען.

אולם, ההבדל בין הנהגת עם ישראל להנהגת העמים האחרים איננה מנתקת בין עם ישראל לאומות, אלא להפך – מחברת ביניהם: עם ישראל המונהג ישירות ע"י ה' כולל בתוכו את כל הכחות של כל האומות, ומתוך כך ביכולתו להשפיע ברכה על כל אומות העולם, כפי שנאמר לאברהם כבר בראשית דרכו: "וְהָיָה בְרַכְּהָ... וְנִבְרַכְּוּ בְךָ כָּל מְשֻׁפָּחֹת הָאָדָמָה" (בראשית י"ב, ב-ג).

בחירתו של עם"י על ידי ה' נותנת לו תפקיד להיות שלוחו לקריאת שם ה' בעולם ולהוות מקור וצינור לשפע ברכה לכל העמים.

מקבילים ל"מספר בני ישראל" היורדים מצרימה בימי יעקב – 70 נפש, כפי שמציין הפסוק בשירת האזינו: "יֵצֵב גְּבֻלַת עַמִּים לְמִסְפָּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל".

נראה ששירת האזינו קוראת להתבוננות בתולדות העולם שבספר בראשית, ולהבנת הקשר שבין אומות העולם לעם ישראל.

בתחילה, העולם היה מונהג ישירות ע"י הקב"ה, ומתוך כך היתה בו אחדות של כל הכחות העליונים ובמקביל – אחדות בין בני האדם. אולם, ההירדרדות של בני האדם, החל מחטא אדם הראשון, דרך המבול ועד למגדל בבל, גרמה לשינוי בהנהגת ה' את העולם.

סיפור מגדל בבל ודור הפלגה מתאר את המשבר – האחדות בין בני האדם נוצלה על ידם לרעה, וה' החליט להפריד ביניהם, ולהפיצם על פני כל הארץ. כך נוצרו 70 אומות העולם, אשר, לפי הקבלה, אינם מונהגים ישירות ע"י ה' אלא ע"י 70 "שרי מעלה", כך שכל אומה מונהגת ע"י "שר" אחר. אולם, עדיין הנהגתו של ה' מושלת בכלום מלמעלה, ולאחר שכל העמים התרחקו מהנהגתו של ה' נבחר עם אחד אשר

שירת האזינו עוסקת בקורותיו של עם"י בעבר, בהווה ובעתיד. השירה מתחלקת לחמישה חלקים – הקדמה, בחירת עם"י וחסדיו של ה', חטאי ישראל לעתיד, העונש העתידי על חטאיהם והצלת ישראל מיד צריהם ע"י הקב"ה. כחלק מתיאור בחירת עם"י, נאמר בשירה: "יֵצֵב גְּבֻלַת עַמִּים לְמִסְפָּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כִּי חָלַק ה' עִמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבְלֵי נַחֲלָתוֹ" (דברים ל"ב, ב-ה-ט). במילים אלה שירת האזינו רומזת לקשר בין היווצרות עם ישראל ובחירתו לבין תהליך היווצרותם של אומות העולם, כפי שמתואר בספר בראשית (י'). תיאור זה כולל את שמותם של 70 אומות העולם, וכחלק מתיאור זה מוזכרים גבולות ארץ הכנעני, הלאו היא הארץ המובטחת לעם ישראל בהמשך. המספרים 70 ו-12 המופיעים כחלק מתיאור ההירדרדות וההתנחלות של עמי העולם, הינם מספרים בעלי משמעות: 12 משפחות כנען (שהתישבו בארץ ישראל בתחילה) מקבילות ל-12 שבטי ישראל (שקיבלו את ארץ ישראל מאת ה' בהמשך), ואילו 70 אומות העולם



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# The Jewish Weapon



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

The 1973 Yom Kippur War was actually also the Sukkot War because it continued through Sukkot. A few years ago, a 40th anniversary of the war was held at Yeshivat HaKotel. The attendees – many of whom had fought in the war – remembered how, during the battles, they had sang the verses of *Hallel*. Some told of how they had lost friends in the mornings and then tried to rejoice and dance in the evenings, an attempt to recreate the *Simchat Shoeva* of Sukkot. A holiday that is all about joy and nature had become a tense time of fears and bloodshed. It is interesting though, that even within the inferno, what bothered these religious soldiers were the halachic details of their situation. Hundreds of soldiers found themselves on Sukkot without the *arba minim* (Four Species), without holiday prayer arrangements, without Torah scrolls and most importantly, without *sukkot*.

For example, then Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yeshayahu Hadari, told the following story: “It was Tuesday evening in the Suez Canal. The tension was tremendous. After two days of intense fighting and heavy casualties, Brigadier Avraham Baram briefed his soldiers before the next battle. He finished his brief by asking: ‘Is everything clear, does anyone have any questions?’ ‘Yes,’ said Yitzhak Tzfatman, a soldier from Yeshivat HaKotel. ‘Tomorrow night is the holiday of Sukkot. We would like you to get us some *arba minim*.’

Rav Hadari continued: “After the war, this commander – who considered himself far from being Torah-observant – said that if the earth had been shaking beneath his feet and swallowing him up, he would have been less surprised than from this

strange request. The *arba minim* in the middle of a war?

“But Tzfatman insisted: ‘We must have the *arba minim*.’ And indeed, When Commander Baram submitted the request for equipment that evening, he added: ‘And send the *arba minim* too.’

The next morning the *arba minim* arrived with the rest of the equipment.

Tzfatman asked Baram to shake the *lulav* and say the *bracha* and explained to him that the fighters would merit from him doing this *mitzvah*. They would win the war. Along with the *lulav*, the *aravot*, *hadasim* and *etrog*, he also gave him a book written by IDF Chief-of-Staff Yigal Yadin.

At the time, Yadin's archaeological discovery of an ancient epistle had just been published. The fragment they had found described how during a battle during Sukkot, Bar Kochba insisted he had the *arba minim*. He had written a letter to a man named Yehuda Bar Menashe, informing him that he will send two of his own donkeys to the Ein Gedi area to be loaded with *lulavs* and *etrogs* for his entire camp.

Tzfatman wanted to show Baram that even 2,000 years ago, during the war with the Romans, Bar Kochba also had the commandment of *arba minim* on his mind and was determined that his soldiers could observe the *mitzvah*.”



We tend to think the highlight of the *chagim* is Yom Kippur, Neilah, and then we come back down to earth. But no, the peak is now. To fast all day like angels is not the ideal. There's something even higher, and it's called Sukkot.

Yes, the holiday with the wood and the nails and the sheets and the branches. Yom Kippur is only one day, when everything stops. The aim is to draw strength

from it for the other 364 days of the year. To take the messages and energy of this special day into our lives, into nature, into the world. Thus writes Rav Kook: “Those days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot were given to educate us about returning to the matters of this world.” In other words, one needs to build a *sukkah*. One needs to go to the market to buy *arba minim*, and yes, there are family meals that need to address everyone's preferences and dislikes, and yes, sometimes the noise from the neighbor's *sukkah* is annoying, and yes, you need to juggle all the kids, etc. But when you take what you've gleaned from Elul, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and apply them to all these seemingly mundane assignments... that's the ideal. Life itself.



Here's a short piece by Rav Erez Moshe Doron on the *arba minim*, which reminds us of the significance of the *lulav*, *etrog*, *hadas* and *arava*. He expands on the famous symbolism of each of the species representing a different type of Jew:

“As we know, the *arba minim* symbolizes unity, but it's not only the unity of different parts of the people, but unity within us – unity between all the parts and all the situations Jewish souls can possibly encounter. Each one of us could be a *rasha* or a *tzaddik*. And what is our call as we shake the *arba minim*? First, connect to *Am Yisrael*. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done or do, you have a connection too; you can come closer to being a *tzaddik* as well. Second, it's not only “connect” but also “wake up!”: we are shaking the *arba minim* to the four corners of the earth and up and down, and the message is: whoever, whatever, wherever you've been thrown or fallen, do not despair. You can come back and

*Continued on next page*



# For the Yom Tov Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**

Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi

Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

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

The use of the Sukkah as an analogy for dynasty of David HaMelech originates in Amos (9:11), where Hashem declares, ביום ההוא אקים את־סֹכֶת דָּוִד הַנִּפְלֶת, – On that day, I will establish the fallen Sukkah of David.

Why is the Davidic dynasty compared to a Sukkah – a temporary structure? Wouldn't the term "בית" be more appropriate, like when we refer to "מלכות בית דוד"?

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

In this fashion, David HaMelech asks Hashem to conceal him “in His Sukkah



**Our aspirations are for the very same Davidic line to reassume as a direct continuation of our unbroken connection to Eretz Yisrael and Torat Yisrael.**

on the day of evil” in Tehillim Perek 27 (LeDavid Hashem Ori), as the Sukkah represents a welcoming refuge from the outside world.

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

Our Sukkot are vulnerable and are only built to withstand normal winds, but were

they to fall down and be rebuilt, we would not call the rebuilt Sukkah a replica – it is the very same Sukkah. Each year we dismantle and rebuild our Sukkot, yet we do not view them as new structures – they are a direct continuation and representation of the first time we built them.

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

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

Continued from previous page

come closer from absolutely anywhere in the world.”



The *Ushpizin*, the guests we invite into our *sukkot*, are seven fathers of the nation – Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon and David. There are many profound and kabbalistic explanations for this custom, but in “*Be'er Miriam*,” I found an historic reason I've never thought of before: our national fathers were largely

nomads. Avraham left his birthplace and came to Israel, and then to Egypt, and back. Yitzchak went to the land of the Philistines during the famine, and then to the western Negev, to Beer Sheva and Chevron. Ya'akov fled to Charan, returned to Cana'an, and emigrated to Egypt. Yosef was sold as a slave, Moshe and Aharon wandered for 40 years in the desert and Moshe had already been in Egypt as a child. David too fled from Shaul and Avshalom.

Their lives were lives of *sukkah*, not of permanent homes. They well understood how much the permanent reality is transient, and how much flexibility, faith and creativity one needs in life. And, despite all the inconveniences and troubles mentioned here, each one of our ancestors built himself up and led and educated. We too can take our circumstances and become better people. That's another thing to think about in your *sukkah*.

# The Arc of the Moral Universe



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

In majestic language, Moses breaks into song, investing his final testament to the Israelites with all the power and passion at his command. He begins dramatically but gently, calling heaven and earth to witness what he is about to say, sounding ironically very much like “The quality of mercy is not strained”, Portia’s speech in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Listen, heavens, and I will speak;  
Let the earth hear the words of my mouth.  
May my teaching pour down like rain  
Let my speech fall like the dew;  
Like gentle rain on tender plants,  
Like showers upon the grasses. (Deut. 32:1-2)

But this is a mere prelude to the core message Moses wants to convey. It is the idea known as *tzidduk haDin*, vindicating G-d’s justice. The way Moses puts it is this:

The Rock, His work is whole,  
And all His ways are justice.  
A G-d of faith who does no wrong,  
Just is He, and upright. (Deut. 32:4)

This is a doctrine fundamental to Judaism and its understanding of evil and suffering in the world – a difficult but necessary doctrine. G-d is just. Why then do bad things happen?

Did He act ruinously? No, with His children lies the fault,  
A warped and twisted generation. (Deut. 32:5)

G-d requites good with good, evil with evil. When bad things happen to us it is because we have been guilty of doing bad things ourselves. The fault lies not in our stars but ourselves.

Moving into the prophetic mode, Moses foresees what he has already predicted, even before they have crossed the Jordan and entered the land. Throughout the book of Deuteronomy he has been warning of the danger that, in their land, once the hardships of the desert and the struggles of battle have been forgotten, the people will become comfortable and complacent. They will attribute their achievements to themselves and they will drift from their faith. When this happens they will bring disaster on themselves:

*Yeshurun* grew fat and kicked –  
You became bloated, gross, coarse –  
They abandoned G-d who made them  
And rejected the Rock of their rescue...  
You deserted the Rock that bore you;  
You forgot the G-d who gave you birth. (Deut. 32:15-18)

This, the first use of the word *Yeshurun* in the Torah – from the root *yashar*, upright – is deliberately ironic. It underlines its prophecy that Israel, who once knew what it was to be upright, will be led astray by a combination of affluence, security and assimilation to the ways of its neighbours. It will betray the terms of the covenant, and when that happens it will find that G-d is no longer with it. It will discover that history is a ravaging wolf. Separated from the source of its strength, it will be overpowered by its enemies. All that the nation once enjoyed will be lost. It is a stark and terrifying message.

Yet Moses is here bringing the Torah to a close with a theme that has been there from the beginning. G-d, Creator of the universe, made a world that is fundamentally good: the word that echoes seven times in the first chapter of Genesis. It is humans, granted freewill as G-d’s image and likeness, who introduce evil into the

world, and then suffer its consequences. Hence Moses’ insistence that when trouble and tragedy appear, we should search for the cause within ourselves, and not blame G-d. G-d is upright and just. The defect is in us, His children.

This is perhaps the most difficult idea in the whole of Judaism. It is open to the simplest of objections, one that has sounded in almost every generation. If G-d is just, why do bad things happen to good people? This is the question asked not by skeptics and doubters, but by the very heroes of faith. We hear it in Abraham’s plea, “Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?” We hear it in Moses’ challenge “Why have you done evil to this people?” It sounds again in Jeremiah.

“Lord, you are always right when I dispute with You. Yet I must plead my case before You: Why are the wicked so prosperous? Why are evil people so happy?” (Jer. 12:1)

It is an argument that never ceased. It continued through the rabbinic literature. It was heard again in the *kinot*, the laments, prompted by the persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages. It sounds in the literature produced in the wake of the Spanish expulsion, and echoes still when we recall the Holocaust.

The Talmud says that of all the questions Moses asked G-d, this was the one to which G-d did not give an answer.<sup>1</sup> The simplest, deepest interpretation is given in Psalm 92, “The song of the Sabbath day.” Though “the wicked spring up like grass,” (Ps. 92:7) they will eventually be destroyed. The righteous, by contrast, “flourish like a palm tree and grow tall like a cedar in Lebanon.” (Ps. 92:13) Evil wins in the short term but never in the long. The wicked are like grass, the righteous like a tree.

Grass grows overnight but it takes years for a tree to reach its full height. In the long run, tyrannies are defeated. Empires decline and fall. Goodness and rightness win the final battle. As Martin Luther King Jr. said in the spirit of the Psalm: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."<sup>2</sup>

It is a difficult belief, this commitment to seeing justice in history under the sovereignty of G-d. Yet consider the alternatives. They are three. The first option is to say that there is no meaning in history whatsoever. *Homo hominis lupus est*, "Man is wolf to man". As Thucydides said in the name of the Athenians: "The strong do as they want, the weak suffer what they must." History is a Darwinian struggle to survive, and justice is no more than the name given to the will of the stronger party.

The second, about which I write in my book *Not in G-d's Name*, is dualism, the idea that evil comes not from G-d but from an independent force: Satan, the Devil, the Antichrist, Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness, and the many other names given to the force that is not G-d but is opposed to Him and those who worship Him. This idea, which has surfaced in sectarian forms in each of the Abrahamic monotheisms, as well as in modern, secular totalitarianisms, is one of the most dangerous in all

of history. It divides humanity into the unshakeably good and the irredeemably evil, giving rise to a long history of bloodshed and barbarism of the kind we see being enacted today in many parts of the world in the name of holy war against the greater and lesser Satan. This is dualism, not monotheism, and the Sages, who called it *shtei reshuyot*, "two powers" or "domains"<sup>3</sup>, were right to reject it utterly.

The third, debated extensively in the rabbinic literature, is to say that justice ultimately exists in the world to come, in life after death. Yet though this is an essential element of Judaism, it is striking how relatively little Judaism had recourse to it, recognising that the central thrust of Tanach is on this world, and life before death. For it is here that we must work for justice, fairness, compassion, decency, the alleviation of poverty, and the perfection, as far as lies within our power, of society and our individual lives. Tanach almost never takes this option. G-d does not say to Jeremiah or Job that the answer to their question exists in heaven and they will see it as soon as they end their stay on earth. The passion for justice so characteristic of Judaism would dissipate entirely were this the only answer.

Difficult though Jewish faith is, it has had the effect throughout history of leading us to say: if bad things have happened, let

us blame no one but ourselves, and let us labour to make them better. It was this that led Jews, time and again, to emerge from tragedy, shaken, scarred, limping like Jacob after his encounter with the angel, yet resolved to begin again, to rededicate ourselves to our mission and faith, to ascribe our achievements to G-d and our defeats to ourselves.

Out of such humility, a momentous strength is born.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What extra dimension does poetry give this week's parsha?
- What right did the heroes of our faith, such as Moses, Jeremiah, and Job, have to ask G-d why there is injustice in the world? Did they receive answers?
- Does this approach to suffering blame the victim? Or are we asking for something else from the victims (and from us all)?

1. The full discussion can be found in Brachot 7a.
2. "Out of the Long Night," *The Gospel Messenger*, February 8, 1958, p. 14.
3. Brachot 33b.

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# True Simcha



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

**R**av Soloveitchik was fond of discussing a comment of the Ramban in his *Hasagot* to *Sefer HaMitzvot* (*shoresh rishon*, s.v. *vehapli'ah*). The Ramban believes that the recitation of *Hallel* is a *d'oraita* obligation. This is in contrast to the Rambam, who did not count the recitation of *Hallel* on Yom Tov in the count of *taryag mitzvot* because he held it is only a *mitzvah deRabbanan*. The Ramban cites the *pasuk* in reference to the *shira* of the *Levi'im*: “On a day of your gladness, and on your Festivals, and on your New Moons, you shall sound the trumpets over your *olah*-offerings and over your *shelamim*-offerings” (Bamidbar 10:10).

This *pasuk* describes that during the *nisuch haYayin* (wine libation) of *korbanot tzibbur* (communal offerings), the *Levi'im* engaged in *shira* through singing and musical accompaniment (on weekdays), which included the use of *chatzotzrot*. The Ramban suggests that *Hallel* is a similar obligation to the *shira* sung during the *avodah* – both of them are manifestations of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*.

Indeed, one of the sources in the Gemara (Arachin 11a) for the *shira* of the *Levi'im* is the *pasuk* found in the *tochecha*, חתח אשר לא עבדת את ד' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב – “Because you did not serve *Hashem*, your G-d [a reference to *avodah* in the *Beit HaMikdash*] with joy and goodness of heart” (Devarim 28:47). Rashi adds, “One sings *shira* only out of a feeling of joy and goodness of heart.”

Thus, the *mitzvah* of *simchat Yom Tov* includes more than the offering of a *Korban Shelamim* and the partaking of its meat and of wine. According to the Ramban, one of the manifestations of



**An important part of the mitzvah of simcha is to be mesameach others.**

this *mitzvah* is the singing of praises to *Hashem* in the form of *Hallel*. *Simcha* also includes the obligation to provide colored or pressed linen garments for one's wife and to distribute nuts and almonds to one's children (Pesachim 109a; Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:1).

The Rambam (Hilchot Yom Tov 6:18; Hilchot Chagigah 2:14) writes that *simcha* on Yom Tov requires not only that we ourselves eat, drink, and be in a joyous mood. The Rambam terms such enjoyment as *simchat kreiso* (joy of one's stomach), instead of *simchat mitzvah*. Rather, on Yom Tov, there is also a *mitzvah* to provide for the poor and those who are less fortunate, to enable them to have food and drink for Yom Tov. In other words, an important part of the *mitzvah* of *simcha* is to be *mesameach* others.

That is why there is a *minhag* to make a *tzedaka* appeal every Yom Tov, as an expression of *simchat Yom Tov*. In fact, it is because we pledge *tzedaka* on Yom Tov that the *Yizkor* prayer was introduced (Levush, Orach Chaim 490:9). The pledge of *tzedaka* should be considered as a *zechut* for one's parent(s) who raised a child with proper attitudes and values regarding sharing their assets with others. Thus, the recitation of *Yizkor* is not at all a form of *aveilut*, but rather a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*.<sup>1</sup>

The notion of sharing one's *simcha* with others may be relevant to a *chatan* during his seven days of *Sheva Berachot*. The Rama (Orach Chaim 135:1) records the *minhag* that a *chatan* should be given an *aliyah* since it is like a Yom Tov for him. What is the halachic basis for this *minhag*?

The Rav explained that a *chatan* has a *mitzvah* of *simcha*. Since *Talmud Torah* is a form of *simcha*, as evidenced by the restrictions to learning that apply to an *avel* and on Tisha B'Av, it follows that teaching Torah is a further fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*. Through teaching others, one causes them to experience *simcha*. For this reason as well, the *minhag* is for the *chatan* to deliver *divrei Torah* at the *chatan's tish*. The *chatan* receives an *aliyah* in which he is *melameid Torah* to the *tzibbur* that listens to the *kriya*, essentially the function of every *oleh laTorah*, in order to enhance his *mitzvah* of *simcha* by being *mesameach* others.

According to this explanation, it would seem one should endeavor to be called up for an *aliyah* on every Yom Tov, not only on the Yamim Noraim (as mentioned by the Mateh Efrayim 584:17). This way, one adds to the joy of others by teaching them Torah, and by so doing, he fulfills the *mitzvah* of *simchat Yom Tov*.<sup>2</sup>

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Moadim.

1. See TorahWeb.org, Pesach, 2006, “True Simcha.”
2. See B'Ikvei HaTzon, pp. 94-95.

# The Festivals of Hashem



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

**T**his week we will talk about the ימים טובים in general, mainly from the Pesukim in Parshat Emor that teach us about the different holidays. The Pasuk in the beginning of פרשת המועדים reads:

”דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם, מוֹעֲדֵי ה', אֲשֶׁר-תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ-אֵלֶּה הֵם, מוֹעֲדֵי”  
“Speak to the Jewish people and tell them, the festivals of Hashem, that you will mark them as holy, these are the festivals”. This is a pretty well-known Pasuk, yet it seems to be very redundant. Had the Pasuk just read “Speak to the Jewish people and tell them these are my ימים טובים”, it would have been a wonderful introduction. Yet, the extra phrase “מוֹעֲדֵי ה', אֲשֶׁר-תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ” seems to not be adding anything, and therefore we must understand what is its explanation.

The Netziv gives a beautiful explanation for this Pasuk. One might think that the ימים טובים are days that are holy because of some event that took place in history. The Torah was given on the 6th day of Sivan, and for that reason we celebrate Shavuot to commemorate the event. The Jews left Egypt on the 15th day of Nissan, and for that reason we celebrate Pesach then, and so on. One might think that the holiday came into effect as a result of some historical event, just as we find in many other societies where there are days throughout the year that are meant to commemorate events in history. The



**Hashem is telling the Jewish people that these are the holidays of Hashem, set days for Hashem from the very beginning of existence.**

Netziv explains that the point of this Pasuk is to teach us the opposite. The Torah is telling us that these are not arbitrary days where something happened, but rather they are ימים טובים בעצמם. The days already have intrinsic Kedusha within them, regardless of the event in history that happened. We see this in the Mishna in the first Perek of השנה. There, the Mishna says that the world is judged at 4 points during the year. On Pesach the world is judged about the grain, on Shavuot we are judged about the fruits, on Sukkot we are judged about the water, and on Rosh Hashana the humans are judged. These are judgments that are going on in ימים during these various days, yet they did not start only after a certain event in history. Even before the giving of the Torah, the 6th day of Sivan was the day that the world was judged about the fruits, and even before we sat in huts in the desert, the 15th of Tishrei was a day of judgment about the water. Thus, we see that the days themselves already had some

element of Kedusha within them, even before anything happened on them. Now we can go back and explain the Pasuk. Hashem is telling the Jewish people that these are the holidays of Hashem, set days for Hashem from the very beginning of existence. These days, which are already מוֹעֲדֵי ה', are now supposed to become the ימים טובים of the year. The Jewish people are supposed to make the “מוֹעֲדֵי ה'”, which are already intrinsically holy, into festivals of the year, “אלה הם מועדי”.

This idea from the Netziv gives us a new perspective about all of our ימים טובים, and really all of the Mitzvot in general, that they all carry two elements with them. We obviously have the fulfillment of the רצון ה', that it is Hashem's will that we celebrate a יום טוב on that specific day. However, beyond the גוף המצוה there is an aspect of the world that is fixed when we do a מצוה, relating back to the beginning of time. There is inherent תיקון on those specific days that is accomplished when we celebrate the ימים טובים, beyond just the surface level fulfillment of Hashem's will. There is intrinsic Kedusha on all of our ימים טובים that we tap into when we celebrate the holidays.

May we all merit to appreciate that inherent Kedusha as we celebrate the upcoming יום טוב of Sukkot.

● Edited by Jay Eisenstadt and Ari Levine.

# The Freshness of Life



**Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**  
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

**O**ur Sages ask, what is the common denominator of the four species shaken together on Sukkot – the *etrog, lulav, hadas* and *arava*? We know we bring them together because they are so different – in taste, in smell and in shape, but what is the one requirement common to them all?

Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that these four species all have a connection to water – they must be fresh in order to be used for the *mitzvah* on Sukkot. As the Gemara points out, if your *lulav* is dried out, you cannot use it. The same applies to the other species.

But why? What is this liquid and what does it mean for us? Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that water represents life. When we bring these four species together, we celebrate and give thanks to G-d that we are more alive than ever. We are now ready to dedicate that life to G-d in His infinite wisdom and kindness.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we pray for a good year, a sweet year, and for all of G-d's blessings. But, most fundamentally, we pray for life itself. We ask "The King, who desires life" to "remember us for life" and "inscribe us in the Book of Life."

חיים, חיים, חיים. Life, life, life. Over and over again – that is what we pray for. Because being alive is a privilege, and we never take it for granted.

Along comes Sukkot and you know what we give thanks to G-d for? For the very fact that we're alive. That we have breath in our lungs and blood pumping through our veins. That is why we bring together the



**When we bring these four species together, we celebrate and give thanks to G-d that we are more alive than ever.**

four species, as fresh as can be, filled with as much moisture as possible, and we say the blessing of *shehechyanu*: "Thank you G-d, Who has sustained us and kept us alive to reach this point."

Now, let's take this idea one step further. It's not only about gratitude for being alive. Sukkot is a declaration of what we plan to do with this new life. We take the four species, we bow before G-d and we sing *Hallel* – recognizing G-d's infinite greatness and magnificence, dedicating our gift of life to Him. And how do we do that? Through the Torah, the gateway to life.

The Torah is the Torah of life. "You shall keep my statutes and my laws that a person should do them **and live by them**" (Leviticus 18:4). The Ramban explains that the Torah is the blueprint for how to live life in this world in our interactions with other people. What is the best possible way to do that? Through the values, principles and laws of the Torah, which guide us on how to be a *mensch*, to be kind to people, to interact in good conscience with people.

It goes even deeper than this. By dedicating our lives to G-d – by taking

opportunities to fulfill His *mitzvot* – we unlock the gift of another life... life in the World to Come. As Rashi says on that verse "...and you shall live by them" – refers to *Olam Haba*, the World to Come. The *mitzvot* we do in this world enrich us with life in the World to Come.

And here's the really fascinating thing: the Hebrew word for life is *חיים*, which is plural. We never speak about life, but *lives*. I came across an amazing explanation of this in a book by the Vilna Gaon's brother, Rabbi Avraham Ben Shlomo Zalman. He says the word *חיים* is plural because it refers to two lives, life in this world and life in the World to Come. Whenever we refer to life, we refer to both.

As Sukkot, the "festival of the time of our joy", arrives, we thank G-d for life, not only in this world but for the infinite life He has allowed us in the World to Come. We give thanks and praise to Him for the Torah that He has given us – the gateway to life in both worlds.

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

This Sukkot, let us recognize and celebrate the infinite gift of life. Let us dedicate ourselves to our Creator and His Torah – the source of all life and all blessings.



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# Blessing before Studying Torah



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

כי שם ה' אקרא הבו גודל לאלקינו. (דברים לבג)

When I call out the name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to our G-d. (Devarim 32:3)

The *Gemara* cites this *pasuk* as the obligation to recite *Birchat HaTorah* (Brachot 21a). The *Gemara* in Nedarim cites the violation of this obligation as the reason for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Although elsewhere, we find other explanations – especially that people violated the three cardinal sins of idolatry, promiscuity, and murder,<sup>1</sup> the *Gemara* in Nedarim says something different:

This was asked to the wise men and the prophets, and they could not provide an explanation, until Hashem Himself explained (*Yirmeyahu* 9:12): “They abandoned My Torah” – meaning, they did not listen to Me, they did not follow the path of the Torah. Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav – they did not recite a blessing before learning Torah.

Could this really be the reason for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash? Does the technical failure to recite a blessing over the study of Torah warrant such a severe punishment, from which we suffer to this very day?

Rav Asher Weiss offers an explanation based on a close reading of the *Gemara*.<sup>2</sup> The *Gemara* does not state that they did not make a blessing on the study of Torah. Rather, it states that they did not recite a blessing **before** studying. They may have recited a blessing after the study of Torah, but that was not good enough.

There are two *brachot* that might be Biblical obligations: *Birchat HaMazon* and *Birchat HaTorah*. Why is it that we bench after enjoying a meal, whereas, the blessing on learning Torah is recited prior to engaging in Torah study?

The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains as follows (§430). After we receive the physical pleasure of a good meal, we are able to thank Hashem for providing us with that delicacy. However, with respect to learning Torah, when it comes to the intellect, the mind can fathom the experience one is about to encounter, and a person can therefore express appreciation even prior to engaging in the study of Torah.

Rav Asher Weiss suggests that if a person truly appreciates the privilege Hashem granted him by enabling him to study Torah, he would be overcome with gratitude and a desire to express such appreciation even **before** beginning to engage in the study of Torah. The generation that preceded the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash lacked this appreciation of Torah. Perhaps they recited the blessing over the Torah, like they did *Birchat HaMazon*, only after studying – if they enjoyed it. They did not distinguish between the material satisfaction or intellectual stimulation and the eternal benefit that Torah study affords the immortal soul. As such, the G-dly soul was drawn down into the abyss of material desire and eventually led the people to transgress even the three cardinal sins.

A story is told of Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschütz, author of the *Urim VeTummim* and many other great works. One of his students, who happened to pray next to him, noticed that each morning, when Rabbi Eybeschütz recited the morning *brachot*, he would skip the *bracha* of “*shelo asani goy*” (thanking G-d “for not making me a non-Jew”). The student finally summoned the courage to ask Rabbi Eybeschütz why he did not recite that blessing. Rabbi Eybeschütz laughed and replied that he recites that blessing first thing in the morning

when he awakes. He is so excited to be able to serve Hashem, he blurts out this blessing, unable to wait until he gets to shul to express his appreciation for being able to fulfill the 613 mitzvot. This is the excitement we are to experience when we recite *Birchat HaTorah*.

Rav Weiss offers another explanation of the *gemara* in Nedarim. The *Degel Machaneh Efraim* suggests in the name of the Baal Shem Tov that the people of that generation may have recited the *bracha* of “*asher bachar banu*,” thanking Hashem for choosing us and giving us the Torah, but they did not recite the *bracha* of “*vehaarev na*” – in which we pray that the Torah study should be sweet and enjoyable.

Rav Asher Weiss explains that the *gemara* in Nedarim is about the roots of the attitude that ultimately led the people to engage in transgressions like *sinat chinam* and the three cardinal sins, as listed in other sources as the reason for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. The first baby step that they took away from G-d, which ultimately led them to take giant steps away, was not reciting *Birchat HaTorah* first – specifically, according to the Baal Shem Tov, the *bracha* of “*vehaarev na*.” Torah was not sweet to them. It was not enjoyable to them. They studied Torah, but it was a burden, not a privilege. Children must see that their parents enjoy engaging in Torah study, that it is important to them. The way in which we relate to the study of Torah has an everlasting impression on our children. Even if at first it is not enjoyable to them, if they see that their parents enjoy it, they will continue studying with the understanding that eventually they too will uncover the secrets and develop an appreciation of the study of Torah. So, we

*Continued on page 19*



# Haazinu: Hearing the Voice of Hashem



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

**T**his week's parsha, *Parshas Haazinu*, begins as Moshe calls upon the heavens and earth to bear witness, and to hear, the words that he will say to the *Bnei Yisrael*.

הָאָזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְאֶדְבָרָה; וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ, אִמְרֵי-פִי  
– Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth (Devarim 32:1).

What is *Shirat Ha'azinu*, this song of *Ha'azinu*? It is an indictment of the sins of the nation, a prophecy of their punishment, and a promise of God's ultimate redemption that will come. As part of *Shirat Ha'azinu*, the *pasuk* tells us: בְּהַנְחִיל עֲלֵינוּ גּוֹיִם, בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם; יָצַב גְּבוּלֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *When the Most High gave nations their lot, when He separated the sons of man, He set up the boundaries of peoples according to the number of the children of Israel* (ibid, v.8).

What is the meaning behind these words: He set up the boundaries of nations according to the number of the children of Israel? What do the borders and boundaries of the nations of the world have to do with the *Bnei Yisrael*?

R' Shlomo Zalman Bregman, in his Short and Sweet on the Parsha (p.523-524, Feldheim), offers an important and relevant answer. He writes, "The mystical *sefarim* suggest that this *pasuk* contains a hint to the seventy root nations of the world. Everything that happens to them is actually for the benefit of *Klal Yisrael*. Hashem 'set the borders of the peoples' – including natural disasters and political events – according to the needs of the Jewish people and their adherence to the Torah.

"This was not always the case. The Gemara (Pesachim 118a) explains that in the twenty-six generations between the time Hashem created the world and *Matan*

*Torah*, Hashem kept the world going as a function of His chessed. In fact, this is why the phrase כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ (For His kindness is eternal) is found twenty-six times in Tehilim 136! However, after *Matan Torah*, the way the nations of the world will go is dependent upon the behavior of *Klal Yisrael* and their allegiance to Torah.

"Chazal (Yevamos 63a and Rashi there), along with the Drashos HaRan (8), speak about many of these concepts. They write that misfortune comes to the world only because of *Klal Yisrael*. Sometimes things happen in a remote part of the world – perhaps in a faraway island – in order to awaken the Jewish people to the need for repentance, *teshuva*. It is Hashem's desire at that time that we experience fear and terror and proceed to improve our ways, so that calamity should not reach us as well, R"L (may the Merciful One save us).

"This concept is alluded to in Tzefaniah 3:6-7: 'I have eliminated nations, their towers have become desolate; I have destroyed their streets without passerby; their cities have become ruins, without people, so there is no inhabitant. I said, תִּירְאֵי אֹתִי, תִּקְחֵי מוֹסֵר, אַךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל יִירָא אֹתִי – *just fear Me, accept My chastisement...*'"

R' Bregman concludes by noting that, "Chazal (Chagigah 12b) teach us: 'Woe to those people who see but do not realize what they are seeing!' It would be a pity for so much upheaval to take place in the world if *Klal Yisrael* would fail to take heed or derive the proper lessons!"

– יָצַב גְּבוּלֹת עַמִּים, לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Hashem establishes the borders of nations, according to the number of the Children of Israel.*

Everything that unfolds on the world stage has a lesson for us, and ultimately, will affect us. We must heed the call of G-d when His voice thunders around the world!

– קוֹל-ה' בְּכַחַ; קוֹל ה' בְּהַדָּר – *The voice of Hashem is in strength; the voice of Hashem is in beauty;*  
– קוֹל ה' שִׁבַר אֲרָזִים וַיִּשְׁבַּר ה' אֶת-אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָנוֹן – *The voice of Hashem breaks the cedars, yea, Hashem breaks the cedars of Lebanon* (Tehilim 29:4-5).

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rav, zt'l, teaches, "The Jew is involved in (world) events which at the outset seem to have no relevance to him... There are no neutral events in human history which the Jew may dismiss as irrelevant. The Jew is totally involved in all events and in all major struggles. Even now, the future welfare of the Jew is dependent upon the outcome of the titanic struggle between East and West. Even the final redemption of our people will be precipitated by the apocalyptic battle between Gog and Magog. Providence involves the Jew in great events. Willy nilly, the Jew plays his part on the universal historic stage" (Megillat Esther Mesorat haRav, p.56).

As Moshe *Rabbeinu* departs from his beloved nation, he leaves us with many truisms and final lessons. The lesson of our place and stature in the world, and vis à vis the world events specifically, is a lesson we would do well to remember. *The borders and boundaries of the nations are set according to the numbers of the Children of Israel.* Let us take heed of the voice of Hashem as it is heard around the world, and recommit ourselves to living a life of Torah and *mitzvos*.

– ה' לְמַבּוּל יָשָׁב וַיֵּשֶׁב ה' מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם [enthroned] at the flood; Hashem sat as King forever; ה' עַד לְעַמּוֹ יִתּוֹן ה' יִבְרַךְ אֶת-עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם; – *Hashem shall grant strength to His people; Hashem shall bless His people with peace* (Tehillim 29:10-11).

# Succot - A Time Period of our History



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

**E**ven though the SHALOSH REGALIM are primarily holidays of an agricultural nature, each holiday includes a historical aspect as well.

However, unlike PESACH which commemorates the Exodus - an event which took place on a SPECIFIC day in the beginning of the spring, SUCCOT commemorates our dwelling in 'booths' for forty years in the desert - an ENTIRE TIME PERIOD of our national history: "You shall sit in SUCCOT for seven days... in order that future generations may know that I made Bnei Yisrael live in SUCCOT when I brought them out of Egypt..." (Vayikra 23:43)

Why does the Torah insist that we commemorate this time-period specifically in the AUTUMN, at the end of the harvest season?

We may suggest a connection between the historical and agricultural aspects of CHAG HA'MATZOT and SHAVUOT:

Chag HA'MATZOT = "chag ha'aviv", celebrated in the beginning of the spring, commemorates the Exodus - the BEGINNING of the redemption process

Chag SHAVUOT = "chag ha'katzir", celebrated during the wheat harvest, commemorates Matan Torah, the PURPOSE of that redemption process.

Recall, however, that Yetziat Mitzraim had a double purpose:

- 1) Matan Torah - that Bnei Yisrael should receive the Torah;
- 2) Eretz Yisrael - that Bnei Yisrael should inherit the Promised Land.

One could suggest that just as SHAVUOT marks the realization of the first goal - Matan Torah, SUCCOT marks the achievement of the second goal - inheriting the Land of Israel.

SUCCOT IN THE DESERT - A TRANSITION STAGE

We begin with the lone pasuk in Chumash which explains the REASON for chag ha'SUCCOT: "You shall sit in SUCCOT for seven days... - IN ORDER that your future generations may know that I made Bnei Yisrael LIVE in SUCCOT when I brought them out of Egypt..." (Vayikra 23:43) Note that the purpose of sitting in the succah is NOT to remember the Exodus itself, RATHER to remember our existence in the desert - AFTER we left Egypt and BEFORE we entered Eretz Canaan.

This TRANSITION stage was characterized by a life of total dependance on G-d in the desert, in preparation for entering Eretz Yisrael, and thus a very vital stage in our spiritual growth as a Nation.

It is this specific point, the spiritual purpose of Bnei Yisrael's supernatural existence in the desert in preparation for entering the Land, which Moshe Rabeinu explains to Bnei Yisrael in Parshat Ekev: "All these MITZVOT which I command you... keep in order that you live... and inherit the Land... REMEMBER the way which G-d has led you during your wanderings of FORTY YEARS IN THE DESERT - that HE MAY TEST YOU by hardships to KNOW WHAT IS IN YOUR HEARTS; whether you would keep His commandments..."

\* He gave you the MANNA to eat... in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, RATHER man lives on the words of G-d...

\* Your CLOTHING did not wear out, nor did your feet become infected during these forty years...

\* You should know, that just as a father trains his son, so your G-d has been training you." (Dvarim 8:1-6)

Immediately after this introduction, Moshe explains why this 'testing period' was necessary: "FOR G-d is bringing you into a GOOD LAND ... and land of wheat

and barely, vines, figs and pomegranates, of olive trees and honey...a land where you will lack nothing... BE CAREFUL, lest you forget G-d and fail to keep His commandments. Should you eat and become satiated, and build fine HOUSES and live in them... and everything you own has prospered, BEWARE lest you grow HAUGHTY and FORGET your G-d who took you out of Egypt... Lest you say: My OWN power and my OWN might have won this wealth for me. Remember, it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth..." (Dvarim 8:7-19)

These basic points in Moshe Rabeinu's speech are the basis for understanding SUCCOT, for they explain WHY the transition period of the desert was necessary - to prepare Bnei Yisrael for the spiritual dangers which face them in the agrarian society that they are to establish in the Land of Israel. Therefore, SPECIFICALLY at the climax of the agricultural year - when we gather the last fruits of the field and anticipate the forthcoming rainy season - the Torah commands us to sit in "succot" for seven days IN ORDER that we remember WHY that transition period was necessary!

The very same spiritual dangers which faced Bnei Yisrael when they first entered the land resurface every year, especially during years of plenty when society tends to become affluent. Therefore, at the height of the harvest season, we 'conceptually' leave our houses and live in succot for seven days to re-live the desert experience - a model life of total dependance upon G-d.

Just as dwelling in the desert prepared Bnei Yisrael for their entry into Eretz Yisrael, so too, sitting in the Succah prepares us for the new agricultural year which begins in the fall.

# Let's Come Together



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**

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**I**n Parashat Haazinu, Moshe Rabbenu foresees the time when Beneh Yisrael would betray Hashem, and he asks in bewilderment, "Ha'l'Hashem Tigmelu Zot, Am Nabal Ve'lo Hacham" - "You repay G-d this way, a foolish, unwise nation?!" (32:6). Targum Onkelos, in translating this verse, explains that Moshe here alludes to Matan Torah. How, Moshe asks, could Beneh Yisrael betray Hashem, after He brought them to Mount Sinai and gave them the Torah?

We must wonder, why did Targum Onkelos mention the event of Matan Torah in this context? What is the particular relevance of Matan Torah to Moshe's rhetorical question about Beneh Yisrael's disobedience?

The answer, surprisingly, has to do with the unique importance of Shabbat.

The Gemara teaches that if a person observes Shabbat, then even if he had worshipped idols, his sins are forgiven. The Taz (Rav David Segal, 1586-1667) interprets this to mean that even if a sinner repented for his wrongdoing, he does not achieve atonement until he observes Shabbat. There is something special about Shabbat observance that is necessary for earning atonement.

The commentators explain this concept based on the Zohar's remark that a Jew becomes purified by gathering together with his fellow Jews. When a large number of Jews assemble, this has a special "purifying" effect upon their souls. This can be understood by way of an analogy to

a magnet. A small magnet will not be drawn to another magnet unless it is very close. However, if a magnet is very large, then the magnetic pull is much stronger, and the magnet is attracted to another magnet even from a distance. Similarly, the Jewish soul has a portion in the heavens and a portion here on earth. When a person sins, he disconnects his heavenly soul from his earthly soul. Given the vast distance between heaven and earth, it is not easy to reconnect one's earthly soul to his soul in the heavens. This can be accomplished only when we join together in prayer and learning. Such an assembly creates a strong spiritual force, like the force of a large magnet, which allows us to reconnect to our heavenly souls, thereby fully repairing the damage we caused as a result of our sins.

This is why the Shabbat experience is such a vital part of Teshuba. During the week, we are preoccupied with our careers and businesses and have little time for assembling in the synagogue. Shabbat is the day when we have more time for meaningful prayer and study, and this is, indeed, one of the most important purposes of Shabbat. This is when we come together to be "purified," to reconnect with our pure, heavenly souls, and for this reason, Shabbat is critical for earning complete atonement and forgiveness.

With this background, we can return to our verse in Parashat Haazinu. Moshe asks, "Ha'l'Hashem Tigmelu Zot," which can be read to mean, "Are you giving G-d

only 'Zot'?" The word "Zot" in Gematria equals 408 - the sum of the Gematria of the three words, "Som" (fasting), "Kol" (the sound of prayer) and "Mammon" (money given to charity). These are the three familiar components of repentance, and each of these words in Gematria equals 136, for a total of 408. Moshe Rabbenu here is teaching us that these three are all necessary, but insufficient. We cannot earn forgiveness only through fasting, prayer and charity. We also need to properly experience Shabbat by joining together with our fellow Jews in the synagogue. This is why Targum Onkelos mentions the event of Matan Torah in this context. G-d was going to give the Torah on Friday, but Moshe added a day of preparation so that the Torah would be given specifically on Shabbat. He wanted to establish the precedent of Jews assembling to study Torah on Shabbat - just as our ancestors assembled at Mount Sinai on Shabbat to receive the Torah. Coming together with our fellow Jews is an indispensable part of our Teshuba process - in addition to fasting, prayer and charity.

We must never underestimate the importance of joining together with other Jews for prayer and study, particularly on Shabbat, the day specially designated for this purpose. Let us come together, learn from one another, help one another, and experience the beauty of Torah and Tefila together, so we can all grow together and reach the great spiritual heights that can be reached only as a large, unified group.

*Continued from page 16*

ask Hashem to make the words of Torah sweet, so we can truly enjoy the beauty of studying and practicing the Torah.

May we merit studying Torah so that we fulfill the mitzvot properly as well as using our learning as a vehicle with which to get closer to Hashem.

1. Yoma 9b.
2. Rav Asher Weiss, *Minchat Asher, Sichot Al HaTorah* (Jerusalem, 2008), 400. Also see *Minchat Asher, Sichot Al Mo'adim*, vol. 2, 148.



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# Listening with the Inner Ear



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

The parsha begins (Devarim 32:1) “הָאָזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶדְבְּרָה” “Give ear heavens, and I will speak.” The pasuk asks the heavens to listen using the word “הָאָזִינוּ,” whose root is “אָזַן,” meaning “ear.” Therefore, the opening teaching in the Midrash on the parsha (Devarim Raba 10) teaches the following: “What is the halacha if one has an earache, is it permissible to treat it on Shabbos? The sages taught, ‘one may violate Shabbos even for questionably life threatening situation,’ and in this case of an earache, if it is dangerous, one may treat it on Shabbos.” The commentaries point out that this Midrash seems not to teach anything novel. Every Jew knows that one may violate Shabbos even for a questionably life threatening situation. The Midrash also cannot mean that every earache is life threatening illness because it says “if it is dangerous...”

The Avnei Nezer writes that one may not violate Shabbos to save just one limb. But if the danger to that one limb could endanger the person’s life, then one may violate Shabbos to save that limb. This is because Shabbos is called “כִּלְלֵי דְאִוְרֵי תַּחַת,” the central principle of the whole Torah. It may therefore not be violated for the sake of just one part of a person. But it may be violated for the sake of an illness that endangers the whole person.

The Avnei Nezer’s son, the Shem Mishmuel, based on his father’s teaching, offers a novel explanation of the Midrash quoted above. First, he points out that the ear has an external portion and an internal portion. He explains that the inner ear is connected deeply to the brain and that any sickness affecting the inner ear would certainly affect the whole essence of the person. The Midrash therefore teaches that if the sickness is dangerous, i.e., if

it affects the inner ear, then it actually affects the whole person and one may therefore violate Shabbos to treat it. But if the illness only affects the external part of the ear, then one may not violate Shabbos because it will not endanger his life.

The same principle applies in matters of *רוחניות*, the spirit. The Shem Mishmuel also quotes the Mishna in Rosh Hashana (3:7) which says “If one hears the echo [of the shofar], one does not fulfill the mitzva. So too, if one was passing behind a shul or he was in his house near the shul and hear the sound of the shofar or the sound of the Megillah, if he had intent, he fulfilled his obligation, and if he did not have intent, he did not fulfill his obligation.” One must hear the actual sound of the shofar, and not an echo, a secondary version of that sound. Similarly, there are two ways to listen to something. One may listen with intent so that the sound affects the essence of who he is, or he can listen superficially, in which case he will not fulfill the mitzva.

The same thing is true more generally in the Torah. We are familiar with the Ramban’s explanation of “קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיּוּ,” “You shall be holy” (Vayikra 19:2), that it is possible to be a “נבל ברשות התורה,” a vile person although he technically keeps the mitzvos and is officially orthodox. Such a person has not heard the essence of the Torah, the Torah itself. He has only heard some external, superficial aspect of the Torah, an echo of Yiddishkeit without truly hearing the inner will of Hashem.

The Shem Mishmuel makes a distinction between *שמיעה*, hearing and *האזנה*, paying attention or “giving ear.” Paying attention means listening to the essence of the message. The pasuk (Shmos 15:26) says “If you listen to the voice of Hashem your G-d and

do what is just in His eyes, and give ear to his mitzvos...” We see here that after the pasuk teaches that one must listen (*שמיעה*) to Hashem, it reemphasizes that he must also pay close attention (*האזנה*), indicating that there is a distinction between the two and that paying attention implies a closer form of listening.

A Jew must seek out the inner message of the mitzvos and listen to what they are really asking of him. When a Jew learns Daf Yomi, he should not just check it off of his Yiddishkeit checklist for that day. He should ask “What is this Gemara asking of me, what should I learn from this?” The pasuk in Tehilim (45:11) says “שְׁמַעֲי-בַת וְרָאִי וְהִטִּי אָזְנְךָ,” “Listen, daughter, see, and incline your ear.” After one listens and looks, he must listen with his inner ear to internalize the message so that the teaching so that it permeates his being and affects who he is. That which a person hears should not merely affect him superficially, but he should also make it part of his whole self.

We can now understand the continuation of the Midrash quoted above, which says “The Rabanan say that one who wishes not to have an earache nor to have a sickness in any one of his limbs should incline his ear to the Torah. Then he will inherit life, as it says (Yeshayahu 55:3) ‘Incline your ears and come to me. Listen and your lives will be revived.’” The Medrash teaches that if one does not want to have an “earache,” he should pay attention so that he will truly listen to the words of the Torah.

If a person wants to have a full, deep, and real Yiddishkeit, he must not listen to the Torah and keep the mitzvos with his ear alone. Rather, he must incline his ear to hear what the Torah wants from him.

# Are You Afraid To Change



**Rabbi YY Jacobson**  
TheYeshiva.net

## The Blind Golfer

**C**harlie Boswell was a great athlete who became blind during World War II while rescuing his friend from a tank that was under fire.

When he returned to this country after the War, he decided to take up a sport that he had never tried as yet—golf. Years of Practice and determination led him to win the honor of National Blind Golf Champion no less than 13 times. One of his heroes was the great golfer Ben Hogan, so it truly was an honor for Charlie to win the Ben Hogan Award in 1958.

Upon meeting Hogan, Charlie was awestruck and told the legendary golfer that his greatest wish was to have one round of golf with the great Ben Hogan.

Hogan was duly honored, after all, he knew Charlie as the great blind player that he was, and truly admired his skills.

But suddenly Boswell blurted out an unexpected challenge. "Would you like to play for money, Mr. Hogan?"

"Charlie, you know I can't play you for money, it wouldn't be fair!" said Mr. Hogan.

Boswell did not flinch. Instead, he upped the ante. "Aw, come on, \$1,000 per hole!"

"I can't. What would people think of me, taking advantage of you and your circumstance," replied the golfer who indeed was able to see.

"Chicken, Mr. Hogan?"

"Okay," blurted a frustrated Hogan, "I'll play. But I warn you, I am going to play my best!"

"I wouldn't expect anything else," said the confident Boswell.

"You're on Charlie. I'll tell you what. You name the time and the place!"

A very self-assured Boswell responded: "Fine. 10 o'clock...tonight!"

## The Citron

"You shall take for yourselves, on the first day [of Sukkot]," instructs the Torah in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, "the magnificent fruit of a tree, the frond of a date-palm, branches from the thick-leaved tree, and willows of the brook." These are the familiar "four kinds"—the esrog (citron), lulav (palm frond), hadassim (myrtle twigs) and aravos (willow twigs), which we celebrate and shake during the Sukkos festival.

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

It is a fascinating fact: The esrog can remain fresh and alive on a tree for five years, and just continue to grow with each

season and each year, becoming bigger and bigger. This sets the esrog apart from all other fruits, which rot or fall off the tree after its particular season has passed.

## Weathering Change

Yet here is an important question. Why does the Torah refer to the citron in this roundabout way, as "the fruit that dwells," rather than stating its name directly?

The answer is it is this quality of the citron—its ability to weather change and grow from it—which the Torah is attempting to teach us concerning our own lives.

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

This is the deeper significance of the Torah's description of the esrog, teaching us about how humans ought to mirror the esrog. The esrog is one who "dwells in his tree from year to year:" one who weathers all changes and fluctuations, whose integrity, growth and connection with his or her source and nucleus are not compromised by any of life's vacillations.

Many people do well in particular "seasons." For some, when life is sunny and warm, they thrive; for others, when life is cloudy and cold, they function well. Dark days bring out the best in them. Regardless, they are fully alive only in one season; when you take them out of their "comfort

*Continued on next page*

# Ha'azinu: Testify!



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

**R**av Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, zt'l, was the elder *Gadol HaDor* in Pre-War Europe, and was universally regarded as the greatest of sages.

Once, when Reb Dov Genechovsky was visiting the Chazon Ish, Rav Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, zt'l, he noticed that the hat of the Chazon Ish seemed worn out, and offered to purchase a new one for him.

The Chazon Ish smiled in appreciation for the gesture, but turned down the suggestion:

“A hat that saw HaGaon Rav Chaim Ozer, zt'l, we don't exchange so fast...”



*Haazinu hashamayim* — “Listen, O Heavens, and I will speak...” *V'tishma haaretz imrei fi* — “and let the earth hear the words of my mouth!” (Devarim, 32:1)

Calling upon Heaven and Earth as witnesses, our Parsha is Moshe Rabbeinu's 'swan song' and final exhortation, urging us to do Teshuva. Rashi explains that in summoning “*shamayim*” and “*aretz*” to serve as witnesses to his final message, Moshe Rabbeinu is recognizing his mortality: “I am a man of flesh and blood, and tomorrow I will die. If Am Yisrael says, ‘We never accepted the covenant,’

who will come and refute them?” *Shirat Haazinu* directs our attention to the human condition with an explicit allusion to the temporal nature of man. Heaven and earth will exist long after we are gone, and while their testimony will endure forever, we do not.

The Gemara (Taanis, 11a) shares a similar message and warning: “Lest a person say, I have acted in secret; who will testify against me on the Day of Judgment?” The Tanna explains that *avnei beiso v'koros beiso*, “the stones and support beams of a person's house will testify against him, as it is stated: ‘For a stone shall cry out from the wall, and a beam out of the timber shall answer it.’” (Chavakuk, 2:11).

Rabbi Nissan Mangel is a talmid chacham of renown, a Holocaust survivor, prolific author, and was commissioned by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to translate *Sefer Tanya*.

One of the major themes of *Tanya*, in *Shaar haYichud v'haEmunah*, is the Divine basis for all of Creation: anything that exists in this world or any world is enlivened and given existence by a Divine spark, an extension of Hashem Himself. Furthermore, Torah wisdom and Jewish consciousness see Creation as divided into four 'kingdoms' or realms of existence: 1) *domem*, 'silent', inanimate creations or the mineral kingdom 2) *tzomeach*, 'things

that grow', or the vegetable kingdom, 3) *chai*, 'living beings' or the animal kingdom, and 4) *medaber*, 'speaking beings', or the human kingdom.

When it came to translating the kingdom of '*domem*', Rabbi Mangel used the standard translation of "inanimate". When editing the manuscript, The Rebbe replaced "inanimate" with "silent", expressing the fact that even in the realm of '*domem*', there is life, albeit an existence that is silent.

Still wanting to maintain a professional and classy style of writing, Rabbi Mangel kept the word "inanimate" and placed brackets around the word "silent". When the Rebbe reviewed the translation of *Sefer Tanya* for the final time, he changed Rabbi Mangel's version once again, emphasizing "silent" as the primary translation, placing brackets around "inanimate".

The difference between these two words is not semantic. The Rebbe's perspective reflects a deep awareness that everything in existence is alive, pulsating with Divine vitality, an expression of the Ribbono Shel Olam. Even that which seems to be lacking life — heaven, earth, the walls of our homes, or even an old hat — is awake and alive, even if seemingly silent.

*Continued from previous page*

zone,” when you remove them from their “natural habitat,” they often wither away or become detached from the tree, from their source of life. When life's waterfalls transport them to new and unexpected situations—they often lose their core,

their vitality, their truthfulness, their steadfastness and courage.

The Torah teaches us to become like an esrog: to learn how to endure the diverse seasons of life. And even more, just like the esrog, to learn how to grow and develop

from each season and change in our life. For in truth, every new experience in life, affords us the opportunity to discover new horizons.

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

# Exalted Entourage

**Mrs. Shira Smiles**

International lecturer and curriculum developer

**T**here is a well-known custom of inviting seven special guests, seven shepherds of our nation, into our *sukkot*, one on each night of Sukkot. According to the Zohar, each of these precious shepherds – Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon and David – is considered a day to which the holiday is dedicated, and all of Israel then joins them.

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

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

The walls of the *sukkah* represent the Clouds of Glory that surrounded us at Sinai and then descended on the Mishkan. As such, they represent the bond between the physical and the spiritual. The clouds, like the *sukkah*, are a temporary manifestation of G-d's presence, and we can achieve that state through our service to Him. The ultimate bond,



**Each of these leaders renewed something in the world. Each year, as the world is being recreated, we draw upon these characteristics to help us repair the world, and we ask that these seven come down and impart their energies to us as individuals so we can work on our mission as G-d's nation.**

however, is achieved in the World to Come, from where our guests have come to visit us on this holiday. When we sit in the *sukkah*, we are basking in the joy of being in G-d's presence. Therefore, if one experiences discomfort while in the *sukkah*, one is exempt from sitting there, while one should attempt to “live” in the *sukkah*, catching up on one's reading and Torah study in this holy environment.

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

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

Pesach, but on Sukkot, when we've just started rebuilding the world, we can use their help with *chesed* and *gevura* and all the other traits they embody.

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

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



# So Happy for You!



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

“**A**nd the holiday of Sukkot is the test of how we will pass the test of joy” wrote Rabbi Dassler. What, we are not done with the tests of the Yamim Noraim?

It turns out that not.

The test of marriage will not be when we stop fighting, when we reconcile, when we forgive. Love waits for us to be happy. The trial of truth will be only when a partner can say to her, "I am so happy with you!" And when she says to him, "How happy I am for you!" And there is no other joy before G-d.

No one wants to have an abusive partner or a partner who wants us to change. We want someone as happy with us as we are and expresses that joy with gestures, words and a big hug.

We have become accustomed to thinking of joy or its absence as an emotion that may or may not be present in us, but the Torah requires, "You shall rejoice in..." and also, "We will rejoice and be glad in you!" The joy in us must reach the heart of another, be in him as well, only that is perfect joy.

"Are you happy with me?" asks G-d on Sukkot, "or are you only happy to be rid of the terrible image of the Days of Judgment?" And the Midrash brings a parable about a king who threw his son out of



**The joy in us must reach the heart of another, be in him as well, only that is perfect joy.**

the house because of his bad behavior, and when he decided to forgive him, he told him, "The condition will be that you do not return to the palace immediately, but stay in the Sukkah next to the palace. If you have a good time there too, I will know that being close to me is more important to you than the fact that the family is functioning again and everything is settling down, even at the cost of inconvenience." The king will check if his son is happy with him and being close to him, or if those inconveniences of austerity and strife have simply been removed.

I know so many relationships that are content with the status quo of no strife and labor peace. Marriages of convenience. There is no joy in these relationships and a joyless relationship is open to all the dangers of the world.

Joy always means giving up comfort so that we can be close. It will neutralize the viability and the profit we get from this

relationship. Joy, you will be exactly the non-interfering connection, the connection of the clean object near the partner.

And so the Midrash comments on the words "We will rejoice and be glad in you!" from Shir HaShirim, that when two spouses want to divorce because the relationship has not brought the hoped-for benefits, children... Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asks them to separate at a party, just as they were married at a party. He reminds them of their joy from that time when they did not think about what their partner could not give them, they were just happy together because they were together. When the man is drunk, he says to her, "Take the most valuable object to your father's house," and she takes it, and when he wakes up, she will tell him the most indecent words in the world: "I do not have a more valuable object in the world than you!"

When closeness is joy itself, when you are ready to gather in the Sukkah not only because it is a Sukkah of Shalom but also because it is beautiful to be so close, then all the objects in the Sukkah, all its decorations, its walls, suddenly become witnesses to a great wedding, a wedding where the joy of it simply blows your straw away so that you and heaven can finally meet.

# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



**David Curwin**  
balashon.com

The song of HaAzinu describes the ingratitude of Israel, despite G-d's kindness to them. That kindness is portrayed with the analogy of a parent caring for a child. One of the images used, in Devarim 32:14, is that of the food being provided:

הַמָּאֵת בְּקֹר וְחֶלֶב צֹאן עִם-חֶלֶב כְּרִים וְאֵילִים בְּגִי-בָשָׂן וְעֵתוּדִים עִם-חֶלֶב כְּלִיֹּת חֹטֶה וְדָם-עֵגֶב תִּשְׁתֶּה-הֶחָמֵר:

The verse begins with mention of “curds of cattle and milk of sheep, with the best of lambs, and rams of Bashan and he-goats, with the very finest wheat.” However, I'd like to focus on the last phrase of the verse, which is particularly difficult to translate. Some render it as “you drank fine wine from blood-red grapes,” and others as “they drank the blood of grapes for wine.” None of these, in my opinion, fully grasp the meaning of the verse.

The commentaries of both Seforno and Rav Hirsch point out that the דָּם-עֵגֶב – literally “blood of the grape” refers to the initial grape juice. The חֶמֶר, however, indicates a fermented drink – in this case, the mature wine. So according to this interpretation, they received wine straight from the vine, without the effort of preparing it. I would suggest translating the phrase as “you drank the blood of grapes, fermented [as wine].”

The root חמר, as used here, means “to ferment.” It is more common in Aramaic than in Hebrew. We find it in such phrases as כָּל הַחֲמִירָא – “all the leaven” (to be considered destroyed before Pesach) and חֲמֵר מְדִינָה – literally, “wine of the province,” i.e., any beverage considered a substitute for wine in kiddush.

The other meaning of the root חמר is “to be red.” This root is the origin of such words as:

- חֶמֶר – originally “bitumen” (from its reddish color), now meaning “clay”
- חֲמֵר – originally “clay” (also of a reddish color), then came to mean any kind of material or matter
- חֲמֹר – “donkey”. It originally meant “the red animal.”

While some scholars don't connect the two uses of this root, others point to our verse as proof that fermented wine is associated with the red color of blood.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**  
Mizrachi Melbourne

Find four words in a row whose **סופי תיבות** (last letters) spell G-d's ineffable name backwards (Hey, Vov, ....).

### Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that whenever G-d's name appears in this way (**backwards**) either in the first letters of the words or the last letters, it symbolizes G-d manifesting His Midat HaDin (Stern Judgement). In the context here in Haazinu it refers to the judgement that will be executed against the nations who are our adversaries. Where the letters appear **forward**, it is an expression of Chesed (kindness/compassion), such as in the words – וירמי ושמר – דם השם וירמי ושמר.

(גדוה:ל-ח-ל-ט) (דבריה זי ראה עמך עמך)



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Kol Hatorah Kulah

National Council of Young Israel

RZA-Mizrachi USA

## CALIFORNIA

Beth Jacob Congregation  
Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy  
West Coast Torah Center  
Young Israel of North Beverly Hills  
YULA High School  
Young Israel of Century City

## COLORADO

DAT Minyan  
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue  
The Denver Kehillah

## CONNECTICUT

Beth David Synagogue  
Congregation Agudath Sholom  
Young Israel of West Hartford

## FLORIDA

Beth Israel Congregation  
Hebrew Academy RASG  
PlayHard PrayHard  
Congregation Torah Ohr  
Sha'arei Bina Torah Academy for Girls  
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale

## GEORGIA

Congregation Beth Jacob  
Congregation Ohr HaTorah

## HAWAII

Kehilat Olam Ejad Ganim

## ILLINOIS

Mizrachi-Religious Zionists of Chicago

## MARYLAND

Kemp Mill Synagogue  
Pikesville Jewish Congregation  
Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation

## MASSACHUSETTS

Congregation Beth El Atereth Israel  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe  
Congregation Shaarei Tefillah  
Young Israel of Brookline

## MICHIGAN

Young Israel of Oak Park  
Young Israel of Southfield  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe

## MINNESOTA

Congregation Darchei Noam

## MISSOURI

Yeshivat Kadimah High School Nusach

Hari B'nai Zion Congregation  
Young Israel of St. Louis

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hillel at Dartmouth

## NEW JERSEY

Ahavas Achim  
Volunteer Chaplain Middlesex County  
Congregation AABJ&D  
Congregation Adath Israel of the JEC  
National Council of Young Israel  
Congregation Ahavat Achim  
Congregation Ahavath Torah  
Congregation Brothers of Israel  
Congregation Darchei Noam of Fair Lawn  
Congregation Etz Chaim of Livingston  
Congregation Israel of Springfield  
Congregation Ohr Torah  
Congregation Sons of Israel of Cherry Hill  
Ma Tov Day Camp  
Ohav Emeth  
Pal Foundation  
Shomrei Torah of Fair Lawn  
Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center  
Yavneh Academy  
National Council of Young Israel  
Young Israel of Teaneck

## NEW YORK

Congregation Anshei Shalom  
Congregation B'nai Tzedek  
Congregation Bais Tefilah of Woodmere  
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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