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

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

In loving memory of Phil Miller, Feivel Baer ben Aryeh Leib, nifter suddenly on 8 Tishrei, five weeks before his 103rd birthday. Condolences to his daughters, Sandra (Joe) Burstyn and Hope (Michael) Sachwald; grandchildren Todd, Shawn (Chavie), Heather (Burstyn) Fisher (Evan Fisher), and Scott Burstyn; and grandchildren Shlomo & Yosef Fisher and Moshe & Baylah Burstyn. Grandpa Phil remained alert and in sound mind, and brought nachus to the extended family to the end.

My close friend Saadia Greenberg, who has compiled Likutei Devrei Torah for 28 years, shared my woe at having almost no time to prepare Devrei Torah this week. With Yom Kippur Tuesday and Wednesday, and the Devrei Torah due by Thursday evening, we have only one day to prepare. This week, with a death in the family Motzi Shabbas (see the dedication above), I could not start preparing before Kol Nidre. With no realistic alternative, I am adapting an earlier message to provide an introduction this week – after a few introductory sentences.

As my son and daughter-in-law approach their thirteenth wedding anniversary, we count our blessings for having become a part of the Burstyn family, and Patriarch Phil Miller. When we met Grandpa Phil, he was approaching his 90th birthday. He lived on his own, drove his car, did his shopping, and came to family events on his own until he was 98 years old. One memory in particular ties in with the Shalosh Regalim (festivals). Some months ago, on a warm afternoon, I joined Phil sitting on the front porch. Phil noticed something about a car parked around the corner and mentioned it to me. I got up to take a closer look but still did not notice what Phil had observed from further away. Grandpa Phil reminds me of Moshe looking at a bush burning in the Midbar but not being consumed. As Rabbi Fohrman remarks, how many people would look at the bush and notice that it was burning without consuming the bush? Phil had this kind of insight, at age 102. A person so observant at any age would be remarkable. For someone aged 102 who could not approach the car without help, this insight was a miracle. The life of Phil Miller, z"l, was a miracle, a blessing from Hashem. He continued to bring nachus to the entire family until the night he died. "Caring for" Grandpa Phil in his old age (which started at age 98) was a privilege for the entire Burstyn family, including his four great grandchildren.

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

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

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

Rabbi David Fohrman extends the connection between Pesach and Sukkot. When B'Nai Yisrael leave Egypt, they first journey from Rameses to Sukkot (Shemot 12:37). What is Sukkot? When Yaakov leaves Lavan, after he encounters his brother Esav, Yaakov and his family journey to Sukkot, where he builds a house and shelters for his livestock. He calls the place Sukkot, after the shelters that he builds for his animals (Bereshis 33:17). Sukkot therefore means shelters worthy of sheltering animals.

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

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

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

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

Our family always feels close to my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, on Sukkot. We enjoyed many Sukkot meals and visits with Leonard and Elizabeth Cahan, and their family, over the years. Rabbi Cahan helped me build our first two Sukkot – plywood structures that were beautifully crafted, lasted for many years, but eventually were too difficult for us to put up and take down by ourselves. (We now have a "snap" Sukkah that I can put up or take down by myself in

less than an hour.) Sukkot with the Cahan family always embodied the spirit and feeling of moedim l'simcha – one of the happiest times of the year. May it be a time of rejoicing for all of us.

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

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Yonatan Ophir ben Ilana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom; Chag Samaich; Moedim l'simcha,
Hannah & Alan

Dvar Torah: Sukkot: To Draw Even Closer

by Rabbi Label Lam © 2016

I knew that everything that Elochim made, that will be forever; we cannot add to it, nor can we subtract from it; and **Elochim made it so that they should fear have fear before Him.** (Koheles 3:14)

On Sukkos we read from the Book of Koheles which is written by the wisest of all men, King Solomon. Who knows, we might benefit from listening well to his words. Even a single line might prove life altering if appreciated deeply. Just as the Sukkah itself is designed to reorient us to the ultimate realities of life, so too a few choice words from King Solomon can serve to bring everything into focus.

The Sefer Chovos HaLevavos builds the entire Chapter of Inspection on the partial verse, "Elochim made it so they should have fear before him." What is it that HASHEM made they we should fear Him? The answer is, "EVERYTHING!" That's the beginning of a revolution in thought in how we view and experience all the stuff of life. The purpose of anything and everything that was created, macro and micro, and in between is that we can gain a profound sense of awe and awareness of G-d.

When one goes to an art museum to study the works of a certain artist, his talent shines through and his signature is recognizable in every piece. Chana declared when celebrating the birth of Shmuel, "There is no (Tzur) rock like our G-d!" The Talmud plays with the word Tzur and discovers a new meaning. There is no Tziar- Artist like our G-d! He is the greatest artist! His artwork is on display all over the world.

Wherever we cast our glance, and inspecting eye, there can be discovered a hint of the overwhelming greatness of the artist of all artists Himself.

Avraham Avinu started on this path 3700 years ago, and with his original mind, it led him to conclude with certainty that we are sitting in a designer Sukkah and the exact purpose of that design is to attract our attention and inspire ultimate curiosity and an overpowering awe. What is the matrix? How are we to study a thing? Simple as a dimple! Five areas of criteria suffice for now. We are looking for an exhibition of 1) Power 2) Wisdom 3) Kindliness 4) Purpose 5) Unity. That's all!

Consider the Periodic Table of Elements. Everything in the physical universe, you and me and the air between us is made up of some combination of stuff listed there. All the various elements from Hydrogen to Uranium, from the lightest gas to the heavy metals is all composed of the very same stuff with differing densities of neutrons and protons and electrons orbiting at various valences. When you open up any one of them oceans of sublime energy comes pouring out. At the

core is a rich concentration of the same pure power. Appreciate please that power, wisdom, kindliness, purpose, and unity are on open display.

While driving to where we would spend Yom Kippur, my daughter and I found ourselves enamored by the rich display of color and the pageantry of the fall leaves. I reminded her of a simple point which we immediately fact checked. Only humans experience the full range of colors that paint our world. A few creatures see weakly one or two colors but most are looking at a black and white picture. Why is an orange orange? The organization of those millions rods and cones that give us access to color is there solely for our benefit, to attract our attention, to recognize the greatness of the Artist through His art, to develop a burning passion to know that Artist even more and **to draw even closer.**

https://torah.org/torah-portion/to-draw-even-closer/

The Mitzvah of Lulav in Jerusalem Today

by Rabbi Zachary Truboff, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah

All three pilgrimage festivals were centered around the experience of being at the Temple during the holiday. Whereas each person was required to offer a sacrifice for the festival, on Sukkot other unique rituals also took place at the Temple over the seven days of the holiday. These include the water drawing ceremony, simchat beit hashoeva, and the custom of circling the mizbeach with aravot. In addition, the mishnah (Sukkah 3:13) states that the arbah minim would be taken up in the Temple during all seven days of the holiday, whereas in the medinah, presumably outside the Temple, they would only be taken up on the first day. Though no mention of it appears in Mishneh Torah, Rambam states in his Commentary on the Mishnah (Sukkah 3:12) that medinah did not refer to outside the Temple, but to outside of Jerusalem, implying that in the times of the Temple, those in Jerusalem also took up the arbah minim all seven days of the holiday.

After the Temple's destruction, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai issued a series of enactments to enable Jews to navigate the new religious world they found themselves in. For Sukkot, he instituted a rabbinic obligation that Jews should take up the arbah minim all seven days of the holiday and not just on the first day. However, Rabbi Yakov Ettlinger (1798-1871), a noted German halakhic authority and the author of Bikurei Yakov, would later argue, based on Rambam's comment, that even after the Temple's destruction, there remains a biblical obligation to take up the arbah minim all seven days of the holiday in the city of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Sholomo Zalman Auerbach (1910-1994), a prominent halakhic authority who lived in Jerusalem, addresses Rabbi Ettlinger's claims in his responsa (Minchat Shlomo Tinyana, 57). He notes that Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926), author of Ohr Sameach, a collection of novallae on Mishnah Torah, vehemently disagreed with Rabbi Ettlinger and brought several proofs from the gemara to demonstrate that his position was untenable. In response to this, Rabbi Auerbach attempts to show that it is perhaps possible to creatively read the gemara in such a way as to leave open the possibility that Rabbi Ettlinger's position is a viable interpretation. Still, in the end, he sides with Rabbi Meir Simchah. He explains that even if it was true that the arbah minim were taken up all seven days in Jerusalem during the time of the Temple, this no longer applies today. Why is this? Because for Rambam, the mitzvah of arbah minim is also connected to the mitzvah of rejoicing in God's presence at the Temple. When the latter is no longer is possible then so too the mitzvah of arbah minim no longer applies in the city of Jerusalem either.

In seeing Jerusalem today, it is east to attest to the fact that the city is holy. But without the presence of the Temple, it is also clear that our joy during the holiday is far from complete.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Coordinator, International Beit Din Institute; Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Ordination 2010. Note: Responsa, Minchat Shlomo Tinyana (2-3) 57, is available in Hebrew and English translation at the following location:

https://library.yctorah.org/lindenbaum/lulav-in-jerusalem-sukkot/

Three Tendencies: Thoughts for Parashat Ha'azinu

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

In his essay, “The Messianic Idea in Judaism,” Professor Gershom Scholem points to three tendencies within the spiritual life of the Jewish people.

The “conservative” element stresses the need to maintain things as they’ve always been. It is manifested in a deep commitment to Jewish law and custom; it focuses on detail and ritual. This tendency wants to ensure stability and continuity. It worries that any change in the system can lead to the unraveling of the entire structure.
The “restorative” element longs for the “good old days.” It wants to renew our days as of old, to reestablish the kingdom of King David, to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Its underlying thought is that the greatest eras and personalities are in the past, and that our wish is to return to a past “Golden Age.”

The “utopian” element longs for a messianic era. It is characterized by spiritual restlessness and idealistic fervor. It contains within it bubbling emotions, and can be creative, nerve-wracking, even painful. It calls on us to change our focus from the safety of the past to the uncertainty of the future.

Throughout Jewish history, these three elements have reflected themselves in our religious lives. In some eras, one element has predominated; in other eras, another element has predominated. But all three have always been with us to some degree.

The challenge is to balance the claims of all three tendencies, and to develop a Jewish life that draws on the strengths of each. The “conservative” element maintains the religious structure of our daily lives. Without adherence to halakha on a regular basis, Judaism is sapped of its influence on our lives. It becomes a nostalgic pastime to be experienced on special occasions. It becomes a matter of personal preference rather than a commitment to a divinely ordained way of life. Without the “conservative” element, Judaism becomes watered down to such a degree as to lose its real spiritual power.

The “restorative” element reminds us that we indeed did enjoy “golden ages” and we did indeed produce great personalities. While we in fact do not want to return to the past, yet we can derive tremendous inspiration from the great events and personalities of Jewish history. If we can restore the best elements of our past, this can be a boon to us and to the future of our people.

The “utopian” element reminds us to focus on the future. Without the idealism and hopefulness of utopianism, we risk becoming mired in the past. This tendency keeps us focused on developing new ideas, new ways of approaching an imperfect world, new aspirations for improving society.

In this week’s Torah portion, we read: “Remember the days of old; think about the years of the past generations. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will explain to you.” (Devarim 32:7). I believe this verse can be understood as providing us insight on maintaining a vibrant Judaism that maintains a keen balance among the conservative, restorative and utopian tendencies.
“Remember the days of old…” Tradition is vital to our wellbeing. By rooting ourselves in our traditions and teachings, we retain continuity with our past and we deepen our sense of rootedness and structure. This is the conservative tendency.

“Ask your father…” Rashi comments that “father” refers to our prophets. This is a nod to the restorative element. We lack prophecy today; yet we long for the “good old days” when we had divinely inspired prophets who could lead us, who could deliver direct messages from God. Lacking the presence of living prophets, we must depend on the words of the prophets as recorded in the Bible.

“Your elders…” Rashi comments that “elders” refers to our sages. The hallmark of a genuine sage is wisdom to apply ancient teachings to the needs of the current generation. Historically, our greatest sages have also been the most utopian i.e. the most tuned in to the coming generations of the Jewish people, the most concerned about a messianic future.

Judaism that is based primarily on the “conservative” tendency becomes dry and over-ritualized. Judaism that is based primarily on the “restorative” element becomes quixotic and irrelevant. Judaism that is based primarily on the “utopian” element becomes deracinated, flailing out in various directions while disconnecting itself from the wellsprings of Jewish tradition.

In truth, we need all three elements and we need to balance them wisely. This was true of the Jewish past. It is true for the Jewish present. It is the foundation of the Jewish future.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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https://www.jewishideas.org/three-tendencies-thoughts-parashat-haazinu-1

NOTE: The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals offers a High Holiday and Sukkot reader free to download at
https://www.jewishideas.org/article/holiday-reader-institute-jewish-ideas-and-ideals

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Biblical Criticism, Historical Truth

Book Review by Rabbi Hayyim Angel *

Joshua Berman, *Ani Maamin: Biblical Criticism, Historical Truth, and the Thirteen Principles of Faith*)Maggid, 2020(, 321 pages

Joshua Berman has written a much-needed book for those in the Orthodox community who have read popular works on Bible criticism but who lack the tools to evaluate the merits of various theories or the religious implications of these theories. Informed by decades of research into both traditional and academic methods, Berman is uniquely qualified to address the religious and academic issues in the first book-length study of its kind.]i[

Berman's primary argument in the first half of his book is that most purported faith-science conflicts arise from misunderstandings of the nature of academic truth. There are several influential academic Bible theories, such as the documentary hypothesis, which posits multiple human authors of the Torah to account for the contradictions and redundancies in the Torah, or arguments that many narratives lack archaeological corroboration and therefore are fictional and irrelevant. Berman posits that these are based on anachronistic assumptions about literature, history, and law, rather than on the world of ideas in ancient Near Eastern texts and contexts. It is therefore critical from a scholarly perspective to shed these assumptions, and to attempt to understand the Torah as a literary creation of the ancient world. By doing so, we also may better appreciate the revolutionary religious and moral developments that the Hebrew Bible contributed to ancient Near Eastern culture and literature. These values transformed many areas of world culture.

Many of Berman's arguments in the first half of his book are summaries of his two earlier academic books published by Oxford University Press: Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism)2017(, and Created Equal: How the Bible Broke from Ancient Political Thought)2008(. Because Ani Maamin is primarily addressed to the Orthodox community, Berman is careful to demonstrate the continuity of his ideas and methodology with classical rabbinic sources. For example, he cites Maimonides and Gersonides when discussing the literary and historical context of the Torah, and he explores the thought of Netziv and Rabbi Zadok HaKohen of Lublin on the relationship between the Written and Oral Law.

Berman does an admirable job in challenging the central assumptions of the documentary hypothesis. For example, proponents of that foundational theory of biblical criticism maintain that Deuteronomy was written as a new version of history and law intended to replace the earlier books of the Torah. Berman notes many examples, however, where Deuteronomy clearly relies on the earlier Torah narratives and laws, and cannot be read as a stand-alone work. Berman asks why the Torah would retain conflicting narratives and laws. The source critics who proposed the documentary hypothesis respond that the Torah is an anthology of competing traditions that were brought together by later redactors. Berman argues, however, that the Torah's laws are not a compromise between different communities that had different laws, as the source critics argue. Rather, the collections of laws in the Torah are replete with conflicts without having their differences synthesized. "The sine qua non of a compromise document…is that it will iron out conflict and contradiction so

that the community can proceed following one authoritative voice")134(. There are also no known ancient Near Eastern narrative anthologies of combined sources, nor compromise legal documents, to serve as precedents to this hypothesis. Finally, "why would the later author of Deuteronomy compose laws designed to replace laws spoken by God in Exodus, and replace them with laws whose authority is only that of Moses?")135(.

Regarding the documentary hypothesis theory of two spliced documents to create the Noah narrative, Berman identifies the many textual and methodological holes in that theory. Once again, there are no known examples of interwoven texts in the ancient Near East. Most strikingly, the complete flood narrative in the Torah features 17 elements that are parallel with the Babylonian flood narrative, the Epic of Gilgamesh. Each purported document in the Noah narrative contains only some of these elements, whereas only the combined accounts)i.e., Genesis 6–9(contain all 17 elements, in the same order as Gilgamesh. Based on these and several other arguments, Berman states that "the two-source hypothesis… should be rejected entirely on academic grounds, because it collapses under the weight of its own deficiencies")126(.

The architects of the documentary hypothesis mistakenly read the narratives of the Torah as they would evaluate modern histories, and therefore concluded that the Torah's contradictions must have arisen from the hands of different authors. However, Tanakh has no concept of history in the way that we think of that discipline today. The authors of ancient literature, including Tanakh, harnessed accepted historical details for the purpose of exhortation. Pre-modern writers did not sift sources to paint as accurate a picture of the past as possible, but rather used what was known about the past to inspire and instruct. The listener would engage with these texts to learn the lessons those texts come to teach:

> *The Tanakh is a valuable account of the past, not because all it records is fact. It is a valuable account of the past because of the divine authority behind it; it is valuable because it casts the events of the past in a way that ensures that we come away with the most important messages those events have to teach. Our modern environment tells us we should read the news or learn about past events and then process the facts for ourselves, determine their meaning on our own. Our sacred sources insist that we come to the sacred texts in submission with the belief and commitment that this alone is the best way to understand the meaning and lessons of the events that are portrayed. This is how God has authorized that we relate to these events)25(.*

Berman warns that we should not fall into today's historical bias, that "facts" that are considered "historical" are more valuable than other forms of teaching.

In this vein, Berman devotes a chapter to the historicity of the exodus from Egypt. Although we cannot hope to corroborate every point of the Torah's narrative from extant Egyptian records, the Torah's account contains several significant parallels to contemporaneous Egyptian artifacts and literary records that demonstrate the Torah's deep cultural familiarity with Egypt at the time of the exodus.]ii[The Torah built a series of religious and moral lessons upon a historical core.

Tanakh did break rank with other ancient foundational narratives of surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultures. Tanakh presents a historical continuum and depicts real people and events that occurred in known geographical settings. Ancient Near Eastern myth is generally set in places not easily identified by their readers, addresses realities of human existence, focuses on a small number of figures, and typically employs supernatural events and figures. In stark contrast, God's interaction with people in Tanakh is dynamic, and relates to many people over a long period of time. Berman observes that these fundamental differences reflect the different genre established by Tanakh:

> *The Tanakh is… a record of how God responds to Israel's actions across the history of their relationship in covenant…. The surrounding cultures of the ancient Near East believed that there was no force that unilaterally controlled world events; the gods were in tension with one another, and this tension played out in the chaotic turns of world events. By contrast, the Tanakh posits that the world is controlled by a God who purposefully directs human—that is to say historical—affairs according to His will… Writing in this new convention makes sense only if the Tanakh assumes that it is telling us about individuals that really lived and events that really happened.*)37–38(

Hazal and classical commentaries generally assume that biblical stories are historical, but there is meaningful debate on that subject as well. The primary endeavor of traditional commentary is to uncover the religious meaning of our sacred texts, and that is precisely what the original prophetic authors intended for their audiences.]iii[

In addition to bringing their anachronistic sense of history into their analyses, the source critics who created the documentary hypothesis, influenced by Aristotle, also imposed an expectation of consistency. Since there are contradictions in the Torah, these critics argued, the Torah must be a literary product of different hands, as a single author would not contradict himself. Berman, however, challenges this assumption. Can we be certain that the authors of biblical Israel shared Aristotle's notion that wise people do not contradict themselves? Shalom Carmy and David Shatz argue that

> *The Bible obviously deviates, in many features, from what philosophers)especially those trained in the analytic tradition(have come to regard as philosophy…. Philosophers try to avoid contradicting themselves. When contradictions appear, they are either a source of embarrassment or a spur to developing a higher order dialectic to accommodate the tension between the theses. The Bible, by contrast, often juxtaposes contradictory ideas, without explanation or apology.]iv[*

To account for the narrative discrepancies between Deuteronomy and the other books of the Torah, Berman appeals to analogies with Hittite vassal treaties. They often made treaties between themselves as suzerain)the more powerful king(and vassal nations)subordinate countries who depended on the suzerain for protection in exchange for loyalty and taxation(. Among the numerous similarities between Hittite treaties and the covenant of the Torah, Hittite kings used updated language in their treaties to suggest changes in terms of the relationship between the suzerain and vassal. Hittites did not want the earlier versions of the treaty to be forgotten or supplanted. Rather, they retold stories with differences, and those differences were critical for understanding the change in the standing of the vassal. The vassal would understand these changes in this manner, specifically by reading the earlier and updated versions together. Imagine a cuneiform version of "show track changes." Berman concludes that

> *The Hittite kings "updated" the past to serve the needs of the moment…. There was no desire to forget now the story had been told in previous generations. Rather, the retention of the previous telling of the history was crucial, even as that history was rewritten.… Only by accessing the previous version of the history between the two kings would the vassal fully grasp the nuance of the new version of those events and properly digest the diplomatic signaling inherent in the telling.… Every change in nuance between the accounts was carefully measured*.)101(

Similarly, Deuteronomy is a renewal treaty between God and Israel, who has been a rebellious vassal. The retold history highlights rebellions, leaving Israel on different terms with God as the people are about to enter the land. Deuteronomy is intended to be read along with the other, earlier biblical books, not to replace them. Deuteronomy does not present a stand-alone recap of all Israel's history, but rather reviews only several critical points of the covenantal history from Sinai onward, often highlighting Israel's intransigence. Readers are expected to discern the nuanced differences to ascertain the change in Israel's standing before God after a generation of rebellions.

While Berman's critique of the documentary hypothesis is persuasive, and his alternative hypothesis is consistent with a contemporaneous ancient treaty-making technique, one might ask the same question that Berman levels effectively against the source critics: If Deuteronomy is a royal upgrade of a suzerain-vassal treaty where the nuanced differences redefine the relationship, why is the book largely presented in the mouth of Moses? Shouldn't God as sovereign be the one to restate the treaty? Berman maintains that Moses acts as God's agent to tell them to recall the covenant, but it is unclear why God should not command Israel to recall that covenant.

The conventional position adopted by classical commentaries appears closer to what is suggested in Deuteronomy: At the end of his life, Moses reviewed certain seminal elements of the God-Israel relationship and gave them the tools for success in the Land of Israel in their relationship with God. Moses made rhetorical adjustments for his religious exhortation, and focused on events that strengthened the God-Israel relationship for future generations. This position arrives at the same approach as that proposed by Berman. We should read the narratives in the other books of the Torah alongside the accounts in Deuteronomy, paying close attention to the similarities and differences to ascertain the meaning of each passage. At the same time, this approach avoids making a complete analogy between Hittite treaties and the Torah, given that Moses is the speaker in Deuteronomy.

Regarding the legal verses in the Torah, Berman rejects the source critics' assumption that contradictions suggest different authors, with Deuteronomy intended as a comprehensive legal code to replace earlier codes. The critics' theory is based on another modern assumption that the Torah and other ancient Near Eastern legal texts are comprehensive

codes. This assumption is rooted in the usage of statutory law in America, England, and Germany that became prevalent in the nineteenth century. Statutory law is a comprehensive system that supersedes all earlier laws and is binding on the courts. However, until the early nineteenth century, a majority of Germans, English, and Americans used common law. In a common law system, judges arrive at decisions based on the mores and spirit of the community. Written laws serve as resources for making decisions, but are neither comprehensive nor binding on the courts. Law in the Torah is common law, as are the other law collections of the ancient Near East. The Torah never instructs judges to use the written law, nor does it provide a comprehensive code of laws. For example, there are no laws governing how to get married in the Torah, even though Judaism recognizes marriage as an institution governed by Torah law itself. Contradictions reflect different parts of an ongoing legal process and require a complementary Oral Law from the very beginning, since there is no way to use the Written Law exclusively to govern a society. Berman submits that Deuteronomy is Moses' restatement and new application of earlier teachings of the Torah in anticipation of the people's entry to the Land of Israel.

Although the critics' theories are again weakened by Berman's analysis, one still may wonder why Hazal and classical commentaries, living in ages when common law was widespread, viewed contradictions between legal verses in the Torah as requiring resolution. While they would agree with Berman that we require an Oral Law and that the Written Torah is not a comprehensive legal code, it appears that they did view the Written Law as somewhat more binding on the legal system than what Berman's analysis yields. Additionally, in the real time of Exodus and Leviticus, the people expected to enter the land shortly after Sinai, since the sin of the spies and God's decree of 40 years of wandering had not yet occurred. Why would these collections of laws not reflect a similar emphasis as Deuteronomy? Further study is required of the relationship between the laws in Deuteronomy and the other law collections in the Torah.

Having presented the usage of history and law in the Torah as following ancient Near Eastern conventions rather than modern conceptions, Berman identifies the revolutionary ideas of the Torah from within its ancient context. After enumerating several of the central innovations of the Torah, Berman concludes,

> *Throughout the ancient world, the truth was self-evident: all men were not created equal.…]The world they created[was ordered around a rigid hierarchy, where everyone knew his station in life, each according to his class. For the first time in history, the Torah presented a vision… with a radically different understanding of God and man. It introduced new understandings of the law, of political office, of military power, of taxation, of social welfare.… What we find in the Torah is a platform for social order marked with the imprint of divinity.*)178(

The Torah's religious and moral sense so vastly eclipses anything produced by its neighbors that one can better appreciate what God wanted Israel and humanity to recognize:

> *See, I have imparted to you laws and rules, as the Lord my God has commanded me, for you to abide by in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. Observe them faithfully, for that will be proof of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples, who on hearing of all these laws will say, "Surely, that great nation is a wise and discerning people." For what great nation is there that has a god so close at hand as is the Lord our God whenever we call upon Him? Or what great nation has laws and rules as perfect as all this Teaching that I set before you this day?*
>)Deuteronomy 4:5–8(]v[

Berman's book is vital for understanding the relationship between faith and academic Bible study, where we can benefit from those texts as useful tools in learning and appreciate the staggering revolution of the Torah within its ancient context. We should not impose our modern Western notions of history or Aristotelian consistency onto the Torah, nor should we impose our modern sentiments of statutory law onto the Torah. By focusing on the Torah's eternal lessons, by attuning ourselves to differences between narratives to refine our understanding of the message of each passage, by recognizing that the Written Law was never intended as a comprehensive code of law but always required an Oral Law, we can maintain complete faith in revelation without hiding from the beneficial aspects of contemporary scholarship.

In the second half his book, Berman places Maimonides' formulation of the 13 principles in Helek)the final chapter of Tractate Sanhedrin(into its historical context, noting that Maimonides was the first Jewish thinker who included God's revelation of the Torah through the uniquely superior prophecy of Moses as essential aspects of Jewish belief. This fact alone explains the rabbinic views that allow for minor narrative additions to the Torah through later prophets. Significantly, Maimonides does not include these elements of belief when ruling on who is a heretic in Hilkhot Teshuva)The Laws of

Repentance(. Berman analyzes the sources and concludes that Maimonides would consider one who believes that God revealed parts of the Torah to later prophets to be mistaken, but not a heretic:

> *The Rambam's view in Hilkhot Teshuva is that one must believe that all of the Torah is from Heaven. If one believes that at God's behest another prophet added to the narrative portions of the Torah, then for the Rambam, that person is erroneous in his belief, but not deemed a kofer baTorah]a heretic[.)240(*

I leave it to the experts in pesak and Maimonidean studies to evaluate Berman's arguments regarding the fate of the misguided. If Berman is correct, he makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the halakhic status, in Maimonides' view, of much of contemporary Jewry, including many within the Orthodox community. Given Maimonides' prestige and widespread acceptance as the primary source of the principles of Jewish faith, Berman's analysis is exceptionally valuable.
Another productive avenue to arrive at the same communal conclusion is the position of Menachem Kellner, who surveys classical Jewish thinkers and concludes that Maimonides' dogmatic view is a minority position. The majority adopt the view that one is a heretic only when one willfully denies a tenet espoused by Jewish thought, or willfully accepts a tenet denied by Jewish thought. Otherwise, one is mistaken but not a heretic.]vi[

Berman's book is an important contribution to scholarship, and to our religious pursuit of truth in the context of Tanakh study. He challenges readers to examine critically the assumptions they bring to the text. Those who ignore ancient Near Eastern laws and narratives lose a vital tool to evaluate the eternal messages of the Torah. At the same time, it is possible to exaggerate the parallels and analogies between the Torah and other ancient Near Eastern texts. Regardless of the proper balance, Berman provides a fresh perspective on Deuteronomy and its relationship with the other books of the Torah, and expands our horizons in learning, methodology, and religious growth.

ENDNOTES:

]i[Another important, recent book that addresses related issues is Amnon Bazak, Ad HaYom HaZeh]Until This Day: Fundamental Questions in Bible Teaching[,)Yediot Aharonot-Tevunot, 2013(; see also my Review Essay, "Faith and Scholarship Can Walk Together: Rabbi Amnon Bazak on the Challenges of Academic Bible Study in Traditional Learning," Tradition 47)2014(, 78–88. Bazak surveys various religious and academic challenges that arise throughout Tanakh study and its encounter with academic theories. Berman's book contributes meaningfully to this discussion by focusing primarily on the assumptions of ancient Near Eastern writers, determining where there is overlap with Tanakh, and where Tanakh was revolutionary in its context. In the process, Berman also deflates several pillars of certain academic theories that many perceive as challenges to faith, as will be discussed in this essay.

]ii[For further discussion, see, for example, James K. Hoffmeier, Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition)Oxford University Press, 1996(; Kenneth A. Kitchen, On the Reliability of the Old Testament)Eerdmans, 2003(.

]iii[See Hayyim Angel, "Controversies Over the Historicity of Biblical Passages in Traditional Commentary," in Angel, The Keys to the Palace: Essays Exploring the Religious Value of Reading the Bible)Kodesh Press, 2017(, 115–131.

]iv["The Bible as a Source for Philosophical Reflection," in History of Jewish Philosophy, vol. 2, ed. Daniel H. Frank & Oliver Leaman)Routledge, 1997(, 13–14. Cf. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Days of Deliverance: Essays on Purim and Hanukkah)Ktav, 2007(, 29.

]v[See also Jeremiah Unterman, Justice for All: How the Jewish Bible Revolutionized Ethics)Jewish Publication Society, 2017(.

]vi[Menachem Kellner, Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel)Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1986(; Menachem Kellner, Must a Jew Believe Anything?)Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1999(. See also the review essay by David Berger, Tradition 33)1999(, 81–89. Kellner's second edition of Must a Jew Believe Anything?)2006(contains a response to Berger's review. See also Marc B. Shapiro, The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised)Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004(, and Hayyim Angel, "Dogma, Heresy, and Classical Debates: Creating Jewish Unity in an Age of Confusion," in Increasing Peace through Balanced Torah Study. Conversations 27)Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2017(, 22–29.

* Yeshiva University and Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/biblical-criticism-historical-truth-911

Succos – Working for G-d

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2017

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos and Yom Tov!

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

http://www.teach613.org/succos-working-for-g-d/

Ha’azinu – Keeping the Flame Alive

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2021

One of the great gifts of a Torah life is the calendar. Every week, no matter what is happening in our lives, we have Shabbos. Every year, no matter what is happening in the world, we have Pesach, Shavuos and Succos. Every year, no matter how hard the year may have been, we have the inspiration of the High Holidays and a chance for a fresh start. For many of us this gift of the High Holidays is particularly significant this year. With all we have been through, we had a time for inspiration and now a chance for a fresh start.

As we move forward from the High Holidays, our greatest challenge is often in maintaining the inspiration and living up to the goals that we have set for ourselves. As we leave that spiritual high, we begin to return to our old patterns of thought and our old habits. If the fresh start of the High Holidays is of particular value this year, then it is all the more important to find ways to maintain the inspiration throughout the year.

The Chofetz Chaim notes a strange phrase in this week’s Parsha. When warning the Jewish people against future failure, Moshe underscores the error of abandoning one’s relationship with G-d by referring to such a nation as “foolish and not smart.” (Devarim 32:6) The Chofetz Chaim points out that being foolish is worse than not being smart. Why does Moshe add the phrase “not smart” after calling such people foolish?

There is a famous and beautiful Medrash which discusses a future time when the Jewish people did abandon their relationship with G-d. Prior to the destruction of the second Temple, the prophet Yirmyahu was sent to warn the Jewish people of their errors. In beginning of his prophecies, G-d sends a message that we had done a double evil. First we had left G-d, the source of life. To make matters worse, we had “replaced him” with gods who could not help us. The Medrash notes that G-d declared at that time, “If only they had left Me, but safeguarded My Torah. Had they safeguarded My Torah, then through engaging in the study of Torah it would have returned them to Me.” The Medrash does not focus on the observance of Torah, but rather on the study of Torah. Through genuine study of G-d’s Torah – the Written and Oral Laws – one will be inspired to return to G-d. The Torah has a unique ability to open the heart of a Jew and connect one with G-d.

The Chofetz Chaim uses this Medrash to explain Moshe’s phrase. Regarding our relationship with G-d, being foolish and being smart are two separate concepts. Being foolish refers to one who has abandoned his relationship with G-d. Being

smart refers to the study of Torah. Being smart – meaning studying and mastering Torah knowledge - is of even greater importance than one's current relationship with G-d. The study of Torah will inspire one and connect him, no matter how far he has strayed.

If we consider the context of the Chofetz Chaim's message, then we can see that Torah study is of even greater value for inspiring us in our times. The prophet Yirmiyahu was talking to a nation which had completely abandoned their relationship with G-d. The Medrash in Eichah tells us that the nation was involved in all three of the cardinal sins – idolatry, murder and immorality. Yet, had they properly engaged in Torah study, then the lessons and messages of Torah would have inspired them and changed their lives.

We are now just a few days after the High Holidays and are about to begin the joyous holiday of Sukkos. We are already in a place where our hearts are open, and we are actively seeking to connect with G-d. How much more of an impact will the Torah have on us if we commit ourselves now to engage in regular Torah study? There are so many opportunities available to us today through classes, printed materials and a plethora of websites. With so much out there, we can readily find material on our level, whatever our current level of learning is. Whatever topic is of interest to us, we can readily find material to study. If we want to maintain and build on our inspiration, all we need is a commitment to a few minutes of daily Torah study.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, 5909 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda, MD 20814. Rabbi Singer's Devar Torah arrived too late for my deadline, so I am reprinting his message from 2021, when his Dvar Torah also arrived after my deadline.

Sukkos: Torah – A Personal Guide

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2021

The first time that the festivals are mentioned in the Torah, they are presented as seasonal holidays. In Parshas Mishpatim, shortly after we accepted the Torah on Har Sinai, we are commanded to celebrate three festival for G-d each year. The first is the Festival of Matzos "at time of the spring month," then the "harvest festival at the ripening of your work" and "the harvest festival at the end of the year." (Shemos 23:15-16)

The Ramba"n (ibid.) explains that the festivals are times to express gratitude to G-d for the continual and reliable rules of nature. We stop and thank G-d at the renewal of spring when we begin the new cycle. We stop and thank G-d in the middle of the cycle as we begin harvesting. Then we take time again at the end of the cycle when we gather in the harvest. At each point, we stop and reflect on G-d's ongoing gift of maintaining the rules of nature and thereby providing us with our sustenance and nourishment year after year.

The Ramba"n notes that when we stop and recognize that G-d is giving us the gift of nourishment, we can bring ourselves to a much greater level of awareness of G-d's love and care for us. When we are recognizing that G-d is the Creator and Master of the world, then we can see ourselves as His subjects, living in His world. From this perspective, the gift of nourishment and sustenance is not simply one individual helping another in need. Rather, it is the commitment of the Master to care for His subjects. The rules of nature which G-d established and maintains, the yearly seasons and harvest, is G-d's commitment to nourish and sustain us.

The next verse speaks of the mitzvah of Pilgrimage, the obligation to travel to the Beis Hamkidash, the Temple, on each festival to "appear before the Master, Hashem." (Shemos 23:17) The Ramba"n explains that when a servant is given all his needs from a master, the servant will express his gratitude by appearing before the master to receive their instructions. When we recognize the depth of G-d's commitment to us as His subjects, it behooves us to come forward and appear before Him to hear what He wishes of us. This is the Pilgrimage mitzva – to come to learn what G-d asks of us, as an expression of our gratitude for our sustenance.

This Ramba"n is rather puzzling. The servant has not yet been given his instructions, and therefore comes to his master to find out what he should do. We, on the other hand, were given our instructions long ago on Har Sinai. We received the Torah long before the festival occurs. Why do we need to go to find out what we should do to serve G-d? Rather than a pilgrimage, shouldn't we simply spend the day studying Torah?

Perhaps, this Ramba"n is teaching us the proper way to approach Torah study. Deepening my awareness and recognition of G-d is more than simply an inspiration to study and keep the Torah. When I see G-d in my life, then I

recognize that Torah is a personal directive from G-d for my life. When I study Torah from this perspective, it opens my mind and inspires me to find insights and messages which are relevant for my life. Our rabbis teach us that the Beis Hamikdash had a unique holiness whereby a person was more capable of recognizing G-d's Presence in the world. The Pilgrimage Mitzvah is to appear before G-d so that we will be in a place where we can more deeply recognize and sense G-d's greatness. Only then can we truly hear the directives which G-d intends for each of us in our own lives.

While we don't have the Beis Hamikdash today, we still have the holidays and the many opportunities for inspiration that they provide – the Sukkah representing the yearly harvest and the clouds of glory; the Four Species representing our closeness with G-d, the unity of the Jewish people, and so much more. Inspired by the holiday we must also reflect on the unique personal blessings in our lives. The more we see G-d in our lives, the more we can understand that G-d has a personal interest in each of us. Then, we can begin to approach Torah properly as a personal directive for each of our lives, and find the messages meant for us today.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, 5909 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda, MD 20814. Rabbi Singer's Devar Torah arrived too late for my deadline, so I am reprinting his message from 2021, when his Dvar Torah also arrived after my deadline.

Haazinu, Sukkot

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *****

[Rabbi Ovadia's Dvar Torah did not reach my by my deadline. Watch this space for further learning from this outstanding Rabbi and scholar.

Shabbat Shalom; Chag Samaich.

* Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets**

Sukkot: Sukkah As Tabernacle

By Tadhg Cleary *

The Rema — the great Halakhic Codifier of Ashkenazi Jewry — rules that we should build the sukkah on the day after Yom Kippur (starting even right after we break the fast) (Orach Chaim, 624:5-625:1). Some infer that, ideally, we are not supposed to even begin construction of the sukkah at all during the Aseret Yemei Teshuva — the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

R. Chaim Mordechai Margulies, author of the Shaarei Teshuva, asks an important question: Would it not be better to build the sukkah before Yom Kippur, so that the mitzvah of building the sukkah might accrue to our merit before the Day of Judgment?

I think the answer is to be found in a deep understanding of the symbolism of the sukkah.

Of course, the sukkah represents many things. It represents the Clouds of Glory that accompanied us in the desert, when God took care of our every need. It represents our continued dependence on God — as we can only sit in the sukkah if there is fine weather. The sukkah represents the transience of material goods, as we set aside our beautiful, permanent homes, and dwell for seven days in a hut constructed from the left-overs after the harvest. The sukkah reminds us that we are part of a community, as we leave the walls of our homes and see and hear our friends, our neighbors, the stranger, and the other, in the world outside.

But there is a lot of evidence that sukkah also represents the Mishkan — the Tabernacle, that portable Temple which we built in the wilderness and carried with us as we traveled from place to place.

The physical structure itself recalls the Mishkan. On the most basic level, it is a box with a simple covering spread over it.

It consists of two full walls and a shorter wall creating the space within it. Indeed, the Talmud derives the minimum height for the sukkah from the Mishkan (Sukkah 4b).

Further, the Gemara determines that there is a mitzvah to dwell in a sukkah both during the day and the night, by comparing the term used regarding Sukkot to the term used to describe Aharon and his sons dwelling in the Mishkan for seven days and nights before its inauguration (Sukkah 43b).

If you look at old English-language Machzorim for the Festival of Sukkot, you will see that the holiday is called “the Feast of Tabernacles.”

The sukkah as Mishkan explains our question why the Rema felt that the sukkah had to be built specifically after Yom Kippur. On a technical, Biblical level, the primary function of Yom Kippur was to purify the Mikdash, to wipe clean the slate, so that Temple service could continue to operate year-in and year-out despite inevitable human error. It was like a yearly tune-up for the Temple. Symbolically, the cleansing of the Mishkan cleansed and wiped clean the slate so that God’s presence could continue to manifest among the people of Israel. Only after this national re-dedication of the central Mikdash, can we construct our own personal Mishkan in purity and sanctity.

On Yom Kippur, we transported ourselves to the Mikdash. We retold and re-enacted the sacred sacrificial service, our eyes were all trained on the Kohen Gadol, the high priest. Would he go in and come out in peace this year?

But on Sukkot, in a few days’ time, we bring a little of the Mikdash to us. Cleansed and purified, we each build our own little Tabernacle in which we will dwell with HaShem. On Sukkot, every one of us is our own Kohen Gadol, entering into that private sanctuary — Lifnai v’Linfnim — into the Holy of Holies.

As we build the sukkah in these days after Yom Kippur, let us revel in the excited anticipation of the intimate encounter with the Divine, and let us consider how we capture the energy of Sukkot and create a space for the Shechina in our daily lives all-year-round.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach!

* Tadhg Cleary, a second year Rabbinic student at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, divided the last ten years between New Zealand and Israel -- learning, teaching, and building Jewish community.

https://library.yctorah.org/2022/10/sukkah-as-tabernacle/

Sukkot

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

* Rabbi Rube has just moved from Alabama to Auckland, NZ, where he is Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation. We look forward to once again sending us new learning weekly.

Rav Kook Torah
Sukkot: All of Israel in One Sukkah

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

> *“For seven days... all who belong to the people of Israel will live in sukkot [thatched huts]”* (Lev. 23:42).

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

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

The Unity of Succoth

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

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

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

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

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

https://www.ravkooktorah.org/SUKKOT_67.htm

Radical Uncertainty (5780)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

There is something very strange about the festival of Succot, of which our parsha [ed.: Emor] is the primary source. On the one hand, it is the festival supremely associated with joy. It is the only festival in our parsha that mentions rejoicing: "And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days" (Lev. 23:40). In the Torah as a whole, joy is mentioned not at all in relation to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur or Pesach, once in connection with Shavuot and three times in connection with Succot. Hence its name: z'man simchatenu, the festival of our joy.

Yet what it recalls is one of the more negative elements of the wilderness years:

> *"You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, so that future generations may know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God."* Lev. 23:42-43

For forty years, the Israelites lived without permanent homes, often on the move. They were in the wilderness, in no man's land, where it is hard to know what to expect and what dangers lie in wait along the way. The people certainly lived under Divine protection. But they could never be sure in advance whether it would be forthcoming and what form this protection might take. It was a prolonged period of insecurity.

How then are we to understand the fact that Succot of all festivals is called z'man simchatenu, the festival of our joy? It would have made sense to call Pesach – freedom's birthday – the festival of joy. It would have made sense to call Shavuot – the day of revelation at Sinai – the festival of joy. But why give that title to a festival that commemorates forty years of exposure to the heat, cold, wind and rain. Remembering that, why should we feel joy?

Besides which, what was the miracle? Pesach and Shavuot recall miracles. But travelling through the wilderness with only temporary homes was neither miraculous nor unique. That is what people who travel through the wilderness do. They must. They are on a journey. They can only have a temporary dwelling. In this respect there was nothing special about the Israelites' experience.

It was this consideration that led Rabbi Eliezer[1] to suggest that the succah represents the Clouds of Glory, ananei kavod, that accompanied the Israelites during those years, sheltering them from heat and cold, protecting them from their

enemies, and guiding them on the way. This is a beautiful and imaginative solution to the problem. It identifies a miracle and explains why a festival should be dedicated to remembering it. That is why Rashi and Ramban take it as the plain sense of the verse.

But it is difficult, nonetheless. A succah looks nothing like the Clouds of Glory. It would be hard to imagine anything less like the Clouds of Glory. The connection between a succah and Clouds of Glory comes not from the Torah but from the book of Isaiah, referring not to the past but to the future:

> *Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything the glory will be a canopy. It will be a succah for shade from heat by day, and a shelter and hiding place from the storm and rain.* Is. 4:5-6

Rabbi Akiva dissents from Rabbi Eliezer's view and says that a succah is what it says it is: a hut, a booth, a temporary dwelling.[2] What, according to Rabbi Akiva, was the miracle? There is no way of knowing the answer. But we can guess.

If a succah represents the Clouds of Glory – the view of Rabbi Eliezer – then it celebrates God's miracle. If it represents nothing other than a succah itself – Rabbi Akiva's view – then it celebrates the human miracle of which Jeremiah spoke when he said:

> *"Thus said the Lord, "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved Me and followed Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown."* Jer. 2:2

The Israelites may have complained and rebelled. But they followed God. They kept going. Like Abraham and Sarah, they were prepared to journey into the unknown.

If we understand this to be the miracle, we can infer a deep truth about faith itself. Faith is not certainty. Faith is the courage to live with uncertainty. Almost every phase of the exodus was fraught with difficulties, real or imagined. That is what makes the Torah so powerful. It does not pretend that life is any easier than it is. The road is not straight and the journey is long. Unexpected things happen. Crises suddenly appear. It becomes important to embed in a people's memory the knowledge that we can handle the unknown. God is with us, giving us the courage we need. [emphasis added]

Each Succot it is as if God were reminding us: don't think you need solid walls to make you feel safe. I led your ancestors through the desert so that they would never forget the journey they had to make and the obstacles they had to overcome to get to this land. He said, "I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." (Lev. 23:43) In those booths, fragile and open to the elements, the Israelites learnt the courage to live with uncertainty.

Other nations told stories that celebrated their strength. They built palaces and castles as expressions of invincibility. The Jewish people was different. They carried with them a story about the uncertainties and hazards of history. They spoke of their ancestors' journey through the wilderness without homes, houses, protection against the elements. It is a story of spiritual strength, not military strength.

Succot is a testament to the Jewish people's survival. Even if it loses its land and is cast again into the wilderness, it will lose neither heart nor hope. It will remember that it spent its early years as a nation living in a succah, a temporary dwelling exposed to the elements. It will know that in the wilderness, no encampment is permanent. It will keep travelling until once again it reaches the promised land: Israel, home.

It is no accident that the Jewish people is the only one to have survived 2,000 years of exile and dispersion, its identity intact and energy unabated. It is the only people who can live in a shack with leaves as a roof and yet feel surrounded by Clouds of Glory. It is the only people who can live in a temporary dwelling and yet rejoice.

Economist John Kay and former Governor of the Bank of England Mervyn King have just published a book, *Radical Uncertainty*.[3] In it they make the distinction between risk, which is calculable, and uncertainty, which is not. They argue that people have relied too much on calculations of probability while neglecting the fact that danger may appear from a completely unexpected source. The sudden appearance of the Coronavirus just as their book appeared proved their point. People knew there was a possibility of a pandemic. But no one knew what it would be like, where it would come from, how

rapidly it would spread, and what toll it would take.

More important than the calculation of probabilities, they say, is understanding the situation, answering the question, "What is going on?"[4] This, they say, is never answered by statistics or predictions but rather by narrative, by telling a story.

That is exactly what Succot is about. It is a story about uncertainty. It tells us that we can know everything else, but we will never know what tomorrow will bring. Time is a journey across a wilderness.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we pray to be written into the Book of Life. On Succot we rejoice because we believe we have received a positive answer to our prayer. But as we turn to face the coming year, we acknowledge at the outset that life is fragile, vulnerable in a dozen different ways. We do not know what our health will be, what our career or livelihood will be, or what will happen to society and to the world. We cannot escape exposure to risk. That is what life is.

The succah symbolises living with unpredictability. Succot is the festival of radical uncertainty. But it places it within the framework of a narrative, exactly as Kay and King suggest. It tells us that though we journey through a wilderness, we as a people will reach our destination. If we see life through the eyes of faith, we will know we are surrounded by Clouds of Glory. Amid uncertainty we will find ourselves able to rejoice. We need no castles for protection or palaces for glory. A humble succah will do, for when we sit within it, we sit beneath what the Zohar calls "the shade of faith."

I believe that the experience of leaving the protection of a house and entering the exposure of the succah is a way of taming our fear of the unknown. It says: We have been here before. We are all travellers on a journey. The Divine Presence is with us. We need not be afraid. That is a source of the resilience we need in our interconnected, hazardous, radically uncertain world.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Succah 11b.

[2] Succah 11b.

[3] John Kay and Mervyn King, *Radical Uncertainty*, Bridge Street Press, 2020.

[4] The authors derive this idea from Richard Rumelt, *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy*, Crown, 2011.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/emor/radical-uncertainty/

Could the People Have Stopped Moses' Passing?

By Yossi Ives * © Chabad 2022

When the time came for Moses to end his earthly sojourn, the Torah set out his final instructions:

> *"The L rd spoke to Moses on that very day, saying: Ascend Mount Avarim [to] Mount Nebo … and die on the mountain…"1*

What do the words "on that very day" imply?

Rashi compares this verse with two previous cases where the same phrase is used.

The first is when the Torah says that Noah entered the ark "on that very day."2 In that case, the people around Noah had vowed to forcibly stop him from entering the ark, and even hack it to pieces, so as to prevent the flood from occurring.

Therefore, G d instructed Noah to enter the ark “in the glare of full daylight,” as if to challenge anyone to try to intervene.

The second occasion when the phrase “on that very day” is used is when the Israelites left Egypt.3 Here too, many Egyptians swore they would prevent the Israelites from leaving through the use of weapons. In response, G d had them leave “in the middle of the day,” daring anyone to try and stand in their way.

Similarly, in our case, Rashi interprets “on that very day” to mean “the middle of the day.” He explains that it intends to convey that Moses was to end his life that day, whether the people liked it or not, for when the Israelites heard of Moses’ impending death, many of them declared that they would not let it happen.

They protested: “The man who brought us out of Egypt, divided the Red Sea for us, brought the manna down for us, made flocks of quails fly over to us, brought up the well for us, and gave us the Torah – we will not let him (go to his final resting place)!”4

Thus, G d instructed Moses to ascend the mountain “in the middle of the day,” making it clear that they had no power over what would happen.

What Were They Thinking?

While Rashi’s explanation provides a reason for the words “on that very day,” it also creates several difficulties. Most significantly, how could the Israelites imagine that they could prevent Moses’ death? G d is the ultimate Giver of Life, and there is no way a human being can prevent another from passing away! While Noah’s peers or the Egyptians opposed to the Exodus could have attempted to use force to achieve their goal, there was really nothing anyone could have done to prevent Moses from dying if G d were to take back his soul.

It is also difficult to understand what Rashi gains by telling us about the other two situations where the phrase “on this very day” is used. When he gives his explanation about Noah entering the ark, he does not delineate the other two occasions where this phrase is used. Why now, on its third appearance, does Rashi decide to elaborate so extensively?5

Righteous Indignation

The Rebbe explained that the reason for the more detailed and complex commentary from Rashi is because Rashi is actually aware of the inherent problem posed by the text. While the words “on that very day” are clearly superfluous and suggest that G d specifically intended that Moses’ passing would happen in the middle of the day – this explanation is highly problematic. In the two other cases – opponents of Noah and of the Exodus – we can assume that those trying to intervene were wicked people who had no problem opposing the will of G d. By contrast, the Israelites at the time of Moses’ passing could be assumed to be righteous. Why would we think that they would so overtly seek to contravene the Almighty’s plan?

Given that it is counterintuitive that the Israelites would have sought to oppose a clear Divine instruction, Rashi felt compelled to begin by sharing precedent for his understanding.

But how would the Israelites have thought it possible to prevent Moses’ death? Rashi doesn’t spell it out, as a closer look at the Biblical text makes it obvious. Moses is told to ascend the mountain and he was to breathe his last breath once he reached the place of his eventual burial. Moses could not die until he arrived at the designated spot. So, all the Israelites would have had to do to prevent (or at least delay) Moses’ death was to block his ascent up the mountain.

Nevertheless, this still begs the question: Why would the righteous Israelites even contemplate defying G d?

A Targeted Instruction

Rashi explains that the Israelites felt great loyalty to Moses for all he had done for them. They felt it was their duty not to abandon “The man who brought us out of Egypt, divided the Red Sea for us, brought the manna down for us, made flocks of quails fly over to us, brought up the well for us, and gave us the Torah.” Judaism attaches great importance to the virtue of gratitude, so the Israelites felt justified in displaying their gratitude towards Moses.

While gratitude is indeed an important virtue, it still seems hard to accept that any Israelite would imagine that this gives

them the right to act in direct conflict with the expressed will of G d. After all, had G d not explicitly instructed Moses that he was to ascend the mountain?

But that is precisely the point! Moses alone was instructed to go up the mountain. By objecting, they were not going against any instruction that they had been given by G d. Rashi hints at this when he cites, “G d spoke to Moses.” It was Moses who was told it was time for him to die; as far as the Israelites were concerned that was none of their business.

We have here an important lesson about the importance of gratitude, one of Judaism’s core values. When people help us or show us kindness, showing appreciation should be our top priority. We should look around at all the people who continue to make important contributions to our lives, and ask ourselves: When was the last time I told them how much I appreciate all they do for me?

Adapted from Likutei Sichot, vol. 19, Parshat Ha’azinu II.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Deuteronomy 32:48-9.

2. Genesis 7:13.

3. Exodus 12:51.

4. Rashi, Deuteronomy 32:48.

5. Moreover, on the second occasion (the Exodus), Rashi makes no comment at all about the words “on that very day,” presumably relying on his earlier comment in relation to Noah. Why could Rashi not rely on his earlier comment in our case too?

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https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5242988/jewish/Could-the-People-Have-Stopped-Moses-Passing.htm

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At Home With G-d

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe *

To be Surrounded by a Mitzvah

The Torah commands,1 "For seven days you shall dwell in sukkos." In defining this mitzvah, our Sages state,2 "You must live [in the sukkah] just as you live [in your home]." For the seven days of the holiday,3 all of the daily routines of our life must be carried out in the sukkah. As our Sages explain:4 "For all of these seven days, one should consider the sukkah as one's permanent dwelling, and one's home as temporary.... A person should eat, drink, relax... and study in the sukkah."

Our Sages point out that5 "the mitzvos were given for the sole purpose of refining the created beings": by observing a mitzvah a person elevates himself and his surrounding environment. Most mitzvos are focused only on limited aspects of our being and limited dimensions of our environment. When putting on tefillin one elevates one's head, heart,6 and arm, as well as the actual leather artifacts involved. When, by contrast, a person lives in a sukkah, his entire body is enveloped by the mitzvah: even the most mundane aspects of his life become means of connection7 to G d.

The message of the mitzvah of sukkah is not self-contained; it influences our conduct throughout the entire year to come. The Torah simply tells us to8 "know Him in all your ways"; and our Sages comment,9 "This is a short verse upon which all the fundamentals of the Torah depend." For G dliness is present not merely in the synagogue or in the house of study, but in every dimension and corner of our lives. This concept is made tangible by the mitzvah of dwelling in a sukkah.

Infusing Spirituality into Our Material World

Whenever one fulfills a mitzvah with material objects, a connection is established between them and the spiritual import of the mitzvah.10From that time on, they are known as tashmishei mitzvah ("objects used for a mitzvah"). Since their connection with spirituality remains, an object that has been used in performing a mitzvah should not later be used for unrefined purposes.11

There is an even deeper connection between the building materials used for the sukkah and the spiritual influences associated with it. Thus our Sages say,12 "Just as the sacrifices become consecrated for the sake of heaven,... so too, the sukkah becomes consecrated for the sake of heaven."13

The sukkah represents a deeper fusion between materiality and spirituality than that which is achieved through the performance of many other mitzvos. In most instances, the connection between the material object and the spiritual effect established through the observance of a mitzvah does not permeate the material entity entirely. Therefore, though we are required to treat them with respect, these objects are not considered holy: they are not totally united with spirituality. Consecration implies that the physical entity becomes suffused with holiness, and this deeper bond is achieved through the mitzvah of dwelling in the sukkah.

"Your Sukkah of Peace"

Our Sages associate the mitzvah of sukkah with unity, as may be seen by the phrase,14 "Your sukkah of peace," and in our Sages' statement that15 "All Israel are fit to dwell in one sukkah."
Why is the sukkah associated with peace and unity? Chassidic thought16 explains that observing the mitzvah of sukkah draws down to this world a transcendent spiritual light whose revelation erases all differences between men and establishes a fundamental equality among them. Our world is characterized by differentiation. The mitzvah of sukkah is intended to suffuse the world with a G dly state of oneness that is, essentially, uncharacteristic of this diverse world.

In another sense, the unity established by this mitzvah resolves the differences that exist between spirituality and material existence. From the perspective of the world, the two appear to be opposites. From G d's perspective, however, both the material and the spiritual are expressions of Himself and can be fused together harmoniously.

The Ultimate Sukkah

Our Rabbis17 explain that through dwelling in the sukkah we will merit the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, as is implied by the verse,18 "And His sukkah will be in [Jeru]salem." The ultimate fusion between the material and the spiritual will take place in the Era of the Redemption and in particular, in the Beis HaMikdash, where the Divine Presence will be openly revealed. May this take place in the immediate future.

Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. II, Sukkos; Vol. XIX, Sukkos

FOOTNOTES:

1. Vayikra 23:42.

2. Sukkah 28b.

3. In the Diaspora we are required to dwell in the sukkah on Shemini Atzeres as well, though a blessing is not recited when observing this mitzvah.

4. Sukkah, loc. cit.

5. Bereishis Rabbah 44:1.

6. The tefillin are placed on the head and on the biceps of the left arm facing the heart.

7. The Hebrew word mitzvah ("commandment") is related to the Hebrew/Aramaic word tzavta ("connection"). By observing a mitzvah, one establishes a connection with the One who gave the command. See Likkutei Torah, Parshas

Bechukosai 45c.

8. Mishlei 3:6.

9. Berachos 63b.

10. See the essay in Vol. II entitled "What Happened at Sinai?"

11. Cf. Megillah 26b; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 21:1.

12. Sukkah 9a, quoted in Shulchan Aruch HaRav 638:1.

13. For this reason we are forbidden to use the building materials of the sukkah for mundane purposes during the holiday (Shulchan Aruch HaRav 638:15-16).

14. Daily liturgy.

15. Sukkah 27b.

16. See the series of discourses entitled VeKachah 5637, chs. 95-96.

17. Maharsha, commenting on Pesachim 5a. See also the Targum and Midrash Tehillim to Tehillim 76:3.
18. Tehillim 76:3.

***** *More from Lubavitcher Rebbe*; adapted by Eli Touger**.**

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/742803/jewish/At-Home-With-G-d.htm

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Ha'azinu: Making G-d Great

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

"When I proclaim the Name of G-d, give greatness to our G-d." Deuteronomy 32:3

One meaning of "giving greatness to G-d" is enabling G-d, so to speak, to fulfill His desire in creating the world. G-d purposely left the world unfinished when He created it, intending for us to perfect it. Thus, G-d's plan cannot be completed without us.

The way we help G-d fulfill His desire for the world is by living our lives in accordance with His teachings.

Specifically, by constantly probing the depths of the Torah for new insights that can transform our lives and the lives of others, and by observing G-d's commandments with renewed inspiration, we elicit new levels of Divine consciousness into reality.

We thereby gradually and persistently help the world fulfill its purpose, transforming it into G-d's ultimate home.

– from *Daily Wisdom #3*

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
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* A Chasidic insight that Rabbi Wisnefsky selected for the parsha.

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Shabbat Shalom

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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

A Leader's Call to Responsibility

When words take wing, they modulate into song. That is what they do here in Ha'azinu as Moses, with the Angel of Death already in sight, prepares to take leave of this life. Never before had he spoken with such passion. His language is vivid, even violent. He wants his final words never to be forgotten. In a sense he has been articulating this truth for forty years, but never before with such emotion. This is what he says:

Give ear, O heavens, that I may speak,
Earth, hear the sayings of my mouth…
The Rock, His acts are perfect,
For all His ways are just.
A faithful God without wrong,
Right and straight is He.
He is not corrupt; the defect is in His children,
A warped and twisted generation.
Is this the way you repay God,
Ungrateful, unwise people?
Is He not your Father, your Master?
He made you and established you. (Deut. 32:1-6)

Do not blame God when things go wrong. That is what Moses feels so passionately. Don't believe, he says, that God is there to serve us. We are here to serve Him and through Him be a blessing to the world. God is straight; it is we who are complex and self-deceiving. God is not there to relieve us of responsibility. It is God who is calling us to responsibility.

With these words Moses brings to closure the drama that began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When they sinned, Adam blamed the woman, the woman blamed the serpent. So it was when God began creating, and so it still is in the twenty-first century secular time.

The story of humanity has been, for the most part, a flight from responsibility. The culprits change. Only the sense of victimhood remains. It wasn't us. It was the politicians. Or the media. Or the bankers. Or our genes. Or our parents. Or the system, be it capitalism, communism or anything between. Most of all, it is the fault of the others, the ones not like us, infidels, sons of Satan, children of darkness, the unredeemed. The perpetrators of the greatest crime against humanity in all of history were convinced it wasn't them. They were "only obeying orders." When all else fails, blame God. And if you don't believe in God, blame the people who do. To be human is to seek to escape from responsibility.

That is what makes Judaism different. It is what made some people admire Jews and others hate them. For Judaism is God's call to human responsibility. From this call you can't hide, as Adam and Eve discovered when they tried, and you can't escape, as Jonah learnt in the belly of a fish.

What Moses was saying in his great farewell song can be paraphrased thus: "Beloved people, I have led you for forty years, and my time is coming to an end. For the last month, since I began these speeches, these devarim, I have tried to tell you the most important things about your past and future. I beg you not to forget them.

"Your parents were slaves. God brought them and you to freedom. But that was negative freedom, chofesh. It meant that there was no-one to order you about. That kind of freedom is not inconsequential, for its absence tastes like unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Eat them once a year so you never forget where you came from and who brought you out.

"But don't think that chofesh alone can sustain a free society. When everyone is free to do what they like, the result is anarchy, not freedom. A free society requires cherut, the positive freedom that only comes when people internalise the habits of self-restraint so that my freedom is not bought at the expense of yours, or yours at the cost of mine.

"That is why I have taught you all these laws, judgments and statutes. They are not arbitrary rules. None of them exists because God likes giving laws. God gave laws to the very structures of matter – laws that generated a vast, wondrous, almost unfathomable universe. If God were only interested in giving laws, He would have confined Himself to the things that obey those laws, namely matter without mind and life-forms that know not liberty.

"The laws God gave me and I gave you exist not for God's sake but for ours. God gave us freedom – the most rare, precious, unfathomable thing of all other than life itself. But with freedom comes responsibility. That means that we must take the risk of action. God gave us the land but we must conquer it. God gave us the fields but we must plough, sow and reap them. God gave us bodies but we must tend and heal them. God is our Father; He made us and established us. But parents cannot live their children's lives. They can only show them, by instruction and love, how to live.

"So when things go wrong, don't blame God. He is not corrupt; we are. He is straight; it is we who are sometimes warped and twisted."

That is the Torah's ethic of responsibility. No higher estimate has ever been given of the human condition. No higher vocation was ever entrusted to mortal creatures of flesh and blood.

Judaism does not see human beings, as some religions do, as irretrievably corrupt, stained by original sin, incapable of good without God's grace. That is a form of faith but it is not ours. Nor do we see religion as a matter of blind submission to God's will. That too is a form of faith but not ours.

We do not see human beings, as the pagans did, as the playthings of capricious gods. Nor do we see them, as some scientists do, as mere matter, a gene's way of producing another gene, a collection of chemicals driven by electrical impulses in the brain, without any special dignity or sanctity, temporary residents in a universe devoid of meaning that came into existence for no reason and will one day, equally for no reason, cease to be.

We believe that we are God's image, free as He is free, creative as He is creative, We exist on an infinitely smaller and more limited scale to be sure, but still we are the one point in all the echoing expanse of space where the universe becomes conscious of itself, the one life form capable of shaping its own destiny: choosing, therefore free, therefore responsible. Judaism is God's call to responsibility.

Which means: thou shalt not see thyself as a victim. Do not believe as the Greeks did that fate is blind and inexorable, that our fate once disclosed by the Delphic oracle, has already been sealed before we were born, that like Laius and Oedipus we are fated, however hard we try to escape the bonds of fate. That is a tragic view of the human condition. To some extent it was shared in different ways by Spinoza, Marx and Freud, the great triumvirate of Jews-by-descent who rejected Judaism and all its works.

Instead like Viktor Frankl, survivor of Auschwitz, and Aaron T. Beck, co-founder of cognitive behavioural therapy, we believe we are not defined by what happens to us but rather by how we respond to what happens to us. That itself is determined by how we

interpret what happens to us. If we change the way we think – which we can, because of the plasticity of the brain – then we can change the way we feel and the way we act. Fate is never final. There may be such a thing as an evil decree, but penitence, prayer and charity can avert it. And what we cannot do alone we can do together, for we believe "it is not good for man to be alone." (Gen. 2:18)

So Jews developed a morality of guilt in place of what the Greeks had, a morality of shame. A morality of guilt makes a sharp distinction between the person and the act, between the sinner and the sin. Because we are not wholly defined by what we do, there is a core within us that remains intact – "My God, the soul You gave me is pure" – so that whatever wrong we may have done, we can repent and be forgiven. That creates a language of hope, the only force strong enough to defeat a culture of despair.

It is that power of hope, born whenever God's love and forgiveness gives rise to human freedom and responsibility, that has made Judaism the moral force it has always been to those who minds and hearts are open. But that hope, says Moses with a passion that still sears us whenever we tread it afresh, does not just happen. It has to be worked for and won. The only way it is achieved is by not blaming God. He is not corrupt. The defect is in us, His children. If we seek a better world, we must make it. God teaches us, inspires us, forgives us when we fail and lifts us when we fall, but we must make it. It is not what God does for us that transforms us; it is what we do for God.

The first humans lost paradise when they sought to hide from responsibility. We will only ever regain it if we accept responsibility and become a nation of leaders, each respecting and making space for those not like us. People do not like people who remind them of their responsibility. That is one of the reasons (not the only one, to be sure) for Judeophobia through the ages. But we are not defined by those who do not like us. To be a Jew is to be defined by the One who loves us.

The deepest mystery of all is not our faith in God but God's faith in us. May that faith sustain us as we heed the call to responsibility and take the risk of healing some of the needless wounds of an injured but still wondrous world.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Singing the Song of Life
Rabbanit Neta Lederberg

This week's portion, Parshat Ha'azinu, is written for the most part in poetic verse. In fact, it is the last shirah ["song"] in the Torah. In the previous portion, Moshe takes leave of the People with words of encouragement before they embark on their conquest of the Land, and blesses Yehoshua with the words Chazak Ve'ematz – "Be strong and take courage" – upon the latter's appointment as the leader designated conquer the Land.

Moshe then writes down all the words of the Torah – "And Moshe wrote this Law" – followed by the mitzvah of Hakhel – the compulsory assembling of every Israelite man, woman and child for the purpose of hearing the reading of the Torah by the king once every seven years.

The portion is "interrupted" by God's words to Moshe: "And God spoke to Moshe" – a string of words so typical of the previous Torah Books, but absent from the Book of Devarim until this point.

Hashem then turns to Moshe and utters a description that is hardly encouraging: The People will turn astray and worship other gods, resulting in "And I will hide My face from them". The verses go on to describe numerous hardships, exile, estrangement and catastrophe. This description is followed by a completely new Divine instruction to Moshe – "Now write down this song for you."

In other words, God seemingly replaces Moshe's Book of Law with a Book of Song, which can easily be remembered by heart and recited even during turbulent times. The two parts of our portion [which relate to the "two books" respectively] contain similar expressions which are easily comparable:
"And Moshe wrote this Law" (Devarim 31:9)
which corresponds to
"And Moshe wrote this song" (ibid. 31:22);
"Take this Book of the Law, and put it by the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee" (ibid. 31:26)
which corresponds to
"…so that this Song may be a witness for Me against the Children of Israel" (ibid. 31:19).

It is very plausible that our portion of Ha'azinu is that very song which was written by Moshe in wake of the Divine instruction mentioned above: a Shirah that does not constitute the entire Torah, and is therefore more easily remembered, even during times of forgetfulness. How else are these poetic verses different, besides their being a type of song?

Does this Song convey identical messages to those expounded upon in the Covenant mentioned in Ki-Tavo and Nitzavim – namely, a life of curses as one option, a life of blessing as an alternative, and the call for repentance?

It seems to me that there is a difference between "the words of the Law" and "the words of the Song". The difference is first and foremost a technical one. Poetic verse is eloquent and flowing; it uses allusions and is therefore succinct.

The Song of Ha'azinu begins by talking of Divine justice, then goes on to talk of God's kindness to His people in the desert, followed by His future compassion towards them in the Promised Land. This, in turn, is followed by a description of the sins committed by the People and the ensuing Divine wrath. The Song ends with God's sovereignty, and the punishment He will inflict upon those who have hurt Israel.

The song moves rapidly from one topic to the next, in such manner that we hardly notice the extreme transition from the initial punishment of the Children of Israel to the ultimate punishment of those who have hurt them.

One of the unique ideas expressed in this Song is the notion that the mitigation of Israel's punishments stems from an extrinsic consideration; i.e., the manner in which such harsh punishment of God's own People will be looked upon by the nations of the world. In fact, this consideration is so weighty, that it prevents Israel's ultimate punishment from happening; instead, God focuses on healing and mending the terrible rift between Himself and His people. It follows then, that the "adversaries of God" are no longer the People of Israel, but rather the People's own enemies which, in turn, become God's adversaries – "For He does avenge the blood of His servants" (ibid. 32:43).

In other words, the nations from whose hands we will be saved, are the very same nations that will be punished for their actions against us.

What this boils down to is that while the portion of Nitzavim introduced the notion of Teshuva -Repentance – as a tool for rectifying the relationship between God and His people and mitigating the punishments mentioned in the Covenant of Ki-Tavo, the Song in our portion conveys the idea that the hardships will be made lighter not because of any apparent change in the People of Israel; in fact, the People are charged with no duty whatsoever. Rather, the wrath of the Lord against Israel will be alleviated as a result of the other nations' response to the Chosen People's supposed abandonment. This response induces God to save us and protect us, while punishing the other nations for their malicious actions against us.

In fact, our portion introduces a completely new concept: The Covenant between us and God is not contingent upon our actions, but upon God's obligation to protect His people, no matter the circumstances. The Covenant of the Torah demands change, repentance and rectification; the Covenant of the Song demands nothing. Blessing shall ensue regardless of our actions; simply because we are the People of Israel.

This notion might give us insight into the well-known dispute between the Sages with regards to the Final Redemption, whether it is contingent on our repentance or not at all. Perhaps we can now conclude that it will come when it comes, regardless of anything. This should serve as a constant comfort to us

because it allows us to sing the Song of Life and to celebrate life itself.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Kiddush Hashem- Sanctifying God's Name

At the very end of our Torah portion, God explains (again) why Moses did not merit to enter the Land of Israel with a slightly different reason (Deuteronomy 32:51); because he did not sanctify God's name among Jewish people. These specifics of this incident and its harsh punishment of Moses (denying him his lifelong dream) is not made clear in the Torah, and various commentaries explain the sin differently (found in Parshat Chukat, Numbers 20, and not for elucidation here, but they use this verse to further defend their positions). But God makes it clear in our Parsha what Moshe's sin was, that denied him entry into the Land of Israel: Moses "defiled" God's name (Chilul Hashem) when he failed to "sanctify God's name" (Kiddush Hashem). What exactly is the Mitzvah-command to sanctify God's name and its inverse sin, defiling God's name? Why is this sin so harsh that Moshe received the ultimate punishment? How can Jews keep this commandment and avoid this sin today?

One of the basic tenets of Judaism, that Jews learn and recite as part of the "core" faith, is the verses in the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:5), signifying that Jew should love God with all their hearts, all their souls/lives and all their might/money. Loving God with all one's soul implies a willingness by a Jew to give up one's life for God. This is the context in which most commentaries understand the Mitzvah-commandment to sanctify God's name in the world and, conversely, not to desecrate God's name. Rashi explains that this is a commandment for a Jew to be ready to give up one's life because he or she is a Jew. Similarly, Nachmanides explains that a Jew should die, rather than violate core commandments at "gunpoint", since Jews are God's servant (Leviticus 22:32, commentaries of Rashi and Ramban). In a parallel path, Maimonides enumerates the specific details of this commandment (Maimonides, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah 5:1-4), and spells out which commandments must a Jew violate to save his or her life, and when sacrifice of his or her life is demanded. But in a time of Jewish persecution, violating even the smallest commandment is forbidden, and a Jew give up his or her life rather than be forced to commit the sin.

But a closer examination of this Mitzvah-commandment to sanctify God's name and avoid desecrating His great name will demonstrate that those opportunities to fulfill these dual commandments (two sides of the same coin), have much more to do with the living, and not merely dying as a Jew. One can only die once as a Jew, but a Jew can fulfill these two commandments of sanctifying God's name and not desecrating His name, each day of his or her life, many times each day. What exactly, then, is this commandment to sanctify God's name in life, and what must a Jew avoid in order to not desecrate God's name?

What is this Mitzvah-Commandment for Jews Today? - Maimonides (Maimonides, Book of Mitzvot, Mitzva 9) gives a simple definition of this Mitzvah: to spread the word of and belief in God to the people of the world. When the opposite occurs, i.e., God's core ideas and belief in Him is diminished in the world because of a specific Jew's words or actions, that is called a Chilul Hashem, a desecration of God's name (Maimonides, Maamar Kiddush Hashem, Sefer Chinuch, Mitzvah 295). These two commandments (one positive and one negative) are not merely 2 of 613 commandments in the Torah, but, as we shall reveal, are the essence of being a Jew, and violation of this precept is worse than any other sin in Judaism.

The Worst Sin In The Torah - There are numerous sources which show how truly despicable the act of desecrating God's name is in the eyes of the Rabbis and God Himself, making it more abhorrent than any other sin. For example, for every other sin, says the Talmud (Kiddushin 40a with Rashi commentary), God acts with man's sins like the credit card system of today. God "stores" the sins for a time (30 days, a year?) and does not demand immediate "payment-punishment" for sins. Only after a long period will the Almighty punish the sinner. But in desecrating Gods' name, there is no grace period, and God demands immediate payment-punishment. The Talmud continues and says that for every other sin, there a dramatic difference between a sin committed with willful intent and a sin that is committed "accidentally" without any prior plan. But only with the sin of desecrating God's name is intent irrelevant, and the punishment is the same. Why? If God's name is lessened in the world, the effect is devastating, no matter what the intent. Another Talmudic passage (Yoma 86a) also differentiates this sin from all others. For most sins, even murder, there is a path to achieve atonement, through a combination of repentance, the awesome power of the day of Yom Kippur itself, and through suffering/ punishment. But for the sin of bringing desecration of God to the world, there can be no atonement at all, no matter what a Jew does later, and how bad he or she feels, or how much he or she suffers. Maimonides codifies this into normative Jewish law (Maimonides, Hilchot Teshuva 1:4).

The Rabbi Chiya says something astounding in the Midrash. It is a generally known principle know that the Torah itself and Torah law may never be amended or changed. Normally, a Jewish murderer that is hanged as his punishment, may not be left hanging for more than a few hours. But in the case of Saul's family, it was ruled they would hang for seven months, due to the severity of the sin. Rabbi Chiya (Deuteronomy 22:23, Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah 8:4) was worried that a non-Jew might come along and say that the "Torah" of Plato and the Greeks is less harsh than the Jewish Torah. Because of that potential desecration of God's name, they change the ruling, and did not let the bodies hang as long as Jewish law had demanded. So, too, when Joshua was "duped" into signing a peace treaty with the Givonim, believing what they told him that they are a nation that lived in a distant land. When Joshua discovered that he Givonim actually lived close by, and were afraid of an imminent attack, by "rights," Joshua could have immediately annulled the treaty. But he thought of the implications, as the Givonim and other nations might then believe that Joshua did not keep his word. Appearances count, and it might have caused a Chilul Hashem had Joshua reneged. Thus, Joshua abided by the terms of the treaty, even though it was against his best military and security interests (Joshua 9:15-19).

Even in a Jewish court of law, the same principle applies. If a non-Jew and a Jew came before a Jewish court, and Jewish law found in favor of the non-Jew, then, of course, the non-Jew must receive the award. But even when Jewish law would find in favor of the Jew, if non-Jewish law would appear more conciliatory to the non-Jew, then Rabbi Yishmael says we rule for the non-Jew. Rabbi Akiva says that because of desecration of God's name, any hint of discrimination, the judgment must be in favor of the non-Jew (Bava Kama 113a). Hundreds of years later, in his Code of Jewish Law, Rabbi Karo ruled any stealing or impropriety with non-Jew is absolutely forbidden in Jewish law. That is how far Judaism goes in trying to avoid any instance of Chilul Hashem.

In this same vein, the prophet Ezekiel states that it is preferable for Jews to worship idols, and not, at the same time, bring sacrifices for the Jewish God. Doing both at the same time is a greater desecration of God than not bring any "Jewish" sacrifices (Ezekiel 20:39 with commentary of Metzudat David), due to the hypocrisy. Finally, Rabbi Pazi in the Jerusalem Talmud sums it all up and states that desecrating the name of God is simply the worst sin in Judaism (Jerusalem Talmud 12b).

What, Then, are the Specifics of This Commandment in Daily Living? - How can a Jew not die sanctifying God's name, but live every day fulfilling this commandment? Rambam (Maimonides, Sefer HaMitzvot , Mitzvah Aseh 9) writes that this commandment is fulfilled by spreading the belief of God in the world, to Jews and non-Jews. And this should be done in public, wherever possible. Thus, Maimonides is saying that this is an over-arching attitude to do every daily act in one's life in a manner that God will be more believed, and God will be more enhanced in the world. In another place, Maimonides writes (Maimonides, Sefer HaMitzvot , Mitzvah Aseh 3) that God should

be more beloved, and more people drawn to Him because of a Jew's words and actions. We can all relate. When a friend of ours loves someone, or loves a movie or certain music, they try to get all their friends to love these with the same passion as he or she does. This is the central mission of the Jewish people, but, rather, with God, according to Rambam.

The Talmud shows that difference between fulfilling this commandment positively or committing the sin, is achieved in dally living by how Jews do the little things. It says (Yoma 86a) that if people observe a Jew and by watching him or her they say to themselves "What a great guy", his parents, the person who taught him or her Torah, and his or her God must all be special, then that is the pure form of Kiddush Hashem-Sanctifying God's name. But if the opposite occurs, and people ask what kind of parents, teacher or God produce such a person, then he or she has committed the sin of Chilul Hashem-Desecrating Gods' name. Thus, a Jew must also be cognizant of his or her behaviors and how people will perceive all the small activities in life. That small act could be the difference between fulfilling the central commandment of Judaism or committing the greatest sin.

Until now, this Mitzvah-commandment appears as one of outward actions, and how Jews and non-Jews react to a Jewish deed. But there is an additional layer of keeping this commandment, and inner dedication that can achieve the same results. Maimonides, in his book of laws (Maimonides, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah 5:10), writes that if a Jew fulfills any commandant simply because of God commanded him or her, or refrains from a sin simply out of devotion to God and His Torah, then this, too, is a sanctification of God's name. Rambam compares this to Joseph (who saw the image of his father) when he was seduced by and refused the wife of Potifar. This pure act of fulfilling God's commandment, not because of fear of punishment or desire for reward, not because how others will react and not because of a feeling or right and wrong, but merely to satisfy the desire of the Creator. This, too, is Kiddush Hashem.

There is another aspect of this commandment that every Jew can accomplish multiple times every day. The Zohar says (Zohar, Raaya Mehemna, Emor 93a) that every time a Jewish congregation (ten adult men) gathers, the Kaddish is recited, and each Jew present responds, this is a Kiddush Hashem. The very first words of the Kaddish "Yitgadel Vitkadesh Shemai Rabbah" translate "May God's great name be enhanced and sanctified." That is the Mitzvah – to acknowledge God's greatness in the universe. Similarly, Ben Ish Chai writes (Sefer Ben Ish Chai, Hilchot Shana Rishona, Parshat Terumah 3) about the Kedusha prayer recited as part of the repetition of the Shmoneh Esreh in a congregation. The beginning words "Nikadesh et Shimcha Ba-olam" translate as "let us make Your name Holy in the world." This, too, is a fulfillment of the Mitzvah, if a Jew has intent to fulfill this commandment. There is one more phrase recited by the Cantor in the morning Shacharit and evening Arvit prayers and repeated by the congregation: "Barchu et Ado-nai Hamevorach". This translates as "(Let us) bless Who is blessed." All three of these declarations about God are equivalent (Found in the morning prayer services). Chavot Yair (Chavot Yair 115) states that any Jew who responds to these statements in the synagogue has fulfilled the commandment of sanctifying God's name. Chatam Sofer goes further and says that any time Jews simply gather to pray publicly, this Mitzvah has been fulfilled1.

Recognizable Jews are Even More Culpable In This Commandment - Maimonides speaks at length2 and rules about a special category of this commandment. If a Jew is a "great man in Torah" then he has special obligations and stringencies that do not apply to other Jews. For example, in a society without credit cards, everyone was expected to pay at time of purchase, and only a few people would the storekeeper let "slide". However, a great Jew must always pay immediately, as soon as he received his goods. If not, he desecrates God's name. Similarly, if this great man jokes while he eats, does not greet each person with a smiling face or easily gets angry, since a higher standard is expected of this man, he has committed the sin of desecrating God's name. Rambam give other examples of bad behavior which would be acceptable by common folk, but for a great Torah scholar, these are sins of desecrating God's name. In a different place3, Maimonides explains his rulings about these stringencies of a great man of Torah. He writes that the people look up to such a man and expect a higher standard of behavior. When this person, then, commits even a minor infraction of behavior, it appears "ugly" to most people, and, hence, to becomes a desecration of God's name.

When people are identifiable as Jews, whether it is through their dress, their observance, their mannerisms, then most people in the world hold these Jews to a higher moral standard, just as the nations of the world hold the State of Israel to a higher moral standard than any other country. According to Rabbi Kagan (Be-er Mayim Chayim, Lashon Hara, Introduction 6), identifiable Jews of today, men of women, are considered to be a "great man of Torah" for his purpose. Since their every word and every behavior will be securitized by others as "Jewish behavior," these Jews are obligated to be cognizant of this fact and behave accordingly. Every small misstep, barely noticeable in others who ae non-Jews, will be called a "desecration of God." On the other hand, all good behaviors have a greater potential to become a '"Sanctification of God".

*** This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

God As a Poet

By Prof. Yonatan Grossman

The Addressees of the Song of Ha'azinu – To whom is the song/poem of *Ha'azinu* addressed? The obvious answer is that the Jewish nation, who heard the song, is its target audience, and it is about what would happen to them that the song was to serve as a witness. This is clear both from the content of the song and from its style, which appeals to Israel in the second person throughout its entire length.

Stylistically, however, Moshe seems to relate to other addressees at the beginning of the song: "Give ear, you heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth" (*Devarim* 32:1). Following Rashi, many interpret this verse as a call to heaven and earth to serve as witnesses: "'Give ear, you heavens' – That I warn Israel, and be you witnesses to this matter; for so I have told them that you will be witnesses" (Rashi, ad loc.). According to Rashi, the song is addressed to Israel ("that I warn Israel"), and heaven and earth are invited to witness the matter. However, according to an even simpler reading, Moshe's appeal to heaven and earth can be understood as defining the addressees of the song. It is them that Moshe invites to hear the song, and it is also to them that he directs his words. This is the role of similar invitations at the beginning of other songs. For example, Lamech opens his song to his wives: "Ada and Tzilla, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech" (*Bereishit* 4:23). Just as Lamech addresses his words to his wives, so Moshe directs his words to his audience – heaven and earth.

Similar reading emerges from the Ibn Ezra's bold interpretation of the verse, "When I will proclaim the name of the Lord, ascribe you greatness unto our God" (v. 3). Who is asked to ascribe greatness to God when they hear Moshe's proclamation of the name of the Lord? Many understand that the verse refers to Israel, who are listening to the words of the song, as stated by R. Yehuda: "'When I will proclaim the name of the Lord, ascribe you greatness unto our God' – Moshe said to Israel:

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[1] Responsa Chatam Sofer Orach Chaim 31

[2] Maimonides, Hilchot Yesodai Hatorah 5:11

[3] Maimonides, Maamar Kiddush Hashem

When I mention the name of the Holy One, blessed is He, you must 'ascribe greatness' to Him" (*Yoma* 37a). Indeed, it is from here that R. Abahu derives that the *zimmun* blessing of *Birkat ha-Mazon* requires three people. This is also the accepted interpretation among various commentators, such as the Rashbam (ad loc.):

When I relate to you the mighty things that the Holy One, blessed is He, did for you, and the good things that he gave you, and also that He is righteous regarding what He will do for you, you too "ascribe greatness to our God" – admit the truth.

However, despite the reasonableness of this reading, it must be noted that there has been no mention yet whatsoever of Israel in the verses. There is a more likely grammatical subject of the verb "ascribe," the directive to ascribe greatness to God, as proposed by the Ibn Ezra:

"Ascribe greatness" – This relates back to heaven and earth, as it is stated: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork" (*Tehillim* 19:2), as I have explained, and also: "Let heaven and earth praise Him" (*Tehillim* 69:35).

Although this interpretation may sound strange, it fits in well with a consecutive reading of the verses. According to this proposal, heaven and earth are not only witnesses; they are also included among the addressees of the song, alongside Israel. The song was proclaimed in their ears as well, and it fell upon them to internalize it.

Note that the song's conclusion surprisingly does not depict Israel, but rather "His land": "Sing aloud, O you nations, of His people; for He avenges the blood of His servants, and renders vengeance to His adversaries, and makes atonement for the land of His people" (*Devarim* 32:43). Various explanations have attempted to join "His people" to "His land" as the object of the atonement (see, for example, Rashi and Rabbeinu Bachya, ad loc.). But the simpler reading is that the land is the object of the atonement dealt with in this verse (whether the atonement shall be made by "His people," as the Ibn Ezra understands, or whether the phrase should be understood as "the land of His people," as follows from the Samaritan translation). According to this conclusion, it would seem that the main conflict that the song wishes to clarify is the defilement and atonement of the land. Whatever the reason for this conclusion, it fits with the beginning of the song, which turns the universe itself into an addressee of the song. Thus, it is reasonable that the song also describes the process that the land itself will undergo.

In what sense can the heavens and the earth be viewed as the addressees of the song? The Ibn Ezra cites the Gaon's interpretation: "I have already informed you that the Gaon said that 'heaven' refers to the angels, and 'earth' refers to the people living on the earth." According to him, the reference is not to heaven and earth themselves, but rather to those who dwell in heaven and earth, and thus it is easy to understand how they can be the addressees of the song.

It is more reasonable to understand the mention of heaven and earth in the song's opening verse as a "merismus" – a figure of speech in which two parts of a thing, perhaps contrasting or complementary parts, are made to stand for the whole. In other words, Moshe means to say that all of nature must listen, that the entire universe must hear the words of the song. What, then, is the role of heaven and earth and all of nature as addressees of the song and as those who are asked to ascribe greatness to God, to justify and confirm His ways of governance?[1]

Why a Song? - The appeal to nature to listen to the song is connected to an even more fundamental question: Why formulate the ideas as a song/poem? *Parashat Ha'azinu* is written in the Torah as a poem with two columns, and it appears that the Torah itself calls this unit a "song": "Now therefore write you this song for you, and teach you it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel" (*Devarim* 31:19). The accepted explanation is that this directive to write the "song" relates to the song of *Ha'azinu*, which will shortly be mentioned. Thus, for example, the Ramban (ad loc.) writes: "The meaning of 'this song' – the song that I will tell you now – namely, *Ha'azinu*."

We will return to the Ramban's words, but it should first be noted that others understand that the term "song" (*shira*) refers here to the entire Torah, from the beginning of *Bereishit* to this point. Thus writes R. Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenberg in his *Ha-Ketav Ve-Ha-Kabbala*:

It seems to me that the word "song" refers here not only to the song of *Ha'azinu*, but to the entire Torah from *Bereishit* to "in the sight of all Israel" (*Devarim* 34:12). In other places as well, we find that *Chazal* call the entire Torah a song… It is not surprising to call the Torah a *shira*, a term which denotes singing, whether a song that is only a melody or a song with words. Both forms are called a *shir*, the word being derived from *yashar*, that which is straight and upright… According to this true principle, it is right to call the Torah a *shira*, for the Torah in its entirety is also called "the book of *Yashar*" (*Yehoshua* 10:13); "Behold, it is written in the book of *Yashar*" (II *Shemuel* 1:18), which the Aramaic translation renders as "the book of the Torah." (*Ha-Ketav Ve-Ha-Kabbala*, *Devarim* 31:19)

According to this view, the requirement to write the "song" and to teach it to the children of Israel relates not only to *Parashat Ha'azinu*, but to the entire Torah. Although this interpretation seems forced, one point supports it. After Moshe is commanded, "Now therefore write you this song for you and teach you it the children of Israel" (*Devarim* 31:19), the Torah describes how Moshe fulfilled the command: "So Moshe wrote this song the same day and taught it the children of Israel" (v. 22), but two verses later it also says: "And it came to pass, when Moshe had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished" (v. 24). Scripture suddenly shifts from describing the writing of the song to describing the writing of the Torah. In this forum, we will not clarify how this writing was carried out, but according to the *Ha-Ketav Ve-Ha-Kabbala*, this can easily be explained: "This song" is nothing other than "this law"; we are dealing here with two designations of the same text that Moshe wrote.[2]

There is room to clarify the significance of defining the entire Torah as a "song" (which according to *Ha-Ketav ve-ha-Kabbala*, is connected to a text that in itself is "upright" and which leads man to be "upright").[3] But it is not by chance that the rest of the commentators explained the directive as relating specifically to *Parashat Ha'azinu*. The continuation of the text teaches that the directive relates specifically to the song of *Ha'azinu*, which will serve as a witness for Israel in the future when calamities will befall them:

For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore unto their fathers, flowing with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten their fill and waxen fat; and turned unto other gods, and served them, and despised Me, and broken My covenant; then it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are come upon them, that this song shall testify before them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed. (*Devarim* 31:20-21)

The content of these words indicates that the reference is to the song of *Ha'azinu*, which indeed describes the future history of Israel which includes the sins of the people and the calamities that will befall them as a result. It is not only the content that indicates that the command to write a song refers specifically to

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[1] In a comprehensive study that Stauder dedicated to Mesopotamian poetry, he argues that Mesopotamian poetry never gives expression to the personal-spiritual life of the author, but rather is exclusively limited to ritual; it serves as odes of praise to the wonders of god and alongside the offering of sacrifices (Wilhelm Stauder, "*Die Musik der Sumarer, Babylonier und Assyrier*," *Orientalische Musik, Handbuch der Orientalistik*, 1 (1970), pp. 171-243). The reading that is integrated also in the song of *Ha'azinu*, to ascribe praise and greatness to God, accords with this claim. The testimony provided by the song is not only one of "I told you so." Rather, it brings the addressees of the song to justify and praise God.

[2] Modern research has offered several ways to explain this doubling, but some have adopted a similar approach: The song becomes part of the Torah, so that it is possible to refer to it by that same name (see Kleer, "šîr," *TDOT*, vol. 14, pp. 639-640).

[3] Since the word "*shira*" is found also in other Semitic languages, it is difficult to assume that the word is connected etymologically to the word "*yashar*." Nevertheless, it is possible that this is a play on words based on their similarity in sound, as in the appeal to the righteous to sing to God: "Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, praise is comely for the upright [*yashar*]… Sing [*shiru*] praises unto Him with the psaltery of ten strings" (*Tehillim* 33:1-3).

Ha'azinu. The words, "and they shall have eaten their fill and waxen fat; and turned unto other gods and served them," appear to relate to the words of the song of *Ha'azinu* itself: "But Yeshurun waxed fat, and kicked – you did wax fat, you did grow thick, you did become gross – and he forsook God who made him, and contemned the Rock of his salvation" (*Devarim* 32:15).

If we adopt the prevailing view that *Parashat Ha'azinu* is defined as a "song," the question arises: Why did God see fit to include a song in His Torah? What would have been missing had this *parasha* been written as ordinary prose, like the rest of the Torah and like the rest of Moshe's orations in the book of *Devarim*? Other sections of the covenant of the plains of Moav describe the future (e.g., *Devarim* 29:21-27), yet they show no deviation from the usual prose mode of writing.[1]

We must, however, temper the formulation that we have adopted: "Why did God see fit to include a song in His Torah?" From the wording of the song, it stands to reason that Moshe is the speaker, for in several places he speaks about God in the third person. This is particularly applicable to the opening declaration: "When I will proclaim the name of the Lord, ascribe you greatness unto God" (*Devarim* 32:3). From here it is clear that Moshe is the speaker, and not God.[2] But even if this is the case, the question remains, for Moshe relays the words of the song as they were relayed to him through prophecy. We are not dealing with an ordinary rebuke on the part of Moshe, the likes of which we have seen the entire length of the book of *Devarim*. The song includes a comprehensive historical description of Israel's future, and the Torah certainly means to imply that Moshe received these words from God and that he is relaying them to the people. Since we have already seen that in God's directive to Moshe this unit is defined as a song, it stands to reason that God was involved in the decision to deliver these words in the form of a song – whether it was Moshe who formulated the song in light of the prophecy that he received or whether he received these words in this form from God.

It should be noted that conventional writing in the ancient Near East tends much more to poetry than to prose. Even complex epics that express a developing plot are usually written in repetitive lines, with multiple parallels and in a distinctly poetic style. In other words, it is actually the accepted prose style of the Bible that deviates from what was customary writing in the ancient world; in the song of *Ha'azinu*, the Torah returns in a certain sense to the more common style of writing.[3]

Why, then, is history presented through poetry?

Music and Memory - In the continuation of the Ramban's remarks that were quoted above, he emphasizes a central feature of song, and from it emerges his perception of why the song of *Ha'azinu* was written in this manner:

> And it is called a *shira*, because Israel would always sing it as a song. And so too it was written as a song, because songs are written with breaks in accordance with the melody. (Ramban, *Devarim* 31:19)

In our modern thinking, we are used to the idea that one can write "poetry" and one can write "prose," these two modes being parallel forms of literary expression. However, the Ramban correctly writes that it would appear that in the Biblical period the difference between prose and poetry was more dramatic. Poems were also set to music and sung. This feature is so central to poetry that according to the Ramban, the rhythmic breaks in poetic writing and the short lines serve the melody. This is the way that the singers know how to sing the work in proper manner.

Elsewhere in the Bible, the term *shira* is used in reference to song. For example: And Chizkiyahu commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song [*shir*] of the Lord began also, and the trumpets, together with the instruments of David king of Israel. And all the congregation prostrated themselves, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. (II *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 29:26-27)

There are also musical instruments called by this very term: "That thrum on the psaltery, that devise for themselves instruments of music (*shir*), like David (*Amos* 6:5). Thus, it seems that the Ramban is fundamentally correct; and the significance of defining a particular text as a *shir* is that it was also set to music and people were invited to sing it.

What a shame that we do not have the original melody (Moshe's?) for the song of *Ha'azinu*, which would certainly reveal much of the meaning of the song and of the atmosphere that accompanies it in its various stanzas. Perhaps this is the melody of the cantillation notes according to one of the accepted traditions among the Jewish people. However, even if the melody is lost to us, the basic idea of the Ramban provides a good explanation for why this text was written as a song. Since the purpose of the song was to serve as a witness for the people of Israel, God commands Moshe to "put" the song in their mouths: "Now therefore write you this song for you, and teach you it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel" (*Devarim* 31:19). Without a doubt, it is easier to remember by heart a poem that is set to music than it is to remember prose, and since the role of the song was to be put in the mouths of Israel, the form of a song is the best option to achieve this.

This is the most common approach among the commentators. It suffices to mention the words of the Tzfat Kabbalist R. Mordechai Ha-Cohen in his commentary on the *parasha*: He calls it a *shira* to say that it should be fluent in their mouths – that is, the song of *Ha'azinu*… "Now therefore write you this song for you, and teach you it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths" – it is not enough to study it, but rather it must be fluent in their mouths like a song that is fluent in a person's mouth, and he constantly sings it. (*Siftei Kohen*, *Devarim* 31:19)

If we accept this approach, we have here a sort of a command to set the song of *Ha'azinu* to music even today, because the main purpose of the melody is to help us memorize the song; if the original melody was lost, it is appropriate to replace it with another simple and catchy melody. In fact, this reasoning is valid even according to those who maintain that the song of *Ha'azinu* was not set to music. It is easier to remember a poem written in rhythmic and parallel lines than rolling prose with a developing plot.

Determinism - It would be possible to suffice with this explanation, but I wish to cautiously suggest another reason for writing the song of *Ha'azinu* in the form of a song. In contrast to the general atmosphere that Moshe emphasized throughout his oration, and especially in this oration concerning the covenant, which highlighted the free choice given to Israel and its impact on the reward that is due them,[4] *Parashat Ha'azinu* presents a historical model that is to take place in the future, and the wording implies that the speaker is certain that it will indeed take place. At first glance there seems to be a contradiction: Does Jewish history stem from the Jewish people's free choice, or does it follow a predetermined master plan that imposes its realization on reality, a kind of planned procession of ideas that is realized at a pace that is appropriate for it?

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[1] The definition of "song/poem" is complicated – certainly in modern poetry, but also in ancient poetry (see, for example, Yaakov Kaduri, *"Shirat Ha-Mikra –Ha Keitzad*?" in *Sifrut ha-Mikra*: *Mevo'ot U-Mechkarim*, I, pp. 287ff.). Parallelism is commonly seen as the defining feature of Biblical poetry, but it is more precise to say that writing in two columns is what characterizes Biblical poetry – whether the relationship between the two clauses is one of parallelism (as is usually the case) or not.

[2] For more on this point, see R. Samet's *shiur* on *Parashat Ha'azinu* (second series).

[3] This also affects the tenses of the verbs. In the Bible there is a past tense that is appropriate for prose, whereas "the Ugaritic epic and myth, which is formulated entirely in the form of parallelism characteristic of ancient Semitic poetry, is related in present-future tense, without chronological context" (A. Greenstein, *Ha-Sifrut Ha-Ugaritit*," in *Sifrut Ha-Mikra*: *Mevo'ot U-Mechkarim*, II, p. 498). In the song of *Ha'azinu* – despite its being a poem – we find also verbs in past tense ("But Yeshurun waxed fat and kicked" [v. 15]), but its primary style certainly accords with what is stated above.

[4] Some have even argued that the verses describing the covenant in the plains of Moav present the idea of free will "with exceptional clarity and acuity, and it (the following unit in *Devarim* 30) is the primary source for the idea of free will in the Torah, and perhaps in all of the Bible" (D. Cohen-Tzemach, *Devarim*, *Olam Ha-Tanakh*, p. 224).

It is possible that the underlying assumption of the song is that the nature of man will cause him to wax fat from the great abundance and then deny the goodness that he had received from God. The choice is indeed in his hands, but even if there are generations who will fulfill their part of the covenant, in the end, a generation will arrive that will deny God's goodness and break the covenant.[1]

If we are dealing here with Israel's future, is it possible to point to the specific period described in the song? Various suggestions have been proposed in this regard, but it is possible that the song does not describe a concrete historical occurrence, but rather a model that is liable to repeat itself over and over again (like the cycle that we find in the book of *Shofetim*). This also explains why the song is so vague about the historical situation it sees before its eyes – there is no mention of the Temple, for example – and why there is no explicit mention of exile (in contrast to the view of the Ramban), and especially why there is no mention of the future redemption. If we have before us a full history of the Jewish people, how is it possible that it ends with God's revenge against the cruel nation that subjugated Israel, and not with the people of Israel sitting securely in their land? This is not the way we would expect a song describing the apocalypse to end.

A similar idea was suggested by R. Prof. Dov Rappel: The song of *Ha'azinu* is skimpy on facts because it is not a prophecy. It presents a general schema of the history of Israel. Jewish history is comprised of cycles, different from each other in their details, but similar in their general formula… It shows us the general structure of our history. (*Shirat Ha'azinu im Mavo U-Feirush* [Tel Aviv, 1996], p. 12)

We cannot enter here into a comprehensive discussion of this thesis, and it may be that it should be adopted in a more moderate formulation: The song describes the upcoming history of Israel after the people have settled in their land (the period of the *Shofetim*, with certain changes), but it turns this specific history into a prototype that represents a broad and fundamental historical theme. An echo of this concept can be found in a verse that best indicates the extent to which the song avoids referring to a specific period: "They have roused Me to jealousy with a no-god; they have provoked Me with their vanities; and I will rouse them to jealousy with a no-people; I will provoke them with a vile nation" (*Devarim* 32:21). Who is the nation that will subjugate Israel? Rashi suggests two possible identifications of the nation known here as "a no-people":

"With a no-people" – a nation that has no name, i.e., with a nation that has no reputation, as it states, e.g., of the Kasdim: "Behold, the land of the Kasdim, this people was not" (*Yeshayahu* 23:13); and of Esav it states: "You are greatly despicable" (*Ovadya* 1:2). (Rashi, ad loc., according to the *Keter* ed.)

Rashi does not appear to question which nation the verse is referring to, whether it is the Kasdim-Babylonians or Esav-Edom; rather, he brings two nations that vexed Israel during the First and Second Temple periods. As the Ramban adds (ad loc.), "This is an allusion to the two exiles." Just as the verse can be referring to the Kasdim and to Esav, so too it can be referring to other nations who fulfilled the prophecy of the verse. As R. Yosef Bekhor Shor formulates the matter when he relates to this exegetical tradition: Our Rabbis explained: Such as the Kasdim, about whom it is written: "This people was not." "I will provoke them with a vile nation" – such as the people of Barabaria and Marotania, who walk about naked in the marketplace, as there is no one as despicable and abominable before the Holy One, blessed be He, as one who walks about naked in the marketplace. And they oppress Israel. And such as the Christians. (commentary to *Devarim* 32:21)

In other words, the song remained open to various implementations, and indeed it was implemented time and time again. Similarly, when *Chazal* identified the nation that is a no-people with the Kasdim, this was merely an example, "such as."

Whether we adopt Dov Rappel's formulation or another formulation, the song does indeed present an open outline of the future, which includes sin, punishment, and God's future vengeance against the nations for the desecration of His name caused by the shameful state of Israel whose name is associated with His name (and not because of the people's repentance!). In this respect, some might argue that what we have here is a deterministic historical model.

In light of this, it is possible to offer a new explanation as to why this passage is written as a song. The regular rhythm of the song, its internal rhythm and the external rhythm that follows from the melody, are especially suited to content that repeats itself. Prose is especially adapted to a one-time event, in which the characters described therein enjoy freedom of action, in accordance with which the plot advances. A historical theme or a historical model, which seeks to reveal repetitive behavior that accords with natural cyclicity, is more aptly expressed through the language of poetry.

In this light, we can return once again to the beginning of the song. What is the significance of presenting "nature" as an addressee of the song? The appeal to heaven and earth contributes to the feeling that the song is not presenting a one-time occurrence, but rather presents a permanent historical model that goes beyond a concrete period and represents the ways of God's governance and the history of His people. The things that are described in the song will occur again and again, as a natural model that psychologists and sociologists may know how to decipher. Precisely because the history of the Jewish people is presented in the song as a recurring natural phenomenon, the appropriate addressee is "nature." In other words, the people of Israel, which along the length of the song become its trivial addressees, become integrated with heaven and earth, with the entire universe, all of which is governed according to fixed models.

As I alluded above, it is possible that the essence of the song is not deterministic, but it presents what is likely to occur, and this probability reflects a spiritual law of nature, according to which God rewards His people in accordance with their actions. It therefore falls upon them to proclaim this song day and night and justify God's deeds. "The Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He" (v. 4).

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[1] Some have proposed a similar reading regarding Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden. We also should not reject the reading according to which the song should be understood also as a threat. If indeed Israel will sin, this will be their fate, but it is in their hands not to sin and to be spared from the calamities described in the song.

Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah via the Internet

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Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Why must Sukkot occur in such close proximity to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur? A fresh analysis of a famous dispute in the Talmud regarding precisely what it is that the sukkah commemorates yields a fascinating answer to this question.

Rabbi Akiva (Tractate Sukkah 11b) maintains that we are replicating the actual booths in which our ancestors dwelt during their desert wanderings, while Rabbi Eliezer believes that we are re-creating the miraculous "clouds of glory" which descended from the Almighty as an ethereal protective shield when they left Egypt.

Since our tradition records that the final judgment and absolution of God during this period of repentance is rendered on the seventh day of Sukkot (Hoshana Rabba), it is clear that the Sukkah is an intrinsic part of a process of repentance that began with Rosh Hashana.

Hence, even when R. Eliezer and R. Akiva disagree as to the identity of the "booths" themselves, perhaps they are also distinguishing between two different aspects of the repentance process.

Indeed, the Holy Zohar speaks of two forms of repentance: a lower repentance (teshuva tata'a) which is for a specific transgression or group of transgressions, and a higher repentance (teshuva ila'a) which is an uplifting of the entire personality, a total ennobling of one's direction in life.

I would suggest that R. Akiva's sukkah, reminiscent of the flimsy desert structures, is linked to the lower form of repentance, and R. Eliezer's "clouds of glory" sukkah is linked to the higher form of repentance. Ultimately, we need both of them!

Maimonides, in fact, supports this hypothesis in his Laws of Repentance. Initially, he describes the penitent as having to experience a humbling process:

"The path of repentance is for the penitent to cry out constantly before God with tears and beseeching. He gives charity according to his ability, distancing himself from what he did, and he changes his name as if to say that he is not the same person who committed these transgressions, transforming his deeds into righteous deeds. He exiles himself from his place, because exile serves as a forgiveness for sin in that it causes a person to become more subdued, humble and subservient" (Hilchot Teshuva 2:4).

Here we see an implicit connection between the last step in the repentance process and the sukkah. Since no one understands the humbling experience better than a person who has fallen so low that he must leave his accustomed abode and no longer has a permanent roof over his head, the sukkah becomes in actuality the final step in Maimonides' vision of repentance.

And the entire desert experience, with the Israelite wanderings from place to place, has served as the historical paradigm of Jewish exile, according to most biblical interpretations, with the sukkah standing out as the ultimate personalized symbol of this exile.

Yet, several chapters ahead, Maimonides codifies a different kind of repentance, a state of perfection that places the penitent close to the Divine Presence:

"Repentance is on the highest level because it brings a person close to the Divine Presence. Yesterday he was hated by God and alienated and abominable. But today he is beloved, delightful, close, a beloved friend" (ibid, 7:6).

A friend of God! The highest achievement of repentance. What do friends do? One way to express delight and closeness with a beloved friend is to invite him into your home. And in a sense, this is what happens on Sukkot.

During Yom Kippur, we were all in the presence of God (lifnei Hashem) like angels in heaven. But on Sukkot, which arrives just days afterward, our presence before God is extended by His making our home and His home the very same home. All through the months of Elul and Tishrei, we add the 27th Psalm to the prayer service, which includes the following verse:

"One thing have I desired of the Lord …that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life… " Psalms 27:1).

Finally, on Sukkot our desires are answered. In effect, God is the bridegroom, and we, the Jewish people, are the bride called upon to enter the bridegroom's home. The seven days we sit inside the sukkah correspond to the seven days that a marriage is celebrated. Since no 'Sheva Brachot' is complete without new faces at each of the seven festive meals, we also invite into our sukkah new faces for the duration of the seven days: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David, and the custom is called ushpizin.

Perhaps we must first seek forgiveness for our individual transgressions and lovingly accept the exile of the sukkah of R. Akiva before we can enter the marriage chamber of the glorious sukkah of R. Eliezer. How fortunate are we that the one naturally turns into the other as we reach upwards in our relationship to the Divine.

Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Derashot Ledorot

The Illusions We Live By

The Halakhah is generally rich in the use of illusions, and especially so in its treatment of the laws of Sukkot. There is, for instance, the law of lavud. This means that even if there exist empty spaces in the sekhah or the covering of the Sukkah, if these spaces are less than three tefahim (about fifteen inches), then we consider the empty space as if it did not exist, but was covered by branches or other sekhah. Lavud means that we accept the illusions that any distance less than three tefahim does not exist; it is as if it were attached.

Another example is the law of dofen akumah. This means that if four cubits or less of an invalid type of covering or sekhakh was placed on the roof of the Sukkah contiguous to the wall, we do not regard it as invalid, thereby disqualifying the entire sekhakh, but rather imagine as if the wall were bent over and inclined for that distance, thus causing us to regard the Sukkah as kosher.
Another example would be that of tzurat ha-pesah. This means that if a Jew does not have sufficient material to build the requisite number of walls, then it is sufficient to place two poles on either end and a beam across them. We consider this a tzurat ha-pesach, the figure of a doorway, and imagine that the doorway constitutes both an entrance and a wall. We accept the illusion that this empty space is really a complete wall.

One of the great and most distinguished scholars and preachers of modern Israel, the late Rabbi Amiel ז"ל of Tel-Aviv (in his famous Derashot el Ami), has discovered a hint of this propensity for the use of illusion in Sukkot, in the Talmud's statement concerning the nature of our dwelling in the Sukkot. The Torah teaches us, ba-sukkot teshvu shiv'at yamim--you shall dwell in the Sukkot for seven days. And the Talmud adds, teshvu k'ein taduru-you shall "dwell" as if you truly "resided" in the Sukkah. We do not really change our address from home to Sukkah; nevertheless, in our minds, in our practice, in

our will, in our intentions, we dwell in the Sukkah as if we really lived there. All of Sukkot is a tribute to the power of a noble illusion.

Thus, the Halakhah as a torat hayyim, a Torah of Life, tells us something about the importance of illusion in daily life. Normally we use the word "illusion" in a pejorative sense, as a term of derision, as something which is contrary to fact, to reality, to common sense. But my thesis this morning is that that is all wrong. In many of the most significant branches of human endeavor we make use of illusion, and could not get along without it. Thus, for instance, in law we use legal fictions--as, for example, when we consider a corporation not as a collection of many people, but as an individual, collective personality. In science we abstract "ideal systems" from reality--and that is creating an illusion. The mathematician deals with such concepts as infinity and imaginary numbers. Philosophers speak of the philosophy of "als-aub," the philosophy of "as-if." Men of literature describe and criticize life and society by means of creative illusions.

Indeed, we live our regular lives by certain illusions--not only in the intellectual disciplines, such as law and science, but in the deepest recesses of our individual and ethnic consciousness. Without the proper illusions, life can become meaningless and a drudgery. The future is bleak, the past a confused jumble, and the present depressingly dull, without the necessary illusions.

What we must know is this: that illusions are not opposed to fact. Illusions are what the facts add up to in the long run, what give us the ability to understand and interpret facts. Illusions are frequently more consonant with reality than narrow and isolated facts. Illusions are the framework of fact, that which give them sense and meaning.

Pity the man who prides himself upon possessing "common sense," who "sticks only to facts," and who has nothing to do with sentiment or illusion. What a miserable, cold, dull, impersonal, and boring life he must lead! I do not envy the scientist who carries the laboratory, via his mind, into his home and society; who sees men as objects, as chunks of protoplasm, who thinks only in the terms of numbers and size, and reduces all relationships to impersonal equations. I do not envy the businessman who, when he returns to the bosom of his family, still thinks in terms of profit and competition and marketability. He considers his wife a Junior Partner, or perhaps Vice President in Charge of the Home, his children as deductions, and the gifts he occasionally distributes to his family as bonuses to be reckoned in a budget. Such a family exchanges services as in a commodity market--and that is all!

Such people sterilize all beauty and sweetness out of their lives by ignoring such real and marvelous illusions as dignity and love and hope and purpose and happiness and humor. Such things cannot be weighed or measured or examined under a microscope or analyzed in a test tube or quoted on the stock page. Yet life is dull--and desperate--without them. To remove them is to take the poetry out of living.

Indeed, the poet John Ciardi, in the latest issue of Saturday Review, voiced this very complaint. "It is always a mistake," he writes, "to discuss poetry with a man who insists that it must make sense... For the trouble with being sensible is not the sense it does or does not make, but the life it never really manages to get to... (it) always manages to shut as many doors as it opens... And one of the doors it always shuts, and always with a slam, is poetry." If you look only for a straight, factual message, and ignore image and illusion, then you have destroyed poetry. You cannot read Shakespeare or Wordsworth the way you read the Wall Street Journal. And the same holds true for music or painting or sculpture or literature.

Or take that much abused word, Love. In our sophisticated, post-Freudian, fact-ridden society, there is no great difficulty in talking about sexuality; but love is taboo, and considered only a comforting illusion. Yet such "illusions" are part of a larger reality. You cannot see or touch it, buy or sell or psychoanalyze it, but it exists between devoted couples who have long transcended physical attraction; amongst people who genuinely love books or music; with committed citizens who love country or people; for authentic Jews who love God and Torah.

A narrow factualism regards integrity and honesty as illusions, because "they don't pay." An idealistic appreciation of illusion, however, considered that in the long run there is justice. Maybe the thief will prosper in his business; but like a worm boring its way into a luscious fruit, this same dishonesty must ultimately enter into the innermost recesses of home and family and mind, and destroy these most precious things that a man possesses: peace of mind, domestic bliss, and personal reputations. Of course, there are some illusions that are harmful and dangerous, such as the illusion of race-superiority or that might makes right. But these are myths; they are false, and substitutes for facts. Illusions do not ignore facts; they build upon them and see them from a broader perspective.

What are some of the illusions that Judaism teaches? What are some of the outstanding examples of the principle of Sukkot that teshvu k'ein taduuru? One of them is the illusion that man is basically good, that, in the words of David, va-tehasrehu me'at me'lohim, he was created but little lower than the angels; in other words, that man has a neshamah, a soul. The man who has a nose only for hard facts will not see a soul in the human personality; for this you must have an eye for larger illusions and a heart for great ideals. How silly was that Russian astronaut who, when he returned from orbit, reported that he looked through the heavens and found no God. It is as childish as the sophomoric comment of the surgeon who announced that he had conducted a thorough search of the anatomy and discovered no soul. The best answer was provided by the wise man who replied that he took apart a violin and found no music! Of course, a man has a neshamah; without it his life is meaningless and makes no sense.

Or take the halakhic principle that every Jew has a hezkat kashrut--a presumption of being decent and honest. A narrow view of the facts will tell you that most people are unworthy and irresponsible. But without the illusion of man's kashrut, there can be no trust, no loyalty, no faith. And therefore, there can be no transactions, no marriage, and no happiness. Teshvu k'ein taduru--without the proper illusions, life is unliveable.

A narrow view of the facts will tell you that Jews do not constitute one people. The Yeminite and the American Jew, the Russian Jew and the Bene Israel of India, the German Jew and the Jew from China, are completely different types. What matters it that they share a common history or aspiration or faith?--these things cannot be measured and established as hard facts. Yet Judaism accepts that all Jews are one people, that they constitute Kenesset Yisrael. As in the Sukkah, we accept the principle of lavud: even if there are gaps, and discrepancies, and big holes, and lacunae of all kinds, we assume that they are solid, attached, covered up. The Jewish people is one people. It is by virtue of such illusions that history was turned and restricted, and the State of Israel was created!

Finally, there is another law of Sukkot that beautifully expresses the noble idealism that informs the Jewish mentality in its use of illusion. The Halakhah states that if a man builds his Sukkah and makes his walls from atzei asherah, from the wood of a tree which was used as an idol by idol-worshippers, then the Sukkah is invalid. The reason that is given is ketutei mikhtat she'ureih--since an idol must be destroyed, then we consider this wood as if it had been totally demolished and therefore there is no sheur, the wall is not big enough--since it does not even exist! Here is a heavy, solid wall before me--and the Halakhah says: it is non-existent! What a marvelous expression of the great Jewish illusion that evil does not really exist, that all that is wicked and cruel and unseemly and anti-human can be considered as unreal because, ultimately it will be destroyed in the great triumph of the good over the evil and the holy over the profane and the pure over the defiled! The halakhic principle which accepts the illusion that idolatry is already non-existent is the basis and expression for the great Jewish optimism that

has kept us alive throughout the centuries. Teshvu k'ein taduru!

The Kabbalists of centuries ago devised a special recitation to be read before performing any mitzvah, such a sukkah or lulav. It reads: yehi ratzon she'tehei hashuvah mitzvah zu k'ilu kiyamtiha be'khol perateha ve'dikdukeha, "may it by Thy will that this mitzvah which I am about to perform shall be considered in Your eyes as if I had observed it in all its details and particulars. Indeed so! If we harbor the right illusions about life, if we live life according to the noblest ideals, and observe them faithfully, then God will return the compliment, and accept the illusion k'ilu kiyamtiha, as if our noblest thoughts had been put into practice, as if our most cherished aspirations were realities, as if our errors and sins did not exists, as if our lives were lived on the highest level of humanity and Jewishness.

Teshvu k'ein taduru--what a wonderful holiday is this Sukkoth which teaches us this noble and beautiful and precious exchange of illusions! No wonder it is called zeman simhatenu, "the time of our happiness." May it indeed continue to be so for us, for all Israel, and for all humanity.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Jewish Unity *(Vezot Haberacha)*

Immediately before the final blessings to the tribes in our Torah portion, the Torah (Deuteronomy 33:5) describes a time in the future when all the tribes are united. Rashi on the verse says this is a time of unity, without arguments. Siftei Chachamim seems to say that this time is now, and that is why they are worthy of the blessings by Moses. Rosh (on the verse) and Midrash (Midrash Sifri on Deuteronomy 33:5) stress that this will occur in a time of unity when they accept God as king. But an obvious question should occur to anyone learning these verses. If the goal is to achieve unity, the differences among groups need to minimize so that the people form one group, not many groups. Then why does Moshe in our Parsha give different blessings to each tribe, immediately after this verse highlighting Jewish unity? These blessings highlighted the unique qualities of each tribe, certainly not a formula for Jewish unity. To achieve the goal of unity, would it not have been better to dissolve the concept of twelve tribes right after they left Egypt or at least now that Moshe is dying, in order to promote this unity? If so, then the Jews should have been travelling and living as one unit from the beginning, as soon as they were freed from Egypt, with the competition between tribes and tribal pride eliminated. Why highlight and maintain differences if the goal is unity?

What is Jewish Unity? – Unity, NOT Uniformity - The idea that if everyone is the same and differences are eliminated, then we will achieve unity – is not a Jewish idea. Jewish unity could be achieved and should be achieved despite the differences between the tribes. This is what God wanted. At the Splitting of the Sea, rather than have all the (scared) Jews travel united through the dry waters, the verse in Psalms (Psalms 13:13) and the verse recited each evening in prayers by traditional Jews (blessings after Shema) is that God divided the waters into 12 lanes (*Gezarim*), one for each tribe. Thus, The Almighty desired to keep the differences and specialness of each tribe, and yet, also desired Jewish unity. And, sure enough, despite the 12 lanes, in the morning prayers, (blessings after Shema) after crossing the Reed Sea and surviving, the Siddur tells us "with a new song, the redeemed ones praised Your great Name at the seashore, all of them in unity gave thanks…(*Yachad Kulam Hodu*)". Thus, despite twelve different lanes, which would seem to accentuate individual groups, the Jewish people immediately became one, and unified to sing spontaneously to God. In our Torah Portion, as well, the verse says "*Yachad Shivtei Yisrael*-the tribes unified."

If we look closely, this is not a new idea in the Torah. Rashi (Commentary to Genesis 11:9) asks why the generation that built The Tower challenging God was not killed, since their sin was tantamount to idol worship, while the generation of Noah, whose main crime was stealing, were condemned to death? He answers that thou they we sinners to God, they were totally united in their purpose, and, thus, there was still some hope for them as human beings. This is based on the Torah verse describing them as one language and one purpose (Genesis 11:1). Similarly, before they received the Torah, the verse (Exodus 19:1) described the Jews as "they travelled", "they came", "they camped" and then "HE camped." Since the Torah does not make grammatical mistakes, Rashi (on Exodus 19:2), based on the Midrash (Midrash Mechilta on the verse and Tanchuma Yitro 9) explains that this is the only place in history that the Jewish people camped as one (in the singular singular), since they were unified in purpose, without arguments. It was only in this merit that they were ready to receive the Torah. The implication is that if the Jew had not been unified, they never would have received the Torah. But the next verse (Exodus 19:3), then, is very strange. God says to give one message to "*Beit Yaakov*" (the women) And another message to "*Bnai Yisrael*" (the men). If this is the moment of total unity, then why did God "divide them" by giving two messages to two different to two groups, seemingly encouraging and disunity? God is emphasizing, again, our main point: unity does imply uniformity. The men were indeed very different from the women, and each group needed to hear a different message. But they were, nonetheless, still unified at that moment.

The Torah also alludes to this notion in another place, where two seemingly unconnected verses follow each other. Many Jews are aware of Judaism's overarching guiding principle (according to Rabbi Akiva) "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you ask these same Jews what the content of the verse is following this verse (Leviticus 19:18-19), almost no one will know (unless he is a Torah reader). The following verse states "You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with mixed seed; nor shall a garment mixed of linen and wool come upon you." Since traditional Jews and commentaries believe that verses are not written randomly, what is God trying to tell us by combining these two commandments? The latter verse says that neither cattle that are different may be mixed, plants that are different many are not mixed, nor linen (representing the plant world) may not be contained in a garment with wool (representing the animal world). In short, things that are created different should stay different and not combined. It would be easy to say that "Love thy neighbor" is a commandment signifying the action to try to get everyone to be like me, see things the way I see them. Dennis Prager points out that this is the message of both verses. People are supposed to stay and be different (like different tribes or men and women, with different characteristics). Nevertheless, a Jew should love every other Jew who is totally different. And each Jew has the ability to unify with that different Jew for a higher purpose. As someone once said, the attitude here is "I respect your right to be wrong" (on smaller issue), and "you can disagree as long as you do not become disagreeable."

How, then, Can Jews Come Together and Unite if They Remain Different? - If a Jew understands that Jews can remain different but unite for a higher purpose, then that unity and its importance can override those differences. The Midrash compares the entire Jewish people to one lamb (Midrash, Vayikra Rabbah 4:6). The foot of the lamb does not look at the lamb's shoulder and say "you look very different from me. Your purpose is very different from mine. I cannot work tother with you to make this body function." Similarly, when the ear of the lamb is damaged and hurting, the stomach does not say "not my problem." The entire body hurts at once. The Midrash goes on to say that if one person in a crowded boat cuts through to the bottom, and his neighbor starts screaming, "you are going to drown us all," the other person cannot simply claim "what is under my seat is mine and not your problem." Similarly, the action of every Jew is tied to every other Jew, as all Jews are in the "same boat." If the entire Jewish people are one body, then his or her problem is indeed my problem, and his or her pain is indeed my pain. For the big picture, Jews must unite.

And what is that bigger picture? Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik distinguished between two groups of people that are gathered together and look identical. If one group happened to be in one place in one time, even if it is to celebrate

something or solve something, but then they disperse forever, then then they are a group that is called "*Goral*," put together by fate. But if the group understands that it is not mere fate, but future and events of the entire group are tied to one another, then their relationship is greater than this one interaction. This group is called "*Ye-ud*" and bound by mutual Destiny. When the Jews understand that they are part of this second group, then what binds them is greater than what divides them, and their purpose is much greater than the needs of any individual need, thought or cause, then they can be united.

When was the first time that the Jews were united in purpose? Rashi says (Genesis 42:3-5, with Rashi commentary on verse 3) that first time in the Torah that they were called "the brothers of Joseph" was when the brothers felt contrition about the sale of their brother and realized that the "big picture" of the Jewish future. It was in the very next verse that they were called the "Bnai Yisrael-Children of Israel (Jacob)" for the first time, because they we truly united in purpose And this became the name of the nation forever – the Children of Israel, united as one family. Judaism is the only people-nation-religion whose name signifies "one family." Just as there are people in the family who are different and do not get along (the crazy uncle or that cousin who fights with everyone), in times of difficulty the family (should) bond for a loftier goal. If all Jews are indeed one family, then it is not as difficult to unite or a higher purpose, despite being very different. That is why every Jew should consider every other Jew "my brother" (a common phrase between strangers in Israel even today) or "my sister" and why every Jew is legally responsible for every other Jew (Sanhedrin 27b, Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 87:20), just like a (disliked) family member.

Despite Unity, Jews Should Continue to Remain Different In Thought - The Talmud (Berachot 58a) is proud that Jews are constantly disagreeing with each other, if done respectfully. Therefore, a Jew recites a blessing when seeing a multitude of Jews, but the wording is significant. "Bless…Just as each Jew has a unique face, so, too, each Jew has a unique opinion.." Maimonides (Maimonides, Peirush Hamishnayot , Sanhedrin 10:3) states that as long as it does not affect Jewish law, which must be agreed upon by all (see below), it is perfectly fine for many opinions and different beliefs to exist simultaneously in Jewish thought. The Talmud stresses this idea (Yevamot 13b). Even though the House of Hillel and the House of Shamai argued vehemently, and disagreed about points of Jewish law, they, nevertheless remained companions, socialized, married each other families, and found a way to accommodate each other in Jewish law in these areas. Based on the verse that says everyone was united in building the Tower (cited earlier, Genesis 11:1), Seforno explains this was, in fact, their precise sin: everyone agreed with each other, and there was no room for dissent (Seforno commentary on Genesis 11:1). Where there is no chance for legitimate argument, then a society is doomed to totalitarianism. Complete agreement is antithetical to Jewish thought.

When It Comes to Community Practice, There Must be Unity - The same Maimonides who praised different Jewish opinions as long as it did not involve final Jewish law, ruled (Maimonides, Hilchot Avodah Zara 12:4) that more than one Jewish law authority in a city (Jewish court) is forbidden. A Jewish community, in order to function and thrive, requires one authority only which everyone must follow. This is also logical. Imagine if some Jews decided Thursday was Shabbat or community prayer would begin at different times. The community would quickly fall apart. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Rema, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 493:1) ruled this way as well. Unfortunately, because of world events in the last 100 years, Jewish communities around the world were relocated and disappeared, and, thus, customs what were unique to each community followed by everyone in town, became intertwined, and many observant Jews today follow what was in their families in Europe where everyone in town, of course, had the same practice. There result is that within communities today, sometimes customs differ. But basic practice, Halacha, based in the Code of Jewish Law, remains unified. That is an amazing accomplishment, given that this Code was authored while Jews lived in many different communities, mostly separated as either Sephardic or Ashkenazi Jews. It was only because of a "coincidence" of history that God's hand allowed one Rabbi (Yaakov son of Rabbeinu Asher, who had been head of the Ashkenazi community and then was forced to move to become the head of the Sephardic community) was able to put all the opinions and practices of all the notable Rabbis into one book (Tur), on which two Rabbis wrote their commentaries (Beit Yosef by Sephardic Rabbi Karo and Darchei Moshe by Ashkenazic Rabbi Isserles). When they each wrote their own Code of Jewish Law, fortunately it was published as one book, and accepted by all Jews in all communities as Jewish law. This greatly helped maintain Jewish unity of practice in the entire Jewish world.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks noted this dichotomy in Judaism between the legitimacy of Jewish disagreements and Jewish unity in practice. There are three verses in the Book of Exodus where the Jews accepted the Torah (Exodus 19:8, 24:3, 24:7). In the first two, the Torah says that the Jews were totally united in accepting the Torah (the words "unity" or "one voice"). But in the third verse, the Jews simply said we "will accept the Torah," without the unity. Rabbi Sacks explains that the first two verses, the Jews were speaking about Torah observance the practice of Judaism, "*Naase*-we will do." It is in these verses where the Jews were totally united. But when it came to explaining the Torah and understanding the Torah, they knew that they would disagree, there would be no unity, and that his disagreement would be healthy and expected. Thus, when it came to *Naase Vi Nishma*-we will do and understand," the Jews could not commit to unity, as they knew that disagreements were an inevitable part of the Jewish living experience.

Power of Jewish Unity - When Jews do come together for a higher purpose and achieve Jewish unity, it has a power is beyond any other kind of action. We saw above that Jewish unity merited receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. But the future power of Jewish unity is also expressed by the Rabbis. Rabbi Elazar Hakafar (Midrash Tanchuma Tzav 10), echoing the generation of the Tower builders, said if the Jewish people can achieve unity, then even if they are sinners with idol worship, God cannot touch them, and they will not be punished. On a more positive note, the Rabbis promise (Midrash, Beraishit Rabbah 98:3) that if the Jewish people achieve can, once again, achieve true Jewish unity, then the final redemption is inevitable. This reflects the words of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:16:22) who asked the two different factions of Jews, those of Yosef-Ephraim-Shechem to unite with the Jews of Judah by symbolically combining their wooden branches. He implies that the redemption would immediately come if they would see that their differences could be united for a higher goal – the ultimate redemption.

*** This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

Dvar Torah
Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

It is possible to be fast asleep with your eyes wide open.

This is how the Chatam Sofer explains a fascinating passage in the Gemara, Masechet Succah 13. There a description is given of the Simchat Beit Hashoeiva, the celebration of the ceremony of the drawing of water which took place in the temple every year during the festival of Succot. And in the Gemara, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania exclaims,

"Lo ra'inu sheina b'eineinu." – "We didn't see sleep in our eyes."

On the surface it appears that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania is saying that the celebrations went into the early hours and nobody fell asleep. But why did he say we didn't see sleep in our eyes? If you're asleep you can't see anything! Why this particular phrase?

The Chatam Sofer explains that sometimes, people waste their lives away. Even though we

might have our eyes open and be walking around, if we aren't giving a contribution of value to the world around us, there's no value to our lives. So Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania was saying that at the Simchat Beit Hashoeiva in the temple during the festival of Succot, we were maximising the opportunity to utilise every precious moment of life, and that's why we didn't see sleep in our eyes.

Now I have a question – why did Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania only say this with regard to Succot? If he wanted to teach us about the fact that sometimes we might be sleeping our life away, he could have referred, for example, to the korban Pesach and say that during Pesach, nobody ever saw sleep in their eyes when we were in the temple. Or, at the time when we heard the shofar being blown on Rosh Hashana similarly no one saw sleep in their eyes. Why only on Succot?

I'd like to suggest that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania is referring specifically to celebration.

If we are going to guarantee the continuity of Judaism through the generations to come, it's crucially important that our children and our grandchildren should celebrate their Yiddishkeit – that they should perform the mitzvot 'mitoch ahava' – out of love, and not 'mitoch yirah' – out of fear.

When we maximise opportunities to celebrate the beauty of authentic Torah, then we appreciate how meaningful and joyous it is for us. Succot is 'zman simchateinu' – our season of joy. And over the festival of Succot, let us rejoice in our Judaism, and as a result, we won't see sleep in our eyes.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

The Cloud, the Mist, the Thicket
Rabbi Shmuel Klitsner

According to tradition, Hoshana Raba as the crescendo of the Sukkot experience is also a Yom Kippur retrospective, complete with yet another "last chance" to search for God and for introspection. It seems that gates that have been locked (ne'ilah) are never really tightly sealed.

Undoubtedly, the crescendo of the Yom Kippur experience is the final prayer of the day: the ne'ilah (locking of the gates).

While the Talmud (Yerushalmi Tractate Berakhot 4:1) records a disagreement as to whether the meaning is the locking of the Temple gates or the locking of the heavenly gates, the evocative term ne'ilah, conjures up the image of missed opportunities and impassable boundaries. But does Judaism really limit access to God to particular days and specific locations?

Last month I overheard my son in-law ask my two-year-old granddaughter, "Where is God?" My jaw dropped when she answered: "Wherever people let him in." My son- in- law was quite pleased to have initiated his daughter into the world of Hassidic philosophy.

Epigrams and child prodigies notwithstanding, an oft quoted verse in Isaiah (55:6) suggests that not all moments and circumstances are alike: "Seek God where he is to be found; call to him when he is close."

Various commentaries to the verse (see Talmud Tractate Rosh Hashana 18a) identify God's closeness alternatively as the days of the month of Ellul, as the ten days of repentance, or as the situation of communal – as opposed to private – prayer. However, I am partial to the more audacious suggestion of the Zohar (Bereishit Vayera 105b): "Sometimes God is found and sometimes – not."

This formulation reminds me of a Hassidic parable. An old man comes upon a small child in tears and asks: "Why are you crying, little one?" "Because I am hiding and no one is looking for me," answered the child. The old man began to cry as well. "So too with God: God is hiding and no one is searching!"

To elaborate, there are two reasons people do not search: either because they've forgotten God, or because they think they've found God. The latter is invariably an illusion, as the infinite and the ineffable are, by definition, never to be captured. To apprehend is to reduce; to presume to have found God is both dangerous in its false clarity and destructive of the one activity – the endless search –that may actually bring godliness into life. Paradoxically, moments of doubt and unanswered questions foster spiritual search; the hubris of certainty obviates the search and freezes true yearning for the Divine.

How then might one approach the final hour of Yom Kippur and maximize the power of the ne'ilah experience? How can we deliver the moment when God is so close and simultaneously so far away and prevent it from slipping stillborn behind locked gates?

Three biblical passages and their associative imagery come to mind:

Leviticus 16:12-13, in concerning the service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur, describes the casting of frankincense upon the altar of the temple, whereupon a "cloud of incense covers" the inner holy space.

In Exodus 20:17, regarding the revelation at Sinai, describes a cloud descending upon the mountain and Moses "approaching the mist in which God is to be found".

If God is to be found in the mist, we are to approach not with clarity, but rather in utter humility and vulnerable uncertainty.

Similarly, the late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (in his Ye'mei Zikaron) describes the final moment of ne'ilah as one of desperation, of a final recognition that all the poetic words and lofty rhetoric of our Yom Kippur liturgy still leave us with the inescapable feeling that we have yet to say anything about God and about our yearning for the Divine. It is at that point that the final shofar blast that ends the day of Yom Kippur is sounded. For Rav Soloveitchik, the shofar blast is the mute cry of an inarticulate ram, a helpless creature without recourse to the majesty of language. It is when we cry out in our most primal existential angst – as does an animal caught in the thicket – that we begin to approach the "God that is to be found in the mist."

Indeed, Genesis 22:13, the verse that provides relief from the terrible test of the Binding of Isaac, and that provides our first encounter with the shofar (ram's horn), adds the final image to the "cloud cover" and the "mist" of Leviticus and Exodus.

"And Abraham lifted his eyes and saw: behold a ram – its horns caught in the thicket."

The thicket, the cloud, and the mist – these are the places where we are invited in to be close to God. Not in the landscape of a broad and bright horizon, nor in the loftiness of liturgical poetry. In those places we will find only ourselves and the echo of our own supplications. But if we dare to enter with humility and submission into the space of the thicket, the mist, and the cloud, then maybe… maybe…?

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Hershel Schachter
Anonymous Contributions

Hashem's creation of the world yeish mai'ayin was certainly a fantastic miracle that no human being can possibly fathom. The Gemorah has a principle that Hashem would never bring about a miracle unless He has a very good reason to do so. The posuk in Breishis alludes to the sifro shel Adam Harishon, the book of the history of the world that Hashem showed to Adam Harishon when he was created. This book outlines the development of world history and the development of Torah from generation to generation. Hashem has a plan in this world leading up to the days of Moshiach. Human beings are called upon to become partners with Hashem to bring about the result that He wants. In Sefer Koheles, Shlomo Hamelech describes the way people are all jealous of each other, competing with each other, and how each one wants to outdo others and leave his mark on the world. Everyone wants to leave a legacy and leave his mark on history. Shlomo Hamelech tells us how ridiculous this is. We should all try to ascertain what our mission in life is and partner with Hashem in bringing about His plans for the next stage in history.

The mishna in Rosh Hashanah points out that the Torah did not mention the names of the seventy zekeinim who were together with

Moshe Rabbeinu in the Sanhedrin. In every generation there are always anonymous talmedei chachomim and tzadikim who partner with Hashem to transmit the masorah of Torah to the next generation. The Rambam (introduction to Mishna Torah) writes that by right he should have quoted the names of the Tanoim and Amoroim whose opinions were accepted; he should have mentioned that this din was formulated by R' Akiva and that din was formulated by Rava, etc. Instead he left out all of the names of the chachomim. However, to fulfill that requirement of omer dovor b'sheim omro, the Rambam lists off the forty generations between Moshe Rabbeinu and Ravina and Rav Ashi. Apparently the Rambam thinks that the purpose of omer dovor b'sheim omro is not so much to give credit where the credit is due, but rather that the listener who hears the halacha should realize that all the halochos are coming from a strong masorah that goes all the way to Moshe and Yehoshua. By listing the names of the talmidei chachomim of the forty generations, the Rambam is telling us that every halacha that he is quoting was transmitted from reliable chachmei HaMasorah and therefore when we learn all of these halochos it is considered as if we are hearing everything mi'pi HaGevorah. Our role in this world is not to gain honor and glory and to leave our mark on history but rather to be careful not to get in the way of Hashem's developing history the way He wants, and from time to time to partner with Him in developing this history.

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

Nature or Miracle?: The Haftara of the First Day of Sukkot

By Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein

Nature or miracle? Withdrawal from the world or involvement in it? Two different and even contradictory understandings of the essence of the festival of *Sukkot* that are found in the words of *Chazal* serve as the starting point for parallel discussions over the course of the generations. One sees *Sukkot* as an expression of man's natural life and the *sukka* as blending in with his normal lifestyle. The other goes off in the opposite direction and understands the *sukka* as an expression of withdrawal from nature and the ordinary human world to a secluded corner, insulated from the din of normal life.

The fundamental source of this disagreement is the well-known *baraita* cited in tractate *Sukka* (11b) regarding the *sukkot* that were fashioned for Israel in the wilderness: "That I made the children of Israel to dwell in *sukkot*" (*Vayikra* 23:43) - these were the Clouds of Glory, says Rabbi Eliezer. Rabbi Akiva says: He made real booths for them.

The naturalistic understanding of *sukka* is clearly formulated by the Ibn Ezra, who writes explicitly that dwelling in a *sukka* is an ordinary human practice prevalent among all peoples. He writes as follows:

In the booths that they made after they passed through the Red Sea, and also in the wilderness of Sinai where they stayed for almost a year. **This is the practice in all encampments.** Thus, this festival as well serves as a reminder of the exodus from Egypt. One might ask: Why is this *mitzva* in Tishrei? The answer is that God's cloud was over the camp by day, so that the sun did not beat down on them, but during Tishrei they began to build booths because of the cold.

Not only does the Ibn Ezra note that dwelling in booths is "the practice in all encampments;" he also looks for a natural rationale to explain a phenomenon that at first glance is quite strange - the choice of Tishrei as the time for building the *sukka.* His amazing explanation is that owing to the Cloud of Glory that hovered over the camp, a *sukka* was not needed to provide shade from the summer's heat; they were already covered, and they therefore waited until the approach of winter to build their booths for protection against the rain.

Needless to say, this answer testifies to the Ibn Ezra's rationalistic bent and his desire to offer a naturalistic explanation for the *mitzva* of *sukka.* But it also reveals the built-in tension in the verses according to this approach; this naturalistic explanation is entirely based on the acceptance of the miraculous reality of the Cloud of Glory as so self-evident that it could serve as the foundation for natural human calculations. In any event, what emerges from Ibn Ezra's words is the perception of the *sukka* as an everyday human phenomenon.

In contrast, Rashi understands that we are dealing with Clouds of Glory, which were, of course, a supernatural phenomenon unique to the wilderness. The Ramban also advocates this approach, emphasizing the supernatural aspect of Israel's life in the wilderness and the connection between our question and the Tannaitic dispute cited above:

"'That I made the children of Israel to dwell in *sukkot*' – clouds of Glory." This is the wording of Rashi. And it is correct in my eyes according to the plain sense of Scripture. For He commanded that [future] generations should know all the great acts of God that He miraculously performed for them, that He made them dwell in the clouds of His Glory like in a booth. This is similar to what is stated: "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall there be a canopy. And there shall be a tabernacle (*sukka*) for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, etc." (*Yeshayahu* 4:6). And since He already explained that the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day and the pillar of fire at night, He simply said: "That I made the children of Israel to dwell in *sukkot*," that I made them clouds of Glory as booths to protect them. Now, He commanded at the beginning of the dry season a reminder of the exodus from Egypt in its month and season. And He commanded a reminder of the continuous miracle that was performed for them during their entire stay in the wilderness at the beginning of the rainy season. According to the opinion that He fashioned real booths for them, they began to build them at the beginning of the winter because of the cold as is customary in encampments, and therefore he commanded them at this time [of the year]. And it is a reminder that they should know and remember that they were in the wilderness and that they did not enter a house or find a settled city for forty years, but God was with them and they lacked for nothing.

According to the Ramban, the simple understanding that "is correct in [his] eyes according to the plain sense of Scripture" is that of a continuous miracle. And it is precisely the naturalistic explanation that seems less reasonable to him, although he admits, clearly alluding to the words of the Ibn Ezra, that there are conflicting positions in *Chazal.*

We see, then, that according to the Ibn Ezra the meeting that takes place between man and God on the festival of *Sukkot* is based on an event in which God watched over Israel in a natural manner, and the special sanctity of the festival was introduced into the world in order to mark the connection between man and God in the framework of the natural world and man's actions in this world. According to the Ramban, on the other hand, the festival of *Sukkot* is based on God's removing Israel from the world of natural causality, and the encounter between them takes place in the realm of the miraculous. The shade of the *sukka* that covered Israel in the wilderness was the shade of a miracle, the *sukka* serving as a miraculous shelter against the hardships of nature.

It is not improbable that this local disagreement regarding the sanctity of *Sukkot* reflects a more basic disagreement regarding the nature of sanctity in the world in general. Were we to offer a concise definition of sanctity, we could sum it up by saying that sanctity is man's standing before God. Man's standing before his Maker and his cleaving to Him sanctifies man and all that is around him, just as the penetration of God's spirit into the world by way of the creation of a connection between the Creator and His world gives rise to sanctity. When God descends into the world and is present there, we can speak, as it were, of the sanctity of place or time. When "I shall dwell among them" is fulfilled, the place becomes sanctified, and the Temple is the place where this encounter occurs.

All agree that sanctity exists in our world, whether in the form of the sanctity of time or in the form of the sanctity of place. But the question still remains - what is the ideal model for this encounter between God and man? Is sanctity best achieved when God "constricts" himself, as it were, and meets man on his home court and in the framework of his rules (to the extent that this is possible)? Or perhaps a more sublime sanctity tries to break out of this world, to elevate man and to remove him as much as possible from the material world of nature? Is natural law (and the general providence that accepts the world as it is) the preferred way of introducing sanctity into the world? Or perhaps the desired instruments for conducting the encounter between man and God are miracles that ravage the natural order

and personal providence that is not subject to natural rules, and it is they that must be used to establish sanctity in the world?

In light of this analysis, let us approach the *haftara* read on the first day of *Sukkot*. The *haftara* (*Zekharya* 14:1-21) discusses the war that will be fought in the future in the end of days, "on that day," when God goes out to fight on Israel's behalf, and with the nations' reaction to their calamitous defeat in battle. The people of Israel are perceived in the *haftara* as weak and incapable of defending themselves, so that God intervenes and delivers them from the hands of their conquerors. Thus, Zekharya repeats the message that runs through many prophecies - God's responsibility to redeem His children and save them from their oppressive enemies. The way that he presents this redemption, however, is worthy of attention; the entire prophecy is a description of supernatural intervention whereby God overturns the most basic elements of the natural order, and in this way He defeats the other nations. It is not nature, but rather miracles that serve as God's tools for saving Israel.

The Torah also testifies to the help that God will provide Israel against their enemies. Sometimes, the Torah speaks of a manner of governance that appears to be supernatural. Elsewhere, it asserts that "the Lord is your God who walks before you to fight your enemies for you in order to save you" (*Devarim* 20:4), and similarly adds, "for the Lord your God walks about in the midst of your camp to save you and to give your enemies before you" (*Devarim* 23:15). These verses do not promise that the war will be fought in a supernatural manner. On the contrary, the plain sense of these scriptural passages implies that God will help us in our wars against our enemies, but Israel is supposed to rely on human military tactics. And, indeed, if we examine the wars described by the prophets and the nature of the Divine help that was extended to Israel while those wars were being fought, we will quickly conclude that many times God's fighting on behalf of Israel consisted of His helping them to fight in a natural manner, rather than His elimination of the natural order from the battlefield.

Since our *haftara* deals with the end of days and the war against the nations who will eventually gain control of Jerusalem, it is appropriate to contrast that battle to the war of the conquest of Israel in the days of Yehoshua. Without entering into a broad analysis of the wars fought by Yehoshua, it is possible to point to a transitional process from supernatural wars and miraculous governance at the beginning, as in the case of the war of Jericho, to wars that were fought in a natural manner later in the conquest. A useful example is the second battle at Ai, where God instructs Israel to set up an ambush, a patently human military tactic; He Himself plans out the ambush to its minutest details, without ravaging the natural order and discarding human tactics.

Zekharya, on the other hand, presents us with a model of war fought by way of clearly miraculous governance, breaching nature in absolute manner, with no natural elements whatsoever. God fights against the nations by way of supernatural means that totally disrupt the laws of nature. Nature and history come to a dead end. Jerusalem is described by the prophet as being in grave crisis and distress in the wake of the foreign invasion; it is trapped and ruined, with its men and women subjected to rape and captivity, plunder and exile – "And the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go into exile" (14:2). There is no alternative but to overturn the natural order. Indeed, the war begins with a great noise that divides the Mount of Olives into two and relocates it, and it continues with a total disruption of the natural order:

> And it shall come to pass on that day that there shall neither be bright light nor thick darkness; but it shall be one particular day which shall be known as the Lord's, neither day, nor night; but it shall come to pass that at evening time, there will be light. (14:6)

Whatever the precise explanation of the wording of the verse, the overall meaning is clear: abolition of the natural light that exists in our world. It goes without saying that there is no greater change in the natural order than a situation in which there is neither day nor night! The most basic elements of the natural order will change, starting with the cycle of light and darkness and ending with the water cycle, which will also change when living waters will go out of Jerusalem. Put simply, the fundamental components of creation – light, heat, and water – which appear at the beginning of the account of creation and from that time on have been the most essential foundation stones for the survival of natural life will utterly change. From that point on, they will no longer give expression to the natural order of the original creation, but will rather reflect the renewed presence of God in the material world.

The war against Israel's enemies will also be fought in unnatural ways. God will neither strengthen the hands of the people of Israel as they go out to battle against their enemies, nor will He create tactical or strategic conditions that will lead to the defeat of the nations by way of accepted military strategies. Rather, He will deliver a strange blow against them: "Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets." In this context, it is difficult not to remember that the classical supernatural war in which God fought the nations laying siege to Jerusalem using fighting tactics that canceled nature and its laws, the defeat of Sancheriv, was by way of a plague.

The second half of the *haftara* deals with the nations' response to the war. According to what was stated thus far, their response should be understood not only as relating to Israel's victory over their enemies, but also as expressing their impression of God's actions and their understanding of the principle of His dominion over the world and nature's subjugation to Divine will. In other words, the battle that God will fight in Jerusalem is meant to bring the nations not only to recognition of Israel's right to exist, but also to their recognition of the sovereignty and greatness of the Creator who rules the world.

In light of all this, we can understand how the festival of *Sukkot* fits in to the picture. The celebration of the festival of *Sukkot* in the aftermath of a war in which nature is defeated sets the festival and the *sukka* itself as the opposite of nature. The *sukka* is not a place that fits in to the ordinary world of man, but rather a refuge and haven for those times when nature cannot meet the needs of the individual or the nation. The people of Israel turned to *sukkot* in the wilderness after God split the sea for them, thereby canceling ordinary natural governance, and as they are about to begin forty years of eating the manna that will fall for them from heaven.[1] Thus, the *sukkot*, which are most closely identified with Israel's life in the wilderness, became the symbol for withdrawal from the natural world into the bosom of unique personal providence that cancels nature.

This is also the situation described by Zekharya, wherein the natural world as we know it is cancelled and the world is governed in a "natural" way by means of a miracle. The world of history and day-to-day life is emblazoned with the spirit of God that hovers over the universe; the boundary separating the world of the profane from that of the holy is blurred. For sanctity is God's appearance in the world of man and direct contact with him, whereas the profane is the world in its ordinary natural state – a world created by God but run by fixed laws that were implanted in it.

In the wake of the war, this distinction is cancelled, and all of reality becomes subject to direct Divine intervention, for God ravaged the natural order and subjugated it. Therefore, the horse – the symbol of war and human action in this world,[2] inasmuch as it was the car of the ancient world – will be entirely holy: "On that day shall there be [inscribed] upon the bells of the horses, Holiness to God," and the same will also apply in other realms of human action. This is true with respect to cooking – the focus of domestic human activity and the clearest act of human improvement upon nature that allows nature to fulfill man's needs. Therefore, "And every pot in Jerusalem and in Yehuda shall be sacred to the Lord of hosts," for the Divine presence in private homes will be like His presence in the Temple. The same is true about commercial life, which will no longer stand in opposition to the world of the holy, because the distinction between holy and profane will disappear: "And all those that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and cook in them; and on that day there shall be no more merchants in the house of the Lord of hosts." When the Egyptians and the rest of the nations will recognize the festival of *Sukkot* and the principle represented by the festival, they will recognize that God intervenes in the profane world in a supernatural way. This explains the importance of *Sukkot*.

This is also the meaning of the rain in the *haftara*. In a world governed according to the laws of nature, rain is a natural, expected, and ordinary phenomenon. Certainly in Egypt, which Scripture describes as a land "where you sowed your seed, and watered it with your foot, like a garden of vegetables," the availability of water is perceived as a natural phenomenon. The Egyptians' recognition of the festival of *Sukkot* signifies their internalization and acceptance of a world governed by way of the direct intervention of providence, whereas their refusal to celebrate the festival is a rejection of direct providence and God's active intervention in the world. Therefore, the withholding of rain is meant to emphasize for them the change that will transpire in the world in the wake of the war and the adoption of a manner of Divine governance different than the past, and to make them understand their error.

This also explains the threat of a plague against the nations who will not celebrate the festival of *Sukkot*. For in this prophecy, as we saw above, the plague serves as an expression of direct Divine punishment that appears in the world as the hand of God, and it therefore strikes those who deny God's direct intervention in the world.

We see, then, that the festival of *Sukkot* as it is presented in the book of *Zekharya* serves as a meeting place between man and God in the quiet that follows the storm. The festival does not, however, merely constitute a world of peace and serenity in the wake of the war. Rather, the *sukka* and the festival constitute a new world order in which direct Divine governance will replace the natural governance that preceded it. In the *haftara*, the *sukka* does not fit into our world as the practice of all camps, as argued by the Ibn Ezra. Rather, it is presented as the very opposite, as a rejection of the natural world of camps and wars in favor of a world where the spirit of God hovers over and protects man. [*Translated by David Strauss]*

[1] "Our Rabbis taught: 'Man ate the bread of angels (*lechem abirim*)' (*Tehillim* 78:25) – bread that the ministering angels eat; these are the words of Rabbi Akiva. And when these words were reported before Rabbi Yishmael, he said to them: Go out and tell Akiva: Akiva, you are in error. Do the ministering angels eat bread? But surely it was already written: 'I neither did eat bread nor drink water' (*Devarim* 9:9). How then do I understand *'lechem abirim*?' Bread that is absorbed by two hundred and forty eight organs (*eivarim*)" (*Yoma* 75b). According to both opinions, the manna was not natural bread, the kind that we eat and over which we recite "*ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz*," but rather non-material bread that fell from heaven for Israel in a most miraculous manner.

[2] For example, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle" (*Mishlei* 21:31); "As the horse rushes into battle" (*Yirmiyahu* 8:6). In fact, the vast majority of references to horses in Scripture are in the context of war and governmental rule. For our purposes, it should be mentioned that even Zekharya in various places uses the horse as a symbol of strength and fighting, and in one place directly connects a horse to war ("And makes them like the magnificent horse in the battle" [10:3]).

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Rabbi Michael Rosensweig

Simchat Sukkot: An Expression of Avodah and Hashra'at HaShechinah

The Torah presents the holiday of sukkot in parshat Emor in a most singular fashion. The Torah first (23:33-36) delineates sukkot in typical fashion (mikra kodesh etc.) as the chronological conclusion of the festival cycle. The comprehensive survey then (37-38) appears to terminate with an appropriate (albeit not necessarily anticipated) references to the musaf korbonot (detailed in parshat Pinchas) that are brought on every chag. However, the Torah then (39-44) surprisingly returns to the subject of Sukkot, initiating this supplementary section with the jarring word "ach" (used in parallel only with respect to Yom Kippur, the other equally exceptional presentation in the Emor survey), introducing the obligation of the four minim that was omitted in the previous section, and expanding on the obligation of simchah in the mikdash during this seven-day holiday: "u-semachtem lifnei Hashem Elokeichem shivat yamim". The striking omission of the ubiquitous "mikra kodesh" phrase that unifies the wide-ranging presentation of all the moadim in the main exposition reinforces the impression that this supplement is intended to accentuate a dimension that is unique to this holiday. The fact that Sukkot is the only one of the moadim that warrants a double treatment, sufficiently commands our attention. The other facets in this second rendition need to be accounted for as well.

Previously (Chag haSukkot: Avodat Hashem in the Aftermath of the Yamim Noraim and The Link Between Yom Kippur and Sukkot), we have addressed the link between Yom Kippur and Sukkot, and have proposed that this additional emphasis on Sukkot is related to the contrast-complement that Sukkot embodies in the aftermath of the inimitable, all-consuming Yom Kippur experience. We may further develop and apply this theme particularly in light of the Chatam Sofer's (parshat Haazinu, "le-chag ha- Sukkot") explication of the "ach" that introduces this section. He suggests that this exclusionary usage qualifies the previous verse which identifies avodot-korbonot beyond the festival musaf as only matanot, nedarim or nedavot. The Torah qualifies this characterization by declaring that the four minim, which registers as a central theme on Sukkot only in these added verses, is an exception to this rule, as it constitutes a kind of korbon-avodah celebrating the successful attainment of kapparah on Yom Kippur. He further proposes that the coveted teshuvah me-ahavah (Yyoma 85b) that transforms sins into merits, is actually attained in conjunction with the mitzvah-avodah of the four minim!

The notion that the mitzvah of lulav-four minim evokes avodah and korban is articulated by the midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Emor) and by the Talmud. The gemara (Sukkah 45a) interprets the verse (Tehillim 118:27), "isru chag ba-avotim ad karnot ha-mizbeach" as a reference to the mitzvah of the four minim, which is equated with the

construction of the mizbeach and the bringing of a korban: "kol ha-notel lulav ba-agudo ve-hadas ba-avuto maalah alav ha-katuv keilu banah mizbeach ve-hikriv alav korban".

This perspective certainly accounts for the additional dimension and experience of joy on Sukkot (u-semachtem), particularly in the mikdash (lifnei Hashem Elokeichem), and especially for the unusual 7-day celebration of the four minim specifically in the mikdash. Moreover, the fact that the mitzvah of four minim applies on the first day of sukkot even outside the precincts of the mikdash, even in the diaspora, assumes great significance.

In this respect, as well, Yom Kippur and Sukkot constitute an important-contrast-complement. It is evident that Yom Kippur is an extremely mikdash and avodah-centric moed. Although the kohen gadol is the almost exclusive participant in the intricate avodah, the gripping drama of the kohen gadol's odyssey into the kodesh ha-kadoshim (lifnai ve-lifnim) as the representative of Klal Yisrael dominates not only our musaf prayers, but actually embodies and crystalizes the central themes of this shabbat shabbaton, the most singular, most relevant ("achat ba-shanah", Vayikra 16:34, Shemot 30:10), and most sanctified day of the year. Indeed, the Rambam (Hilchos Avodat Yom haKippurim 1:1, Hilchos Klei haMikdash 5:10) feels the need to integrate the universal obligation to fast on this singular day into the avodah-mikdash structure by repeatedly referring to the day as "yom ha-zom". Certainly, the aspirations and attainments of the kohen gadol as the vehicle for Klal Yisrael are difficult to match, seemingly impossible to supersede.

Yet, sukkot is emphatically no spiritual derogation or compression. It is an authentic and spiritually ambitious successor to Yom haKippurim, as numerous meforshim discern from the otherwise superfluous emphasis of, "la-chodesh hashvii hazeh" (23:34). Indeed, some propose that Sukkot was integrated into the Tishrei cycle although it naturally should have been celebrated in the aftermath of yeziat Mitzrayim, not only because the miracle was more discernable during Tishrei, but because it is the appropriate continuation and complement to Yom Kippur and the yemei teshuvah of Tishrei.

This certainly is acutely manifest in the yirah-simchah dialectic (see The Link Between Yom Kippur and Sukkot)), but it also is exhibited in the respective manifestations of avodah-mikdash. In the aftermath of structured and kohen-gadol-focused avodat ha-yom, Sukkot involves all of Klal Yisrael, and even simulates a quasi-avodah in the form of the simchah of the four-minim obligation. It is noteworthy that some tosafists (see Tosafot Rabbeinu Peretz and Ramban, Pesachim 36a; Ritva Sukkah 9a, 30a) argue that the Talmud Bavli disqualifies only the mitzvot of lulav and korban on the basis of mizvah ha-baah be-aveirah (mitzvah enabled by an illegal transgression), as ritzui, an idealistic korbon-esque requirement that is indispensable to both, cannot abide this offensive taint. While the Talmud Bavli (Arachin 10a) identifies ribui korbonot (distinctive korbonot configurations each day of the festival) as the basis for an independent obligation to recite hallel each day of Sukkot (in contrast to Pesach), it is interesting that the Yerushalmi (Sukkot 5:1) attributes this phenomenon to the obligation to rejoice with the four-minim in the mikdash each of the seven days. Numerous other sources reinforce the notion that the mitzvah of lulav parallels or is perceived as a dimension of avodah-korban.

The korbon-avodah-mikdash motif is equally evident with respect to the other prominent mitzvah that defines this chag, sukkah. The dimensions of the sukkah are linked to the dimensions of the mishkan in the first chapter of tractate sukkah. The sukkah is designated and defined in the Sifrei as an entity that is consequentially invested and suffused with the stature of Hashem's Divine name (sheim shamayim chal alehah) stemming from the sanctity and hashraat haShechinah that models the mikdash. Indeed, the geonim discuss whether the prohibition of kapandarya (use as a short-cut) that originates in the sanctified status of the mikdash applies also to the sukkah. Poskim debate the parameters of appropriate conduct in the sukkah in light of the dialectic of sanctity, on the one hand, and ubiquitous presence and familiar use based on the principle of teishvu ke-ein taduru, on the other.

It is perhaps consistent with this perspective on the symmetrical relationship between Yom Kippur and Sukkot that the Rambam, who was impelled to reiterate the tzom motif in the avodat Yom haKippurim, also strikingly identifies and projects the mikdash experience as an integral part of Hilchot Lulav and Sukkah. In the koteret to Hilchot Lulav and in his Sefer haMitzvot he emphasizes the seven day mikdash obligation of lulav,

although most of the Jewish world only fulfill this biblical obligation on the first day! It is evident that he perceives the extended obligation not as an independent kiyum in the mikdash, but as the most ideal expression of the core one-day mitzvah, as well. [This may be the case notwithstanding some differences in the details of implementation, an issue that is debated by the rishonim, I hope to address this in an expanded treatment of these topics.] This position underscores the singular character of sukkot as a manifestation of hashraat haShechinah, and an outpost of the mikdash and avodah. The very existence of a form of ritzui and avodah outside of the typical formal confines and structures is a remarkable phenomenon and reflection of the singular character this mitzvah, albeit one that is even more powerfully expressed in the mikdash itself.

Toward the conclusion of Hilchot Lulav (8:12), the Rambam invokes the verse that is the focal point of the second presentation of Sukkot and the source of the mikdash extension of the mitzvah of lulav (that he cites as relevant in the koteret and Sefer haMizvot, as noted) - "usemachtem lifnei Hashem Elokeichem shivat yamim"- to support his view that the nightly mikdash celebrations of simchat beit ha-shoeivah distinguish Sukkot as a unique festival of "simchah yeteirah". Rav Soloveitchik zt"l (Kovetz Chidushei Torah) notes that the Rambam evidently does not associate simchat beit hashoevah as a special mikdash manifestation of nisuch ha-mayim. Had this been the case, he would have codified these halachot in Sefer Avodah in that alternative context. He concludes that the Rambam believed that simchat beit ha-shoevah, and the charge of "usmahtem" was a singular expression of simchat yom tov that was reserved for and confined to the celebration of yom tov in the mikdash.

However, the fact is that the Rambam formulates this position in Hilchot Lulav. Moreover, he cites simchat beit ha-shoieivah in his Sefer haMitzvot (aseh 55) in a broader discussion of simchat yom tov. In light of his integration of the mikdash celebration of lulav, based on the same verse, as a more intense application of the more universal lulav obligation, we might modify this conclusion. Near the conclusion of his discussion of sukkot, the Rambam articulated the idea that the Torah itself subtly formulated by adding a supplementary treatment of this remarkable hag, the idea that unique among the chagim, and possibly against the backdrop of the Yom Kippur experience, the intense mikdash motifs of Sukkot highlight the capacity to bring even some dimensions of ritzui, avodah and hashraat haShechinah into our sukkot-homes. This capacity and its expression within the framework of yom tov is, indeed, worthy of "simchah yeteirah".

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Oct 6, 2022, 9:50 PM

The Arc of the Moral Universe
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l
Ha'azinu

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 God’s justice. The way Moses puts it is this:

The Rock, His work is whole,
And all His ways are justice.
A God 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. God 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

God 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 God who made them
And rejected the Rock of their rescue…
You deserted the Rock that bore you;
You forgot the God 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 God is no longer with it. It will discover that history is a ravening 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. God, 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 God'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 God. God 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 God is just, why do bad things happen to good people? This is the question asked not by sceptics 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 God, this was the one to which God did not give an answer.[1] 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."[2]

It is a difficult belief, this commitment to seeing justice in history under the sovereignty of God. 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 God's Name, is dualism, the idea that evil comes not from God 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 God 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”[3], 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. God 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 God and our defeats to ourselves.

I believe that out of such humility, a momentous strength is born.

[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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from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org> date: Oct 6, 2022, 7:00 PM subject: Tidbits for Parashas Haazinu

In memory of Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz zt"l

“וַיְדַבֵּר ד' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לֵאמֹר”

“Hashem spoke to Moshe in the middle of that day, saying” (Devarim 32:48)

Rashi says that the Torah mentions the phrase, “b’etzem hayom hazeh” in three places. First, regarding Noach when evildoers schemed to prevent him from entering the Teivah. Hashem declared in response that He will have Noach enter the Teiva “in the middle of that day”, in broad daylight, and no one will stop him. The second time occurred when the Egyptians swore that they would prevent Klal Yisrael from departing Mitzrayim; Hashem similarly countered that He will have B’nei Yisrael depart in the middle of the day, and no one will prevent their redemption. The third occurrence is in our Parashah; Klal Yisrael, out of tremendous love for their leader Moshe, attempted to prevent Moshe from ascending the mountain that was to be his final resting place. To their dismay, Hashem insisted that he would bring Moshe up in broad daylight. Rav Yitzchok Feigelstock zt”l asks: How can we possibly equate Klal Yisrael cleaving to their leader out of tremendous desire for ruchniyus with the other two occurrences of evildoers?

The Sefer Tomer Devorah writes that one of Hashem’s great middos is that of savlanus, tolerance and patience. Every moment of the day Hashem provides us with strength and with all of our needs, which means that even when a person is in the midst of a sinful act, Hashem is sustaining him and his evildoing! Amongst His many attributes of mercy, Hashem is tolerant and patient and does not withdraw His sustenance from Man, always anticipating that the sinner will repent in the future. Rav Feigelstock zt”l explains that in these three instances Hashem sought to demonstrate that He is the source of all strength, and He simply withheld His ‘supply’ of power from those who would go against His will. While the situations differed tremendously, the comparison is not to equate these circumstances. Rather, in these special circumstances Hashem chose to make known that it is He who is the source of all power. Thus, Hashem interceded in this manner by ceasing to grant those who sought to act contrary to His desired outcome.

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https://outorah.org/p/3052/

Rabbi Weinreb’s Torah Column, Vayera

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

HOSPITALITY BEFORE HEAVEN

He was an old man, frail, tired, and bereaved. News of Hitler's advancing army preoccupied him, and he was overwhelmed, if not broken, by the requests for advice he was receiving from hundreds of troubled Jews. Indeed, he may have already sensed that he had only months to live.

His name was **Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski**, and he was universally acknowledged to be the world's leading Talmudic scholar. He lived in the city of Vilna, and the

time was late 1939. The person who told me the story was then a young man, barely twenty years old. He was himself a refugee, along with his fellow yeshiva students. He found himself in the neighborhood of Rabbi Grodzinski's residence during the Sukkot holiday. He decided he would attempt to visit the Rabbi, although he knew that he might not be granted an audience.

How surprised he was to ½nd the Rabbi alone, studying and writing. The rabbi welcomed him, inquired about his welfare, and invited the visitor to join him in a light lunch. The Rabbi told him that because of his age and physical weakness he deemed himself to be exempt from the requirement to eat in the sukkah. He considered himself a mitzta'er, one whose physical discomfort freed him from the sukkah requirement.

"But you," the Rabbi continued, "are a young man and reasonably healthy. Therefore, take this plate of food down to the sukkah in the courtyard, and excuse me for not being able to join you." The young man did so, but soon, sitting in the sukkah by himself, was surprised to hear the old Rabbi slowly making his way down the many steps from his apartment to join him in the sukkah.

"You may wonder why I am joining you," exclaimed the old Rabbi. "It is because although a mitzta'er, one who is in great discomfort, is exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah, he is not exempt from the mitzvah of hospitality, of hachnasat orchim."

This anecdote underscores the importance of the mitzvah of hospitality and illustrates the fact that even great physical discomfort does not excuse a person from properly receiving and entertaining his guests.

Of course, the biblical basis for Rabbi Grodzinski teaching is to be found in this week's Torah portion, Vayera. In the opening verses, we ½nd that Abraham, despite the fact that he was recovering from his recent circumcision, exerts himself to welcome a small group of wayfarers and tends to their needs with exquisite care. ...

Peninim on the Torah by **Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** - **Parshas Haazinu** Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim PARSHAS HAAZINU

Give ears, O' Heavens, and I will speak… Remember the days of yore… when Hashem will have judged His People, He shall relent regarding His servants. (32:1,7,36)

Two themes seem to stand out throughout Shiras Ha'azinu, The Song of Ha'azinu. First, Chazal refer to this sketch of history as a song. Horav Gedalyah Schorr, zl, explains the concept of song with regard to Jewish history. A song implies the concept of harmony. This means that all elements of an orchestra, a musical score with its high and low notes, all the voices of a choir work together in total harmony, creating a perfect and pleasant sound. Likewise, we recognize that all of the elements of the universe fuse together in carrying out G-d's Will. From a historical perspective, we look back and recognize how all of the aspects of the past, present and future meld together into a harmonious blend. What did not make sense in the past is only too clear in the present and must be prevented in the future. The more spiritually elevated one is, the clearer is his perspective. He sees the larger picture.

Second, we see that history has a pattern. Nothing occurs in a vacuum. Hashem presents reward and punishment, but, above all, He never rejects us. Regardless of our ingratitude, our flirting with secularism, and our dabbling in the morally bankrupt society in which we live, Hashem always takes us back. While our ultimate redemption is not contingent upon repentance - it helps. Shiras Ha'azinu guarantees our survival and the downfall of our enemies.

The song represents the spirit of the Torah which connects us to Hashem. A song is the expression of one's inner self. While there are those who, in their way of life, have rejected the Torah, its song continues to resonate within them. As long as one has a Yiddishe Neshamah, Jewish Soul, he is inextricably connected to Hashem. I believe it was the Baal Shem Tov who said, "Man can say he is with G-d; he can say he is against G-d; but he can never say that he is without G-d." Hashem never turns Himself away from us. He merely conceals His Countenance when we sin, but He is always present - waiting for our return.

The following vignettes demonstrate Jewish spiritual resilience even under the most difficult duress and how, regardless one's distance from Hashem, the connection endures. Horav Ezriel Tauber, Shlita, relates how a heinous act of cruelty became a springboard for increased faith in Hashem, inspiring even the most assimilated Jews to experience an unparalleled spiritual revelation, allowing them to achieve Kiddush Shem Shomayim as they left this world.

The Nazis were not satisfied with destroying the Jews physically; they sought also to devastate the Jewish spirit, to utterly abase it. Their diabolical plan involved a curtain - a curtain that had once been the Paroches, Curtain, hanging over an Aron HaKodesh, Holy Ark, in which the Torah scrolls had been stored. Embroidered on the front of this curtain were the words: Zeh ha'Shaar l'Hashem tzaddikim yavo'u bah, "This is the Gate of G-d, the righteous shall enter therein."

Their goal was to provoke utter shock and despair, to break the spirit within the condemned Jews, hoping thereby that the hapless Jews would renounce their faith at the last moment and turn against their Creator.

They were wrong. On the contrary, the opposite occurred. The sight of these holy words had an unprecedented spiritual impact upon the condemned who were destined to enter the "Gate of G-d." Some of them were individuals whose souls were dormant during a lifetime of alienation from Torah and mitzvos. Yet they suddenly came alive within them. They felt a new strength of spirit, as they went to their final mortal destination amid song and dance. They understood - indeed, they knew - clearly and without a doubt that this gate, the gate to the gas chambers, truly led to Hashem.

Horav Yisrael Meir Lau, Shlita, was asked to speak at a conference sponsored by and held at Tel Aviv University. He would be sharing the podium with a guest of honor from France: Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger. The conference was to take place on the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day. The Cardinal was going to address the topic: "The place of G-d in the Holocaust." Rav Lau was asked to debate the Cardinal. The Rav flatly refused.

He refused because it was a chillul Hashem, a desecration of Hashem's Name. Cardinal Lustiger had been born a Jew, apostatized himself and converted to Catholicism. His mother had perished in Auschwitz. As a lad of fourteen, the young Jean-Marie knowingly and willingly baptized himself. Thus, the Jewish boy, born Ahron Lustiger, became the Catholic Jean-Marie Lustiger.

One can imagine that the Chief Rabbi's decision caused a furor in a country not unused to political commotion. The Rav felt that a university, albeit secular, but yet under Jewish auspices, in a Jewish state, could do better than select an apostate guest of honor to commemorate the Holocaust. Yet, the secularists felt the Rav owed the country an explanation.

The next day, Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Chief Rabbi spoke at the Great Synagogue shortly prior to reciting the Yizkor memorial service. He said, "Hitler gave us six-million reasons to recite Kaddish, but following Lustiger's path would mean that there would be no descendants left to recite Kaddish for those who perished. At their darkest hour in history, Lustiger turned away and defected from his people. At a time when they needed maximum encouragement, he cowered under a cross. He went as far as to choose a lifestyle that would not permit him to raise a family, insuring that no one would remain to recite Kaddish for him."

Now that I have presented how far astray this man had swerved from the Judaism of his ancestors, I will share with the readers a little secret about this apostate. On those days of the year when Cardinal Lustiger has Yahrzeit for his father and mother, he removes his Catholic cloak, dons an ordinary suit and hat, and goes to a synagogue in Paris to recite Kaddish! This may scream of hypocrisy, but I think it indicates once again what is part and parcel of our glorious history: A Jew is inextricably bound with Judaism. There is no exit strategy. We are one with Hashem. We cannot and may not judge those have who have left the fold, became alienated or assimilated, or are just plain lost. Hashem does that. He is the Judge. Our purpose is to never give up on a Jew - because Hashem never does.

Throughout the generations, from father to son, we have passed on the torch of Torah tradition. The Shiras Ha'azinu guarantees that we will endure as a nation, due to our connection to the Torah. During the most bitter times, Jews have continued to study the Torah. When times were troublesome and persecution reigned, we held back, but as soon as we were able, we immediately planted the seeds of the next generation. Rebbetzin Tzila Sorotzkin, a"h, was one of the leading mechanchos, educators, of the nascent Bais Yaakov movement. She was also a Holocaust survivor whose exploits during those tragic years were legendary. She remarked, "In all of the six years of the war, I cried only once. I was in the most horrible camps. I lost my entire family. I was left all alone in the world, bereft of family, broken in body and spirit - but I did not cry. I returned to my hometown and

found a ghost town - not a living soul remained - yet, I still did not cry."

She was told to go to Lodz where the refugees were gathered. Perhaps she would find someone there, a relative, an acquaintance. With her last bit of strength, she traveled to Lodz, in the hope of finding someone she knew. Walking through the streets as twilight approached, she suddenly heard sounds which she recognized - coming from one of the windows. She followed the sounds up to a second-floor ancient apartment. In the darkness she made out a group of young boys with payos, all sitting around a table. At the head of the table sat an elderly Jew, wearing a baseball cap. The children were chanting the Aleph Bais to the familiar niggun, tune, which she remembered from her youth! She immediately began to cry, and then she passed out. A few moments later, she was revived.

"What happened to you?" they asked. "Can we help you? Who are you? Perhaps we can give you something to eat." Slowly she recovered and replied, "This is the first time I have cried in six years, but I am not crying from pain. I cry from joy. I wandered far and wide until I reached Lodz; finally I see Poland as it once was, I see it in its original glory. And if, after all that we have endured, after all of our suffering, little boys with payos are sitting around a table with an elderly teacher teaching them the Aleph Bais - then no one can defeat us. Let me catch my breath. Let me savor the moment. I feel fine. These are tears of joy - not of pain."

The Rock! - Perfect is His work, for all His paths are justice; A G-d of faith without iniquity, righteous and fair is He. (32:4)

The term tamim, perfect, is a reference to the totality of Hashem's work - the big picture. Individual life is part of a large puzzle with countless pieces of all shapes and sizes, representing good fortune, failure, joy and sadness, tragedy and celebration. When these are all factored together by Hashem, everything fits in perfectly. Human cognition is limited; thus, we are able to grasp very little. If it makes sense to the human mind, it is good. If it does not make sense, it is not good. This is the human way of understanding a situation. It sees the here and now - not the yesterday or the tomorrow. Hashem sees it all and knows how to put it all together - perfectly. Accepting Divine Judgment is one of the primary Articles of Faith.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, explains the middah, character trait, of nosei b'ol im chaveiro, sharing in a friend's burden. We are not here for ourselves, but rather, to share with others - in both their joy and sadness. The Mashgiach suggests that following the formula of nosei b'ol im chaveiro, one has the opportunity to help his friend, to the point that he could actually be the reason that his friend's life is spared. Imagine, a Heavenly decree is issued against Reuven that his life on this world will be halted abruptly. Hashem factors in the pain that Reuven's premature demise will cause others, including his relatives and friends. If one of them is not deserving of this pain, that person could be an advocate on behalf of Reuven. In the interim, Reuven might repent and be spared the decree's realization.

Earthly justice does not take the feelings of others into consideration. The larger picture does not apply to them. In a court of law, the judge or jury renders a decision. No one else has any bearing on their decision. Only one who is perfect can render a perfect decision. He can punish the defendant in such a manner that others will not be affected.

Furthermore, if a good friend is taken ill and it troubles us, we should introspect and wonder what it is that we did to warrant this pain. Hashem is not merely speaking to the stricken patient; He is conveying a message to all those who are affected by his troubles. Indeed, Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, would remark that one should see to it that he has many friends who care about him. Who knows? They might become the reason that he is spared from misfortune.

The Chafetz Chaim, quoted by Rav Yerachmiel Chasid, addresses the fact that upon occasion - probably more often than we care to acknowledge- one will complain about his health, financial status and lack of good fortune. He wonders, "Why is this happening to me? To the best of my knowledge, I have been pretty good. I certainly do not warrant such punishment."

The Chafetz Chaim explains that we often ignore the fact that Yom Kippur serves as atonement only for those sins which one commits against Heaven. Hashem doesn't forgive the individual for sins against his fellow man - such as slander, humiliation, cheating in finances, loan repayment - without the victim's forgiveness. The person leaves this world and, when he arrives at his eternal rest, he is informed that he is returning to this world until that

time that he appeases his victim. When the person hears that he must return, he begins to weep bitterly, begging for mercy, claiming that the reason he acted so inappropriately to others was arrogance born of wealth, power and success. He was blessed with an attractive and healthy physical countenance which catalyzed within him a sense of superiority. At least this time, if he must be sent back, will the Almighty please not grant him such success, such good health, such incredible good fortune, such wealth? He could do with the bare minimum - even ill-health is something with which he could live. The fewer reasons for feeling superior to others, for inducing arrogance - the better. Therefore, without realizing it, it is quite possible that what we are going through now is a fulfillment of our own request.

Yeshurun waxed fat, and rebelled. (32:15)

The pasuk implies that wealth is the source of Klal Yisrael's rebellion, indicating that prosperity may not contribute to a strong spiritual balance. It is almost as if wealth is a curse, not a blessing. Yet, two pesukim earlier the Torah tells us that we will be blessed with material abundance: Yarkiveihu al bamesei aretz, va'yochal tenuvos sadai, "He shall cause them to ride the high places of the Land and eat the produce of its fields" (ibid. 32:13). Klal Yisrael will enter the land and be greeted with incredible prosperity. Apparently, here prosperity comes across as a blessing.

On the one hand, we pray for material bounty, so that we may better serve Hashem and help others. We ask for Chaim shel osher v'kavod, "A life of wealth and honor." Yet, we see from the above pasuk, that gashmius, materialism, can lead us to turn away from Hashem. We are ironically praying for the very trait that can cause us to fall into the abyss of sin.

Perhaps, the Torah's use of the word va'yishman, "Yeshurun waxed fat," indicates a change within the person, much like one who eats excessively, causing him to put on weight. He is different from the person who is carrying excessive baggage. When they stand on a scale, they both weigh the same - only one is himself overweight, while the other is weighed down by his baggage. There are those who, upon striking it rich, allow the newly-found wealth to change them. The wealth becomes assimilated into their psyche, such that their whole perspective on life, people and G-d becomes altered. For them, prosperity can be a curse. There are others for whom wealth is like an extra suitcase. They have not changed; they just have more baggage to manage.

In addressing the question of whether prosperity is a blessing or a curse, Horav Yisrael Belsky, Shlita, comments that it very well depends on how-- and at what rate-- one becomes wealthy. Parashas Ha'azinu, which decries the Jewish People's insubordination due to their excess materialism, is warning of the hazards of sudden wealth. Such prosperity presents a new set of nisyonos, challenges and trials. One who has become accustomed to watching the balance in his checkbook scrupulously after he shops at the grocery, might become overwhelmed when he has more credit cards than he knows how to manage. Newfound wealth can confound a person if he is not prepared for it gradually.

We see it all of the time with the lottery winners who spend their winnings almost overnight on frivolities and foolishness. The temptations which were once out of reach are suddenly available for the picking. How often do we hear of a lottery winner donating a portion of his winnings to charity - or sharing with friends and family?

Those who accumulate wealth slowly and moderately become gradually accustomed to wealth. They learn to save, to guard their assets, to invest wisely, to purchase astutely. They are still challenged by wealth, but now they are not overwhelmed by it. It is something with which they can cope. Wealth and material abundance are truly blessings, since they allow one to expand his horizons, to achieve more, to help a greater number of people. The danger is in how quickly he becomes wealthy. He should not want to "strike it rich," but rather, to amass wealth gradually, by installments, establishing a stronger foundation to overcome the eventual challenges which present themselves as his portfolio grows.

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that wealth poses another challenge: it is addictive. Mi she'yeish lo manah rotzeh masayim, "One who has a hundred (coins) wants two hundred." A person is not satisfied with his bounty. It is never enough. It has nothing to do with how quickly one ascends the ladder of affluence. Suddenly, what used to be considered a luxury becomes a necessity. The "once in ten-year" vacation becomes a bi-annual requirement. People who had been accustomed to a simple lifestyle are now exposed; they suddenly indulge in extravagant and exorbitant diversions.

At the end of the day, such a person had been much better off when he was not wealthy. The simple life presented fewer challenges - or, at least, challenges that he was able to handle. Now, he cannot seem to cope with all of the added requirements placed on him by virtue of his prosperous circumstances. More is expected of him. His home is inundated with people seeking his help; his privacy is invaded; his "advice" is sought - day and night. While all of these are really a good thing - one must be ready and willing to accept it. A "rich" wallet with a "poor" mind does not balance very well.

Rav Belsky adds another practical malady from which people who achieve wealth may suffer. They become preoccupied with the fear of uncertainty. "What will be if my wealth comes to an end? What will I do if I make a bad investment and lose my money? How do I know the market will produce this year?" There is no guarantee to prosperity - regardless of its size. People make mistakes; natural disasters can wipe out a portfolio overnight. When one does not have something, he does not worry about losing it. When one is heavily invested in many areas of commercial trade, the newspaper's business section becomes his Bible.

After all is said and done, I think the answer to our original question-- whether prosperity is a blessing or a curse -- depends on one factor: Does the individual acknowledge and never forget the Source of his wealth? When a person realizes that whatever he has is derived directly from Hashem and that this gift comes along with responsibility, the wealth then becomes a blessing. The person who foolishly believes that his affluence is the result of his own doing, however, his acumen - even his good fortune - is far from blessed. He had better prepare a contingency plan for himself.

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https://www.theyeshiva.net/jewish/2550/sukkos-essay-my-love-will-be-stronger-than-your-defiance?print=1

Rabbi YY Jacobson

My Love Will Be Stronger than Your Defiance

We Can All Use a Hug: The Power of the Sukkah

A Gift to a Mother

Three sons left home, went out on their own, and prospered. Getting back together, they discussed the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother. The first said, "I built a big house for our mother."

The second said," I sent her a Mercedes with a driver."

The third smiled and said, "I've got you both beat. You know how Mom enjoys the Bible, and you know she can't see very well. I sent her a brown parrot that can recite the entire Bible. It took 12 years to teach him. I had to spend $100,000 a year for 10 years, but it was worth it. Mom just has to name the chapter and verse, and the parrot will recite it."

Soon thereafter, Mom sent out her letters of thanks:

"Milton," she wrote, to her first son, "The house you built is so huge. I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house."

"Marvin," she wrote to another, "I am too old to travel. I stay home all the time, so I never use the Mercedes. And the driver is so boring!"

"Dearest Melvin," she wrote to her third son, "You were the only son to have the good sense to know what your mother likes. That chicken was delicious."

Anatomy of a Sukkah

For the past three millennia, during the seven days of the joyous festival of Sukkos, we eat, drink, feast, schmuez, relax, read and sleep in a temporary structure, or hut, known as a Sukkah. This structure consists of walls and a roof composed of material that grew from the ground, like bamboo, straw, or branches.

How many walls does the Sukkah require? Jewish law states that a Sukkah must have two complete walls plus a third wall that may even be one handbreadth long (1). If your Sukkah has three or four complete walls, that's wonderful; but the minimum requirement is two walls and a tiny piece of a third wall.

Why does the law dictate this exact requirement for the Sukkah walls (2)? And what really is the spiritual and psychological significance of spending seven days in a hut on your porch or backyard?

Anatomy of an Embrace

Two extraordinary Jewish thinkers, the Arizal, Rabbi Isaac Luria (3) and Rabbi Schnuer Zalman of Liadi (4) turn our attention to the affectionate words uttered by the Bride in the Song of Songs (5), "His left arm lay under my head and His right arm embraces me." These words address (6), in metaphorical prose, two distinct moments in the relationship between G-d the Groom and His people, the bride. During the "days of awe," Rosh

Hashanah and Yom Kippur, G-d's "left arm," as it were, lay under the head of the Jewish people. The left side represents in Kabbalah introspection, awe, discipline, and discernment, and this is the primary theme of the days of awe.

Sukkos, on the other hand, described in the Torah as "the time of our joy," constitutes the point during the year when "G-d's right arm embraces me." The right arm represents, in Kabbalah, love, and kindness.

Take a look at any of your arms, says Rabbi Isaac Luria, and you will notice its division into three distinct sections, each one usually extending in a different direction. The first is the arm itself, from the shoulder to the elbow; the second is the forearm, from the elbow to the wrist; and the third section is from the wrist to the edge of the fingers.

Now, take a good look at your Sukkah and you will notice a "right arm's embrace." The first complete wall represents a Divine embrace from the "shoulder" to the "elbow"; the second wall reflects the embrace of the "forearm" and the third tiny wall symbolizes the palm embrace.

Rabbi Isaac Luria takes this a step further. He explains that these three dimensions of an arm's embrace encompass three distinct parts of the body being embraced. When you embrace another person, explains Rabbi Chaim Vital (7) quoting his teacher Rabbi Isaac Luria, the highest part of the arm (between the shoulder and the elbow) encompasses the entire left waist of the one being embraced. The middle part of the person's arm, the forearm, expands over the entire width of the embraced person's back. Finally, the palm and the fingers extend even further and cover only a small part of the face of the embraced one, a handbreadth of the face.

The same is true concerning the Sukkah "embrace." The first two walls represent G-d's light embracing the left waist and the back of the human being dwelling in the Sukkah. The third wall of the Sukkah symbolizes the Divine energy embracing a small part of the Jew's face. (If you have a Sukkah of three or four complete walls, the hug is, of course, an all-embracing one, encircling your back and your face.)

This is the language of Kabbalah, written in codes and metaphors. But how can we apply these anthropomorphic descriptions in a visceral and practical way?

I will present the explanation presented by Chabad Chassidus into this insight by the Arizal.

How Do You Express Love?

There are different ways we express love (8). The first is through words of affection. The three simple words "I love you," when uttered sincerely, may have a transforming impact on another life. Words of affection express our inner emotive experience.

A second, more powerful expression of love is a kiss. A genuine kiss captures an intense feeling that may not be grasped in words. Words can state, "I love you," while a kiss declares, "I love you more than I will ever be able to tell you how much I love you."

A third, perhaps even more powerful expression of love comes in the form of a gaze. Two people in love can gaze at each other for long periods of time without uttering a sound. The sound of a silent gaze is sometimes louder than a thundering outpouring of love. There is something of your soul that you can communicate to another human being exclusively through your eyes (9).

A fourth universally accepted method of expressing love is by means of an embrace. A genuine hug embodies a profound bond existing between the two people embracing each other.

Dissecting the Hug

In Jewish mysticism, the diverse methods of communicating love represent different qualities of love. In the former three methods, the love is toward the face of the beloved one. You speak to one's face, you kiss one's cheeks or lips, and you gaze at one's eyes. In contrast, an embrace defines as its target the nape and back of the one being embraced.

That is not a coincidence. There are two forms of love, reciprocal and unconditional. The first is directed to the face of the beloved one; the second is directed to the back of the beloved.

I may love you because of what I receive in return for my relationship with you. Your wisdom, passion, depth, empathy, sensitivity, candidness, humor, beauty, talents, humor, values, etc. -- qualities expressed in and through your face, your eyes, ears, mouth, and general look -- enrich me. I love you because of these or other tremendous qualities that you bring to my life.

This is the type of love primarily communicated in words of affection, in a kiss, or in a silent, romantic gaze, all of them directed toward the face of the beloved one, the

primary location of reciprocity. When I express my attachment to you in these three or other forms, I am essentially stating that I cherish you because of your face, because of your qualities and virtues that enrich the caliber of my life. Without you, life for me is that much more empty, boring, and directionless.

This love is deep and powerful, but it is conditional. As long as you are here for me, I am here for you. In essence, I love you because I love myself, and you make my "self" so much deeper and happier.

Yet there is a love demonstrated in an embrace, in which my arms encircle your back. You may turn your back on me, but I won't stop hugging you. You may not give me anything in return for my love; you may even want me out of your life, but I still love you with all my heart, because my soul loves your soul. My core is one with your core.

We see it with parents and children. All healthy parents love their children but sometimes the love (at least on a conscious level) is dependent upon "nachas," the delight and pleasure my child gives me in return for my nurture. What happens in those situations when your child turns his or her back on you (usually because of trauma and emotional neglect)? It becomes very difficult for many parents to maintain the same level of intense love and connection. "He's spitting in the face of all my values, how can I show love? She is showing such disdain for her upbringing, how can I accept her?"

That's the secret of the hug. It is the freedom and the courage to transcend the need for reciprocity. I can show my child, or another child, that affection knows no limits. I love not only your face but also your back. Even as you turn your back on me, I will hold you tightly in my grip and not let go. You may not be interested in me, but I am forever connected to you.

That is why the hug is the only form of love that does not allow the beloved one to escape your embrace. When I utter words of love to you, when I gaze at you, even when I kiss you, I am not holding on to you; if you want to move away from me, it's your choice. But when I embrace you, even if you wish to escape my embrace, you remain "gripped" in my embrace; I won't let you tear yourself away from me.

This is not a coincidence. According to the Chassidic masters, this is the essence of a hug: You may want to run away from me, but I will never run away from you. My love will prove stronger than your defiance.

In a way, it is only when my child defies me that I can prove to him or her that my love is more powerful than his or her defiance and it is then that I can heal his or her attachment wounds. When your loved one turns his back on you, you are being given a gift: the opportunity to embrace them with their defiance and their emotional wounds. This can become the greatest source of healing for both of you.

Hugging Your Child

That is why children appreciate so profoundly the embrace of their primary caregivers.

Children enjoy being spoken to. They certainly take pleasure from being kissed (at least sometimes) and being looked upon with tender affection. Children need to be seen and noticed. Yet, more than anything, most children, especially infants, cherish being hugged. When our children hurt themselves or break out in tears, they come running to their parents for a big and long hug to calm them down and restore their confidence.

When children contract a "booboo" of any form, they need to be soothed and made to feel safe, and secure, The hug, when done genuinely, makes a statement: "Your value is not dependent upon being perfect and impeccable. I love you unconditionally because of who you are and not because of what you achieve."

The Holiday of Talking, Kissing, Gazing, and Hugging

All of the Jewish holidays are about the expression of love.

Pesach is the holiday focused on speech (Peh Sach, means a speaking mouth. The mitzvah of Passover is to tell the story to your child verbally). G-d shows His love through words. Shavuos is the Divine kiss, communicated through the Torah, his inner breath. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur represent the Divine gaze (they are known as the time of "Yirah," awe, the same letters as the word "Reiyah," gazing). That is why they are days of awe and introspection: When the Kings of Kings gazes right at your soul, your soul feels it, and it is stirred.

But on Sukkos, G-d embraces us. It is time for the Infinite hug.

What exactly is the Mitzvah of Sukkah? What do you do in the Sukkah? Whatever you do at home, you do in the Sukkah for seven days, and it becomes a Mitzvah. So you eat, drink, chat, relax, hang out, read, meet people, nap,

and sleep in your Sukkah -- all mundane endeavors. The core of the mitzvah is that whenever you do at home, when you do the same thing on Sukkos inside the Sukkah it is a Mitzvah, a holy act, a Divine connection. I'm reading the paper, chatting with a friend, taking a stroll, or drinking orange juice in the Sukkah, and it is a Mitzvah. It's not about what you are doing, but where you are doing it. The most physically mundane act performed inside the walls of the Sukkah is defined in Judaism as a medium through which we craft a relationship with the Creator.

G-d is whispering this message via the walls of the Sukkah: I love you in the totality of your being. I am crazy about every part and aspect of your life. Like a mom who kvels as she watches her infant eating or taking a nap, just because this is her beloved child, so too does G-d cherish us eating, relaxing, or resting in the Sukkah. The walls of the Sukkah capture the love that has no conditions, no qualifications, and no boundaries. As you enter the walls of G-d's embrace, your back is as cherished as your face. G-d says: I love you the way you are and in every facet of your being.

This is the Divine whisper shared by the walls of the Sukkah: My child, you are in my grip of love. Never ever will I let go of you. Even if you do not believe in Me, and even if you do not believe in yourself, I will never stop believing in you.

Sustaining the Embrace

The purpose of each Jewish holiday is to create an awareness that endures throughout the entire year. The "hug" displayed to us by G-d on Sukkos is meant to carry us through the entire year, to recall how meaningful and powerful every moment and experience of our lives is.

"In all your ways know Him," says King Solomon in Proverbs (10). Because really, there is no mundane aspect in your life. G-d takes it all in. He loves it all. (11)

1) Sukkah 6b; Rambam Hilchos Sukkah 4:2; Tur and Schulchan Aruch Orach Chaim section 630. 2) The Talmud ibid. derives this law from a biblical source. Here we will present the spiritual and psychological dimension of the law, based on the ancient axiom that each law and Mitzvah in the Torah and in the Talmud contains many layers of understanding. Not only are these multitude of interpretations not contradictory to each other, they actually evolve from each other and enrich each other. 3) Known as the Arizal. He is considered one of the greatest mystics in Jewish history, he lived in Jerusalem, Egypt, and finally passed away in Sefad in 1572, after teaching kabbalah for two years and revolutionizing the landscape of Jewish mysticism. 4) Known as the "Elder Rebbe," The Rav, or the Baal Hatanya. The founder of Chabad Chassidus, he was considered one of the greatest Jewish leaders and personalities of his day. He passed away on 24 Teves, 1812 while escaping Napoleon's army. 5) 2:6. 6) Pri Eitz Chaim Shaar Chag Hasukkos chapter 4. Likkutei Torah Derushim LeSukkos pp. 78-79; 82d; 84a-b; 87a. Cf. Or Hatorah Derushim LeSukkos pp. 1762-3. 7) Pri Eitz Chaim ibid. 8) See Likkutei Diburim (from Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch) vol. 1, opening discourse. 9) See Midrash Rabah Song of Song 1:15, explaining the words "Your eyes are like those of a dove." 10) Proverbs 3:6 11) This essay is based on the works of Rabbi Schnuer Zalman of Liadi (Likkutei Torah and Or Hatorah ibid. Likkutei Sichos vol. 2 p. 418 and other sources). Cf. essay by Rabbi Yoel Kahn in Beor Hachasidus (published by Heichal Menachem, Brooklyn, NY) issue of Tishrei 5755.

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from: **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein** <ravadlerstein@torah.org> to: targumim@torah.org date: Oct 6, 2022, 6:46 PM subject: Reb Yeruchem - **It's All About Him**

Based on Daas Torah by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l

Parshas Haazinu

The Rock – perfect is His work, for all His paths are justice.[2]

This is certainly an important statement about Hashem's ways, but what is it doing here? Parshas Haazinu at its essence is a section of tochecha/rebuke – not of theodicy. Why do we heap praise upon His exquisite sense of justice in the process of dwelling on our misconduct?

There is a parallel to this in our davening. "A person should first order his praise of Hashem and only then pray."[3] This should not be understood as sweetening the deal by offering a bribe before making requests. We have nothing to "give" to Hashem.

Rather, praise precedes our petitions because it subsumes all that we ask of Him. All of our needs that we lay before Him are but details, ramifications of the midos with which we describe Him. In the shemonah esrei that is the center of our prayer thrice daily, all the requests we make

are simply expansions and explanations of what we say about Him in the first berachah. (This is why kavanah during the first berachah is the minimum requirement for fulfilling the mitzvah. All the berachos that follow are already implied by that first berachah.)

For example: the Gra says that the berachah for teshuvah grows out of our description of Hashem in the first berachah as One who is gomel chassadim. It is that aspect of Hashem's nature that created the concept of teshuvah, and our ability to use it. Our later prayer for teshuvah, therefore, has already been implied in our recitation of the first berachah.

The same can be said for all the berachos in the middle section of the shemonah esrei. They have all been said – albeit in not quite so many words – from the beginning.

We can point to another instance of inclusion-by-implication. "You shall be holy, because I am holy."[4] This is not just a restatement of the mitzvah of imitating His ways. Rather, it informs us about an identity. Hashem says, "Because I am holy, your need to be holy is implied." The Sifra says this directly. "If you do not make yourselves holy, it is as if you failed to make Me holy." Hashem's kedushah and ours are one; our kedushah is implied by, and included in, His. If we fail to recognize our kedushah, we impugn His!

We are not incorrect in sizing up Haazinu as tochechah. Nonetheless, we praise Hashem's perfect justice, because that praise includes and implies our rebuke! The madregah of Klal Yisrael is fixed and implied by Hashem's praiseworthy attributes. So is our rebuke. What greater rebuke can there be than contemplating Hashem's greatness and praise?

1. Based on Daas Torah by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l, Devarim vol.2 pgs 124-125 ↑ 2. Devarim 32:4 ↑ 3. Berachos 32a ↑ 4. Vayikra 19:2 ↑

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SUKKOT The Mitzvah of Building a Sukkah

By OU Staff June 29, 2006

In general, a mitzva consists of performing a certain action with a particular object. For example eating matza, donning tefillin, "taking" a lulav, and blowing a shofar are all considered mitzvot. The mitzva consists of a precise action performed with a specific item known as the "cheftza" of the mitzva. In general, the "manufacture" of the item is not part of the essential mitzva. Instead, this preparatory stage is known as "hekhsher mitzva" – preparations which are necessary for the fulfillment of the mitzva but which do not constitute its essence. One would assume the same principle regarding sukka. The mitzva consists primarily in using a particular item (a sukka) as a residence, with the construction of the sukka being purely within the realm of hekhsher mitzva. A statement found in the Yerushalmi, however, alters this impression. The exact nature of the activity of building a sukka will form the subject of this article.

The mishna (9a) cites a machloket between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel regarding an "old" sukka. Suppose, instead of building a sukka for the purposes of Chag Sukkot, a person employs an old hut, which just happens to be built according to the halakhic blueprint of a sukka. Beit Shammai invalidates this sukka, requiring a "sukka lishma" – one built specifically for yom tov. Beit Hillel (whose opinion is accepted as halakha) permits any hut as long as it was built according to the proper specifications. The Yerushalmi, however, adds one stipulation according to Beit Hillel. When using an "old" sukka a person must build one small part anew – "ve-tzarikh lechadesh bah davar." Many commentators interpret the Yerushalmi as defining a new mitzva – "construction of the sukka." Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai argue about the texture of the sukka and whether an old hut will suffice. They each agree, however, that a person himself has a mitzva to actually ERECT the sukka. Thus, even though Beit Hillel tolerates the use of an existing structure, they require a small act of NEW construction so that the person will fulfill his obligation to build a sukka. Indeed the Ran (1a in the pages of the Rif) refers to this obligation of the Yerushalmi as "mitzva min ha- muvchar" while the Me'iri in his comments (to 9a) applies the label "hiddur mitzva." The impression given is that this mitzva of constructing a sukka is not absolutely obligatory (it isn't me'akev be-dieved – if one doesn't actually build he has still fulfilled the principal mitzva); however, it still is preferable and enhances the quality of the mitzva.

SUMMARY:

The comment of the Yerushalmi – that when using an old sukka a person must at least add some new element – presents the impression that unlike other mitzvot, the mitzva of sukka actually involves manufacturing the cheftza of the mitzva.

The question remains as to whether this concept has any grounding in the Bavli. The gemara in Makkot (8a) discusses the fate of one who is chopping wood and subsequently kills a person when his ax blade dislodges. The gemara rules that such an inadvertent killer goes to exile only if his chopping was for mundane reasons, as opposed to chopping performed in the context of a mitzva. The gemara rules, however, that one who chops wood for a sukka is not chopping for a mitzva – since he is not required to chop; had he found chopped wood he could have utilized that wood. Rashi elaborates: "The ACTUAL CHOPPING IS NOT PART OF THE MITZVA, RATHER THE CONSTRUCTION IS THE MITZVA." Rashi declares construction of the sukka to be an integrated part of the actual mitzva of sukka. An additional gemara which might imply some sort of role for actual construction is the gemara in Sukka (46a) which examines a berakha recited on "sukka." In order to fully appreciate this gemara, however, we must first glance at a parallel gemara in the Yerushalmi. In two locations (Sukka 1:2 and Berakhot 9:3) the Yerushalmi obligates one who builds a sukka to recite a specific birkat ha-mitzva – "la'asot sukka." This reiterates the position of the Yerushalmi that the actual construction of a sukkah is a separate mitzva and therefore deserves its own berakha. There is of course no identical gemara in the Bavli requiring a berakha on building a sukka. However, the aforementioned gemara in Sukkah discusses a berakha – "shehechiyanu." The gemara initially rules that the she-hechiyanu is recited when building the sukka. In fact the gemara asserts that if one uses a ready- made sukka, one should at least build some part anew to allow the berakha of she-hechiyanu to be recited. Does this not indicate that some sort of mitzva DOES apply when actually building the sukka? In truth, to determine whether this gemara indeed implies a mitzva we must first examine the exact nature of this berakha of shehechiyanu recited during construction of the sukka. One might claim (as earlier stated) that the she-hechiyanu is being recited on the mitzva of building the sukka. Alternatively, one might assert that this she-hechiyanu is being recited for the yom tov of Sukkot. Instead of waiting until kiddush, the she-hechiyanu for yom tov is recited during the first interface with the yom tov – during construction of the sukka, which heralds the arrival of yom tov. Ultimately, the gemara accepts the position of Rav Kahana who schedules this berakha of she-hechiyanu during kiddush. According to Rav Kahana, the she-hechiyanu on the yom tov cannot be recited prior to its actual arrival. But what underlies the first position of the gemara which mandates a she-hechiyanu during construction of the sukka? It becomes necessary to determine the identity of this she-hechiyanu: Does it address the mitzva of building a sukka (if indeed it is a mitzva) or does it mark instead the actual yom tov of Sukkot?

Tosafot in Sukka (46a – s.v. Ha-oseh) question why we recite a she-hechiyanu on sukka and not on other mitzvot such as tefillin and tzitzit. Tosafot answer that the mitzva of sukka is a mitzva which relates to simcha (the special happiness of the festivals which involve a journey to Jerusalem, facilitated by the mitzvot of yom tov) and hence warrants a she-hechiyanu. Tosafot definitely view the she- hechiyanu as relating to the actual sukka and hence formulated their question: Why is this MITZVA different from others? Had the she-hechiyanu addressed the yom tov of Sukkot the question would be meaningless. A second question which might help us determine the nature of this she-hechiyanu is addressed by the Ritva. After reciting a she-hechiyanu during construction of the sukka, must we recite a second one during kiddush? The Ritva rules that we must. Does this not indicate that the original she- hechiyanu related to the mitzva of construction and not the actual yom tov; hence when the day arrives we must recite a second berakha on the yom tov? Of course we must refine our interpretation of the Bavli. If, according to the Bavli as well, building a sukka is a mitzva, why does it only receive a she-hechiyanu and not a standard berakha like those recited on every mitzva [such as "la'asot sukka"] as mandated by the Yerushalmi? To answer this question we must consider the gemara in Menachot (42b) which rules that a "birkat ha-mitzva" is only recited when the mitzva is completed. Performing mila completes that mitzva and hence deserves a distinct berakha ["al ha-mila"] while manufacturing tefillin is merely a prelude to donning them and hence does not warrant a berakha. Since

building the sukka ultimately leads to the actual residence in it during Sukkot, according to the Bavli its berakha might be deferred. However, the construction is part of the mitzva and deserves a berakha – she-hechiyanu. Possibly, theinitial position cited in the gemara requiring a she-hechiyanu during construction of the sukka highlights an independent mitzva of building the sukka – even according to the Bavli. Ultimately, we reject this position and rule that a she-hechiyanu is only recited at the onset of yom tov during kiddush. According to this ruling, must our overall thesis (that construction is part of the mitzva) be likewise rejected? By reciting the she-hechiyanu during kiddush was Rav Kahana rejecting any mitzva of building a sukka? Or is it possible that Rav Kahana was merely combining two separate she-hechiyanus into one berakha – preferring that the she-hechiyanu upon the sukka and the she-hechiyanu upon Sukkot be collapsed into a berakha recited at the onset of yom tov when one first enters the sukka and recites kiddush? If we adopt the latter alternative, the concept of a separate mitzva to build a sukka might remain even according to Rav Kahana's final position. The only point he questions is the necessity of an INDEPENDENT she-hechiyanu to mark this mitzva.

SUMMARY:

Two statements in the Yerushalmi confirm the status of manufacturing a sukka as a mitzva. Moreover, the Bavli in Sukka which proposes a shehechiyanu at the time of construction might further reflect this position. Even according to the final halakha, that shehechiyanu is said only in kiddush, this concept – of construction as a mitzva – might remain.

METHODOLOGICAL POINTS:

1. Oftentimes, a Bavli and a Yerushalmi will dispute a particular halakha. The machloket itself is useful for crystallizing two distinct views of this halakha. 2. Sometimes the CONCEPT, most apparent in the Yerushalmi will hold water in the Bavli as well. The actual halakha of the Yerushalmi (which best reflects the PRINCIPLE or the CONCEPT) might be rejected by the Bavli for peripheral concerns. The Bavli might concede a mitzva in building the sukka but reject a distinct berakha because it isn't the completion of the mitzva. According to the Bavli a berakha is only recited at the consummation of a mitzva.

AFTERWORD: 1. See the Netziv (commentary to the She'iltot 179) who addresses this question amidst a more general backdrop. He discusses additional instances in which acts of preparation (such as baking matza) constitute part of the actual mitzva. 2. The Bavli in Sukka which mandates a shehechiyanu when building the sukkah also requires one when binding the four minim. What does this demonstrate about the binding process? 3. Tosafot (s.v. Ha-oseh – the first one) claims that according to the initial position a shehechiyanu is recited only when building a sukkah for oneself – not when building for others. How can this position be defended in light of the above?

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https://darchenoam.org/sukkah-a-state-of-mind/

Sukkah: A State of Mind

Rabbi Ron-Ami Meir, Yeshivat Darche Noam

"Mitz'ta'er": A Definition

Comparing Sukkah to Tefilin

A Second Approach

Tying it All Together

"Mitz'ta'er": A Definition The Talmud in Tractate Sukkah 25a cites the Amora, Rav, as declaring that a mourner is fully obligated in all of the mitzvot of the Torah (with the exception of one, based on a special verse.) Next, Rav states that a mourner must dwell in the Sukkah during the Festival of Sukkot. This second halacha prompts the Gemara to exclaim: "That's obvious!" In other words – after Rav's initial statement – obligating a mourner in all the mitzvot – why would we have thought that he would be exempt from the mitzvah of Sukkah?

Had Rav not stated this second halacha, answers the Gemara, we may have actually thought that a mourner is exempt from Sukkah. Why? A fundamental principle in Hilchot Sukkah is that one who is suffering from being in the Sukkah – a "mitz'ta'er" – is exempt from the mitzvah; we may have thus thought that a mourner, in his grief, falls into this category. According to the Gemara, Rav's special stress on the mourner's obligation to dwell in the Sukkah clarifies that the exemption of mitz'ta'er only applies to suffering that develops " on its own". The discomfort of the mourner in the Sukkah does not develop "on its own"; rather, the mourner, says the Gemara, "is bringing the suffering on himself, and he

therefore has the obligation to place his mind at ease and calm down [to allow himself to live in the Sukkah.]"

Rashi explains that suffering that "develops on its own" relates to discomfort stemming from the Sukkah itself. Typical examples include: discomfort from the heat of the sun beating down on the Sukkah, the cold temperature in the Sukkah, or a bad odor emitted by the structure's leafy "schach" roof. Since a mourner's sensitivity is not directly related to the Sukkah's temperature or odor, he must put himself at ease so that he can perform the mitzvah.

Why should a mourner find the Sukkah so difficult to tolerate? Rabbeinu Asher ("Rosh") explains that such a person prefers the dark, secluded atmosphere of a house rather than the pleasant-open air atmosphere of the Sukkah. Far from being objectively unpleasant – the Sukkah is "too pleasant" an environment for the mourner! In other words, it's the mourner's delicate and unique emotional state that transforms the Sukkah into a troubling place.

Comparing Sukkah to Tefilin Sukkah is not the only mitzvah in which the halacha stresses the mental/emotional situation of the Jew. The Gemara in Menachot (36b) rules that a person donning Tefilin must not take his mind off the mitzvah, and proves this by learning a "Kal V'chomer" from the requirement of the High Priest (Kohen Gadol) to mentally focus on his "Tzitz" headdress. Rambam codifies this ruling in his Mishna Torah, stating that a person in discomfort, or one whose mind is not at ease, is exempt from the mitzvah of Tefilin – since it is forbidden to become distracted from the Tefilin while donning them.

In response to the above halacha, Rabbeinu Manoach (cited by Kesef Mishna) states: Even though with all other mitzvot, we require a person to put his mind at ease and perform the mitzvah, Tefilin are different: it's forbidden to wear them while mentally distracted. Kesef Mishna understands this comment as an implicit challenge on the Rambam: How can Rambam exempt a "mitz'ta'er" from Tefilin, if, after all, the Gemara in Sukkah states that such a person must calm down with the aim of fulfilling the mitzvah of Sukkah?!

To this challenge, Rabbeinu Manoach responds: The mitzvah of Tefilin is different: Since it is characterized by a special "distraction" prohibition, we don't insist that he put his mind at ease. Why? As much as he calms himself down, he won't escape the fact that there is a special prohibition of being distracted while donning Tefilin.

In other words, we cannot simply say in the case of Tefilin: "Let him calm down and perform the mitzvah." Once a Jew has become preoccupied and distracted, the halacha is wary of permitting him to don the Tefilin ; the very real possibility exists that he will again lose his concentration. No such halachic prohibition – and therefore no such cautious approach – exists in the law of Sukkah.

A Second Approach Another prominent scholar – R. Joel Sirkes in his work "Bayit Chadash" (Bach) – also grapples with the apparent contradiction in the halacha. In contrast to Rabbeinu Manoach's approach, Bach understands the person in Rambam's Tefilin scenario as being in a different mental state than the one in the Sukkah scenario: Rambam, notes Bach, is dealing with a person who is simply unable to put his mind at ease. Even if he succeeds at doing so for a moment, he quickly reverts to being a "mitz'ta'er". He therefore never escapes the status of someone who is distracted and therefore exempt from Tefilin. In contrast, the "mitz'ta'er" of the Gemara in Sukkah is someone – whom – with sufficient effort, can calm down.

Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg (Responsa "Tzitz Eliezer") notes that according to Bach – were the person in Rambam's Tefilin scenario to ask whether he is obligated in Sukkah – we would tell him that he is not. This would be our answer to him, despite the fact that his discomfort does not stem from the heat of the Sukkah, nor the odor emitted by the schach.

At first glance, Bach's approach seems to contradict the Gemara Sukkah (27a): "You must dwell in Sukkot for seven days" says the Torah. Given the principle that we must treat the Sukkah like our home for a week, we need only live in it as long as the it allows us similar conditions we are accustomed to in our homes. Since we would not live in a house that has a leaky roof, or an apartment that is uncomfortably cold – we are not expected to live in a Sukkah under cold or rainy conditions. A person whose discomfort stems mainly from his own mental or emotional state, and not from the Sukkah, however, is not exempt from the mitzvah to dwell in the Sukkah. (The Gemara quoted earlier, as explained by Rashi reinforces this.) How could Bach, then, suggest that a person unable to put his mind at ease – is exempt from both Tefilin and

Sukkah? It is not the Sukkah, but his own mental state, that is standing in the way!

Tying it All Together In order to understand Bach's ruling, Rabbi Waldenberg notes that the question of what exempts a "mitz'ta'er" from Sukkah is a major disagreement between the Rishonim. Rashi, Rosh, and Mordechai all rule that a person is exempt from Sukkah only when the discomfort stems from the Sukkah itself. This is the view accepted by Remah in the Shulchan Aruch. The Maharik, in contrast, states that a "mitz'ta'er" is exempt from Sukkah even if the discomfort is mainly a product of his emotional state. Maharik cites our Gemara Sukkah (25a) – and notes that it was prepared to exempt the mourner as a "mitz'ta'er" – but required him instead to put his mind at ease and dwell in the Sukkah.

In other words, Maharik reads that Gemara differently than we suggested earlier: That "sugyah" did not intend to definitively rule out a mourner's state of mind as a relevant factor in defining "mitz'ta'er": It simply concluded that when the discomfort derives from the Sukkah itself, there's not much the halacha can demand of the Jew: if the Sukkah is too hot or wet, then the conditions do not allow for the mitzvah of dwelling in the Sukkah to be fulfilled. If however, the mourner's state of mind is the issue, the halacha asks him to try to "get a hold of himself" before availing himself of the exemption of "mitz'ta'er." It follows, therefore, that both Maharik and Bach – confronted with a person who is unable to relax, would rule that that he is exempt from Sukkah in the same way as such a person is exempt from – and even forbidden to wear – Tefilin.

Rabbi Waldenberg suggests that underlying the contrasting approaches towards the Gemara – are two contrasting views of the source of the exemption of "mitz'ta'er". The mainstream view – Rashi, Rosh, Mordechai, Remah – understands the verse "You must dwell in Sukkot for seven days" as the basis of the exemption; we must treat the Sukkah like our home for a week, we need only live in the Sukkah as long as it allows us similar conditions as a regular home. As noted earlier, one whose discomfort stems mainly from his own mental or emotional state, and not from the Sukkah, is not exempt from the mitzvah to dwell in the Sukkah.

The opposing view – that of Bach and Maharik – bases itself on the verse in Vayikra Chapter 23, which states that we must dwell in Sukkot "So that your generations [after you] know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in Sukkot when I took them out of the Land of Egypt." This, says Bach explicitly – indicates that the Torah wants us to experience a special religious/historical awareness while dwelling in the Sukkah. A severe "mitz'ta'er" simply cannot attain this consciousness, and is therefore exempt. It's irrelevant, according to this view, whether the unsettled state of mind is a result of the heat of the Sukkah, etc, or a personal state of anxiety not rooted in the Sukkah. This explanation helps explain, as well, why Bach equated between the two issues of Sukkah and of Tefilin. In Shmot Ch. 13, the Torah states that we must wear Tefilin "so that the Torah of God should remain on your lips." Here, as in the mitzvah of Sukkah, a special awareness is required while performing the mitzvah. It is this special state of mind that exempts the "mitz'ta'er."

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from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com> date: Oct 6, 2022, 6:59 AM subject: Dimensions in Ha'azinu

DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH **Ha'azinu The Song of Ha'azinu**

The Parshas of Ha'azinu is undoubtedly one of the lesser learned, and hence lesser understood, parshiyos of the Torah. The fact that it is written as a shira (song or poem), coupled with the fact that it is normally read around the time of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with their own dominant themes, results in the effect of hearing it read being often more atmospheric than educational.

In truth, of course, every verse of this song needs to be unraveled and understood.

The general sweep of Haazinu is provided by the Ramban in verse 40, for indeed, it encompasses our entire history, from its early inception until the ultimate future redemption. It contains both great intensity and harsh extremes. On the one hand, some of the calamitous verses are, in their own way, more devastating than any mentioned in the Torah so far, including the tochachah. However, at the same time, the unwavering vision of the ultimate endurance of the Jewish people and fulfillment of their historic role is likewise emphatically set forth. Indeed, perhaps the full measure and intensity of these themes, which are at once castigating and elevating,

devastating and comforting, could only really be captured in a song.

A major theme of Haazinu that the Ramban points out, as expressed in verses 26-27, is the twinning of two concepts: 1) Hashem's name and 2) the Jewish people.

Hashem's Name: Many times throughout the Chumash and Tanach, Hashem says He will act "for the sake of His name." The meaning behind this is that Hashem created the world so that people could enjoy His goodness and attain an elevated level of existence. This involves awareness of Hashem's name, i.e. of Him as Creator, as well as the values that He embodies and that He expects of people. Should this awareness fade from people's consciousness, the goal of creation could not be realized and creation itself would be in vain.[1]

The Jewish People: Part of choosing the People of Israel as His people is that they become intimately bound up with awareness of Him and His message. As such the destinies of the Jewish People and Hashem's name are now intertwined. If they thrive and succeed, Hashem's name becomes recognized and valued. If they should suffer and dwindle, Hashem's name likewise becomes subject to lack of recognition. Moreover, this relationship is also expressed in the fact that the antagonism of many peoples toward Israel is on account of the very notion that they bear Hashem's name and His message. Since their actions against the Jewish people are ultimately against Hashem Himself, they thereby render themselves fully deserving of His retribution, and forfeit any claim of immunity on the basis of their being instruments of Divine wrath.

The enduring message of Parshas Haazinu, therefore, is that the Jewish people represent Hashem's name and message not only through the things that they say and do, but also by the things they experience. In choosing them as His nation, Hashem entrusted them not only as His Divine subjects with the performance of the commandments of the Torah, but also as a Divine object through which His role as Creator and Controller of the world could be manifest.

Indeed, looked at in this way, the theme of Haazinu and that of the Days of Awe are not so disparate after all. Numerous times over the period of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we base our petitions both for success and for forgiveness on Hashem "acting for the His name": Already beginning with the recitation of selichos, we invoke this idea by saying, "בנו נקרא שמך, ה' עשה למען שמך – Your name is called upon us, Hashem, act for the sake of Your name." Likewise, in the Avinu Malkeinu prayer, we say, "עשה למען שמך הגדול הגבור והנורא שנקרא עלינו – act for the sake of Your great, mighty and awesome name that is called upon us."

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur themselves, this idea is highlighted in the Amidah prayer: The third blessing begins with the plea: "ובכן תן פחדך על כל מעשיך – and so, too, place Your awe upon all of Your handiwork," and then moves on to ask, "ובכן תן כבוד לעמך – And so, too, give honor to Your people." Interestingly, the next blessing echoes the connection between these two themes in reverse. It begins by proclaiming, " אתה בחרתנו מכל העמים... ושמך הגדול והקדוש עלינו קראת – You chose us from among all the nations… and Your great and holy name You called upon us," and then concludes by beseeching Hashem, " מלוך על כל העולם כולו בכבודך... וידע כל פעול כי אתה פעלתו – reign over the entire world in Your glory… let each creation know that You created it."

This dual "backwards and forwards sweep" underscores the intimate connection between the ideas of Israel as Hashem's nation and the nations of the world's recognition of Him as its Creator and Guide.

And thus, the the Yamim Noraim form the seasonal backdrop for the song of Haazinu, whose culmination and realization we longingly await:

הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עַמּוֹ כִּי דַם עֲבָדָיו יִקּוֹם וְנָקָם יָשִׁיב לְצָרָיו וְכִפֶּר אַדְמָתוֹ עַמּוֹ

O nations, sing the praises of His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants; He will bring retribution upon His foes, and He will appease His land and His people.

May we merit to see it, speedily in our days!

[1] Ramban to verse 26.

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8 years of Points to Ponder on Parashas Haazinu
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Schwartz

הַאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַאֲדַבֵּרָה Listen Heavens and I will speak (32:1) - The Midrash (Devorim Rabbah 10:1) asks whether it is permissible to treat somebody who is suffering from an earache on Shabbos. The answer provided is that the Sages have taught that saving a person's life takes precedence over the desecration of Shabbos. Why is this the opening Midrash to Haazinu? Chasam Sofer explains that there is a Machlokes as to

whether a person is permitted to confess his sins on Shabbos. Some maintain that it is permissible since it gives him pleasure to repent and atone for his transgressions, while others forbid it because the focus and emphasis on his misdeeds causes him anguish. However, on the Shabbos preceding Yom Kippur, which has the power to rectify all of the Shabbosim of the previous year (Mishnah Berurah 603:2), the confession is classified as Pikuach Nefesh (life-saving) and permissible according to all opinions. Moshe died on Shabbos. He spoke out Haazinu the same day. Ergo, Haazinu was said on Shabbos. The Midrash is noting that in the same way one might hear painful rebuke causing him ear pain of a spiritual type on Shabbos, one may also confess on Shabbos.

הַאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַאֲדַבֵּרָה Listen Heavens and I Shall Speak (32:1) – Rav Elchanan Wasserman ztl. once began a Shabbos Shuva Derasha with the question of How could Moshe, the great Anav speak with such seeming arrogance? He explained that the answer is in the next Possuk – Ki Shem Hashem Ekra – when I offer Dvar Hashem it is not my words but rather those of Hashem – and therefore worthy of being heeded to even by Shomayim and Aretz.

הַאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַאֲדַבֵּרָה Listen O Heaven (32:1) – R Mordechai Kreiger z"l suggested that this Possuk was Moshe's way of speaking about the Torah. When he spoke of Shomayim, he was referring to Torah Sh'B'Ksav which is straight from Shomayim. When he spoke of HaAretz he referred to Torah Sh'Baal Peh which is studied and plowed through by the Chachamim to derive the proper learning method. Even critical Berachos for daily living all have their source from the Torah.

יַעֲרֹף כַּמָּטָר לִקְחִי תִּזַּל כַּטַּל אִמְרָתִי Dew and rain (32:2) - Rashi notes that like the rain that never stops Torah too will never cease. However, the comparison to rain seems misplaced. Isn't it the DEW that never stops? Why bother with the rain comparison? Rav Eliyahu of Izmir (Minchas Eliyahu) explained that since Torah goes with the person when s/he passes it remains with him/her forever. If Torah would only be compared to dew, the person would think that like dew, Torah is always around and there is no urgency to study and observe it. Thus, the double reference, we need to go at Torah life hard like rain and know that it is with us forever like the dew.

יַעֲרֹף כַּמָּטָר לִקְחִי My lesson will drip like rain (32:2) - The Midrash (Pesikta) notes that those who study Torah are like the fish who rush to catch the new drops of rain all while being surrounded by water. Talmidei Chachamim rush to learn a new insight despite their immense knowledge too. Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl. added that the comparison is even deeper. Like the fish who keep seeking newness even in the water that is already in the sea, Talmidei Chachamim use the new ideas to add a freshness into the Torah that they have already acquired and mastered.

יַעֲרֹף כַּמָּטָר לִקְחִי תִּזַּל כַּטַּל אִמְרָתִי May my teaching drip down like the rain ..like storm winds on vegetation (32:2) – The Sifrei deduces the responsibility for us to assemble our words of Torah into principles and details instead of seeing Torah as a bunch of minute details. Travellers do not take small bills with them on trips. They take large bills which can be exchanged for smaller bills as needed. Ramchal adds that when something is organized it helps make each detail more pleasant to learn.

כִּי שֵׁם ה׳ אֶקְרָא When I call Hashem's name (32:3) – Rav Schachter Shlita would note to us that this is the source of the responsibility to recite Birchos HaTorah before one learns. The Maharsha explains that the reason for this is that all the names of Hashem are found in the Torah and it is really a description of Godliness. If so, we can also understand why it is so that the Gemara (Nedarim) notes that the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because they did not make Birchos Hatorah. Why was this such an Avaira? The Ran explains that they didn't make a Beracha means that they treated Torah like a secular discipline. Rav Schachter added that although one finds many descriptions of Hashem's sovereignty in the secular study of His world, there is a difference in the attitude toward secular study versus that of the study of Torah which is our life and the basis of our existence.

הַצּוּר תָּמִים פָּעֳלוֹ The deeds of the mighty rock are perfect and just (32:4) – what does this mean? Rav Schachter Shlita pointed out that usually when one metes out justice, it cannot take society and the collateral damage into account. However, when it comes to Hashem, he is able to take everything into consideration and Ein Avel - it never ruins His plan.

הַצּוּר תָּמִים פָּעֳלוֹ His works are perfect (32:4) - Rav Shimon of Yaroslav noted that the reason he merited a long life was that when people complain about unfairness

in the world, Hashem takes them into Shomayim and shows them how and why things happen and why it is just. He added that he never complained so he didn't need to be shown why it was just. Rav Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztl. added that this is a great story but it also contains a tremendous amount of truth within it. The danger of stress and tension often lead people to be on tranquilizing medication. These meds often depress the brain and make it less sensitive to reality. Tranquility from Bitachon is far superior to that which is accomplished by medication and promotes longer life.

אֵ֣ל אֱמוּנָ֔ה וְאֵ֥ין עָוֶ֖ל The god of faith (32:4) - The Sifrei notes that Hashem believed in this world and created it. Rav Aharon Kotler ztl. added that by nature, creations have an inclination to sin and deserve destruction. Here Hashem did the world a favor and created the concept of Teshuva before the creation of the world on faith that the world deserves to continue despite its errant actions. Hence the wording -- He is the Hashem of faith without evil -- meaning that he sees beyond the evil having prepared for prior to the creation of the world. (Maybe that's why when we recite the Avodas Yom HaKippurim we begin with the creation of the world as it is the start of the Teshuvah process which inclues the Avodas Yom HaKippurim <JS>).

עַ֚ם נָבָ֣ל וְלֹ֔א חָכָ֖ם A nation that is defiled and not wise (32:6) - Onkelos noted that Moshe called us a nation that received the Torah but was not wise enough to listen to it. Where did he get this idea from? Rav Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Kalmanovitz ztl.who noted that like a Neveila that held onto life and lost it, a person or nation that gets life through the Toah should not lose it due to negligence.

זְכֹ֣ר יְמ֣וֹת עוֹלָ֑ם Recall the days of old (32:7) – When we read of the Yimos Olam the recollection is in the singular language. However in the years of each generation it is in the plural. Why? Rav Yehonasan David Shlita suggested that when it comes to the beginning of time, the Mishna suggests that you can only explain it to a single student. But the history of generation to generations can be studied by the masses together.

שְׁאַ֤ל אָבִ֙יךָ֙ וְיַגֶּ֣דְךָ֔ Ask your father and he will tell you (32:7) - Rav Schachter Shlita would regularly remind us that the Midrash notes that Yitzchak began his Beracha with the same word that Avraham ended his. Yaakov did the same with the words Yitzchak ended. Moshe began with the words that Yaakov ended and Dovid began with the words that Moshe ended. Rav Schachter explained that the Midrash is teaching us that each generation learns from and emulates the practices of the previous generations. It does not mean that we use the exact expressions but that modern practices of each generation should be connected with those of the earlier generation.

יִמְצָאֵ֥הוּ בְּאֶ֖רֶץ מִדְבָּ֑ר He will be found in the desert (32:10) - The Lomza Mashgiach, Rav Moshe Rosenstein HY"D noted that one really tends to find Hashem in those trying moments in life when he has no one else to rely upon or trust except Hashem. He added that this is why the Torah was specifically given in the desert -- in order to demonstrate that Bitachon in Hashem is strongest in these times and is the key to success in life.

ה בָּדָ֖ד יַנְחֶ֑נּוּ Hashem guides us alone (32:12)- The Gemara (Chagigah 3a) notes that when we say Shema, we note the Echad – unique nature of Hashem. Similarly, when we declare Mi K'Amcha Yisrael Goy Echad, we are noting that we too, are a unique nation. While we live in isolation, it is precisely BECAUSE of our uniqueness. Rav Schachter Shlita would often comment that while the nations of the world are created in the image of Hashem, only Bnei Yisrael are referred to as Banim. It is the reason our take on world events is often different than those of the rest of the world. We are Badad – unique.

וַיִּשְׁמַ֥ן יְשֻׁרוּן֙ וַיִּבְעָ֔ט. Yeshurun got fat and he rebelled (32:15) - Sforno comments that even the Torah dedicated, who delve into the depths of Torah, can unfortunately become swayed by the riches of this world and rebel against our real purpose in this world. After this happens, Hashem hides his face in order to get us to see what the real point of everything is. Rav Elya Svei ztl. noted that when Hashem gives us economic prosperity after Tzaros -- we might think that we are entitled to it. However, economic downturns get us to see that either we turn to Him and move to act in the way He would want us to, or we will have no one to blame for the destruction except ourselves. Either way, the goal is to get us to turn back to Hashem.

צ֚וּר יְלָדְךָ֣ תֶּ֔שִׁי וַתִּשְׁכַּ֖ח קֵאֵ֣ל מְחֹלְלֶֽךָ You are unmindful of the Rock that fathered you, and have forgotten God who formed you (32:18) - Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl. noted that there seem to be 2 separate issues with the one who serves Avoda Zara -- that he forgets Hashem and that he serves foreign Gods. While the latter seems to be missing in modern society on the whole, the forgetting of Hashem -- the lack of awareness of His presence in our daily lives

is a serious matter. The Achilles' heel of the modern religious person is this existential awareness of God's Presence in his daily life. We know the answers to the questions, and we know that He is there. But we need to make sure that we never forget that.

צוּר יְלָדְךָ תֶּשִׁי You were unmindful of the Rock Who bore you, and forgot God Who created you (32:18) - What type of forgetting is the big Avaira here? Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl. explained that the forgetfulness described here comes from the awareness of God's existence, but without influence on his lifestyle or his day-to-day activities. In a certain sense, modern man is faced with the problem of the forgetfulness of *Ha'azinu*. A modern person may be aware of God's existence in the general sense, and if prodded indications of His existence he might be able to shake layers of dust off his faith and answer. However, this shallow knowledge has no impact on his life or his behavior. Although he knows that God exists, he does not act accordingly. He ignores the Torah lifestyle and observance that this knowledge is meant to bring with it.

צוּר יְלָדְךָ תֶּשִׁי You were unmindful of the rock who bore you and forgot Hashem who sustains you (32:18) – Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl. explained that there are 2 processes of forgetfulness that lead to sin. In Parshas Eikev the forgetfulness is active as the person tries to select a different Avodah Zara instead of Hashem. The forgetfulness described in Parashat Ha'azinu is of a different type. Here, the forgetfulness comes from awareness of God's existence, but not follow through with the ramifications of this knowledge. The person does not allow his knowledge of God's existence to influence his lifestyle or his day-to-day activities. "And Yeshurun grew fat." This draws his attention away from any sort of spiritual reality – "and he kicked." This person knows that God exists – perhaps he would even profess to believe in Him – but his life is nevertheless considered one of "sacrificing to demons, non-gods." He serves success and prosperity, setting aside no time for developing a spiritual personality. In short, this is modern man's Avodah Zara.

וַיַּרְא ה וַיִּנְאָץ מִכַּעַס בָּנָיו וּבְנֹתָיו Hashem saw and turned away in disdain from the anger of his children (32:19) – Later it says Harninu Goyim Amo Kee Dam AVADAV Yikom. Yet, the Talmud notes that when we follow the words of Hashem, we are called Banim and when we do not, we are called Avadim. Why here does it seem to be the opposite? Rav Asher Weiss Shlita explains that there is a powerful lesson here – when Hashem gets angry with us, he is doubly hurt in that we are also his children (so how could we sin so terribly). At the same time, while moving back into the position of strength, Hashem remembers even the Eved and will avenge even the distance between us.

כִּי דוֹר תַּהְפֻּכֹת הֵמָּה They are a generation of reversals (32:20) – Although the simple meaning of the possuk is in the negative, Rav Yaakov Bender Shlita told the story of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld ztl. who responded to an insolent comment toward Rav Kook ztl. about Shmittah by explaining that there will be a generation in the future whose upbringing is not to be the rejection of Torah and Mitzvos which was the cornerstone of the secularist movement. Sure enough, it came to be – the movement to be Shomer Shmittah K'Halacha is a proud declaration throughout Eretz Yisrael.

הֵם קִנְאוּנִי בְלֹא־אֵל They have caused me to seem jealous [as they pursue] non-gods, they have angered me with their nonsense, and I will make them jealous with a non-people, I will make them angry with a foolish nation (32:21) – Ramban explains that the reference to the nation is the Kasdim. What gave them the unique opportunity to ruin the Jewish people? Rav Zevulun Charlop Shlita explained that they were a rootless people whose style was to steal the style of the people in whose midst they lived. Rav Yaakov Neuberger Shlita added that this nation and its style were created by Hashem specifically to go after a nation that is uninterested in its own grand legacy.

אֲנִי אָמִית וַאֲחַיֶּה I put to death and I bring life (32:39) – Hashem is the source of Refuah. Rav Yechezkel Abramsky ztl. noted that when we have the opportunity to attribute our recovery to someone other than Hashem – like doctors and hospitals and medications, it is especially incumbent to recognize that He is the one in charge. Hence, when we daven we note that Hashem should heal us, "because He is our praise" – that here in particular, it is important to praise Hashem.

כִּי־אָשָׂא אֶל־שָׁמַיִם יָדָי For I shall raise my hand to heaven (32:40) - Rav Moshe Hager, Viznitzer Rebbe ztl. noted that when one raises his hands is a reference to Tefillah. In this section, we are told that our Tefillah should be primarily motivated by a desire to seek to increase Kavod Hashem (the Anochi in the world) We learn that the

Shechina shares our pain and if we daven for the Shechina's pain to end, our pain will end as well.

בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the middle of his day saying (32:48) - Rashi comments that this is one of the three verses in the Torah employing the term in the middle of the day, in this case to highlight that Bnei Yisrael would not be able to stop it. Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl. Points out that this is how we are to respond to the death of a Gadol. The intensity of the pain needs to make us lose our senses and cry out that if we could have done something about it we would have.

בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה In the midst of this day (32:48) – Rashi notes that the phrase B'Etzem HaYom appears three times in the Torah. Each time it was to show that no one could stop it. This time it would be the Bnei Yisrael who might try to stop the death of Moshe. How would they think to be successful? Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl. opines that it would be through their Tefillos that they would try to stop the decree. The Brisker Rav ztl. suggested that by simply blocking his ascent up the mountain, they could thwart death since Moshe was to ascend the mountain in order to pass.

וּמֻת בָּהָר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹלֶה שָּׁמָּה And die on the mountain you are ascending (32:50) – Rashi comments that this death would be similar to the death of Aharon which Moshe so desired. What was so special about the death? Rav Nebenzahl Shlita explained that the actual entire death was a fulfillment of Mitzvos. Aharon was commanded to stretch his hands, close his eyes etc. Moshe too, would fulfill the words in his death by ascending the mountain and following the words. (A similar thought is expressed in the name of the Ponovezher Rav)

כַּאֲשֶׁר־מֵת אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ You will die on the mountain as Aharon your brother did (32:50) - Why the reference to Aharon? Rav Gifter ztl. explains that Aharon's death was done with his awareness that he was fulfilling the will of Hashem until the last moment. Moshe wanted the same type of death -- with the awareness that he too, was fulfilling the will of Hashem in his death. Rav Gifter adds that most people are not granted that opportunity.

Haftorah

On the surface, the song of the Haftorah which is a song of praise is wildly different from the song of prophesy that is Haazinu. Why then is it chosen as the appropriate one for the Haftorah this week? Rav Gideon Weitzman Shlita suggested that the song of praise and the song of prophesy need each other. Mundane praise is raised as a result of the prophesy. Yet prophesy is connected to the people who use it to direct their awareness and sing praise. The prophesy takes the word of Hashem to us, the praise song, allows us to reconnect to Him.

נַחֲלֵי בְלִיָּעַל Torrents of godless men (Shmuel Bet 22:5) - Rav Dovid Feinstein ztl. noted that Bliyal is a contraction of the words Bli and Ol or without a yoke. People without any scruples and no connection to Hashem are often the ones who wreak destruction on the Jewish people hardest.

Parshas Emor: Commemorating the Desert Experience: An Analysis of Parshat Hamo'adot (Ch. 23)

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. PARASHAT HAMO'ADOT

The only complete treatment of the holiday calendar found in the Torah is the centerpiece of our Parashah. Although reading it in the original (to which we will refer throughout the shiur) is preferable, here is a translation which may be used for reference. Paragraph breaks represent separation of Parashiot and those few terms which are in bold-faced print will be explained in the shiur:

1 Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying:
2 Speak to the people of Yisra'el and say to them: These are the appointed festivals of Hashem that you shall proclaim as Mikra'ei Kodesh, my appointed festivals.
3 Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a Shabbat Shabbaton, a Mikra Kodesh; you shall do no work: it is a Shabbat to Hashem throughout your settlements.
4 These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, the Mikra'ei Kodesh, which you shall celebrate at the time appointed for them.
5 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to Hashem,
6 and on the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of unleavened bread to Hashem; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.
7 On the first day you shall have a Mikra Kodesh; you shall not work at your occupations.
8 For seven days you shall present Hashem's offerings by fire; on the seventh day there shall be a Mikra Kodesh: you shall not work at your occupations.
9 Hashem spoke to Mosheh:
10 Speak to the people of Yisra'el and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the omer of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest.
11 He shall raise the omer before Hashem, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the Shabbat the priest shall raise it.
12 On the day when you raise the omer , you shall offer a lamb a year old, without blemish, as a burnt offering to Hashem.
13 And the grain offering with it shall be two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to Hashem; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin.
14 You shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements.
15 And from the day after the Shabbat, from the day on which you bring the omer of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete. 16 You shall count until the day after the seventh Shabbat, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to Hashem.
17 You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering, each made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to Hashem.
18 You shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to Hashem, along with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to Hashem.
19 You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of well-being.
20 The priest shall raise them with the bread of the first fruits as an elevation offering before Hashem, together with the two lambs; they shall be holy to Hashem for the priest.
21 On that same day you shall make proclamation; you shall hold a Mikra Kodesh ; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a statute forever in all your settlements throughout your generations.
22 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am Hashem your God.
23 Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying:
24 Speak to the people of Yisra'el, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a Shabbaton, a commemoration of T'ruah , a Mikra Kodesh.
25 You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall present Hashem's offering by fire.
26 Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying:
27 Now, the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a Mikra Kodesh for you: you shall deny

yourselves and present Hashem's offering by fire;
28 and you shall do no work during that entire day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before Hashem your God.
29 For anyone who does not practice self-denial during that entire day shall be cut off from the people.
30 And anyone who does any work during that entire day, such a one I will destroy from the midst of the people.
31 You shall do no work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements.
32 It shall be to you a Shabbat Shabbaton , and you shall deny yourselves; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your Shabbat.
33 Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying:
34 Speak to the people of Yisra'el, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of booths to Hashem.
35 The first day shall be a Mikra Kodesh ; you shall not work at your occupations.
36 Seven days you shall present Hashem's offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a Mikra Kodesh and present Hashem's offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations.
37 These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, which you shall celebrate as times of Mikra Kodesh , for presenting to Hashem offerings by fire - burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day -
38 apart from the Shabbats of Hashem, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and apart from all your freewill offerings, which you give to Hashem.
39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of Hashem, lasting seven days; a Shabbaton on the first day, and a Shabbaton on the eighth day.
40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Hashem your God for seven days.
41 You shall keep it as a festival to Hashem seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations.
42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Yisra'el shall live in booths,
43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Yisra'el live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am Hashem your God.
44 Thus Mosheh declared to the people of Yisra'el the appointed festivals of Hashem.

II. SEVEN QUESTIONS ON THE PARASHAH

Since every subsection within our selection utilizes and highlights the number seven (which is a topic for a separate shiur), I would like to pose seven questions on the text:

1) Five of the holidays mentioned are also described as a Shabbaton - and two of them, [the weekly] Shabbat and Yom haKippurim are called Shabbat Shabbaton. What is the meaning of this word (which is clearly related to Shabbat)?

2) The listing presented is "the appointed times of Hashem which you (the B'nei Yisra'el) shall declare". Those holidays which fall on a given day of the month (e.g. Pesach on Nisan 15) are clearly declared by the B'nei Yisra'el, when the court announces the new month (under those circumstances when the calendar was fixed on a monthly basis by the testimony of witnesses who had seen the new moon); this is the Gemara's explanation for the liturgical phrase M'kadesh Yisra'el v'haZ'manim (He who sanctifies Yisra'el and the seasons) - it is Yisra'el who sanctify the seasons (BT Berakhot 49a). It is, therefore, understandable why Pesach, Shavu'ot etc. are listed in a group headed by "which you shall declare in their time". Shabbat, on the other hand, exists independently of our declaration or observance of that holy day (which is why the signature form in the Shabbat liturgy is M'kadesh haShabbat, with no mention of Yisra'el (see, however, JT Berakhot 8:1 for a variant version). Why then is Shabbat included in our list? This question is a bit stronger when viewed against the backdrop of the Gemara in Arakhin (11b), which notes that the reason we don't say Hallel on Shabbat is because Shabbat is not considered a Mo'ed (appointed time).

3) In the section (vv. 9-14) relating to the beginning-of-the-harvest offering (brought on the second day of Hag haMatzot), the Torah describes this offering as an omer - which is the amount of the offering. Not only is it odd to refer to an offering by its volume, this term is repeated four times within a space of 6 verses. What is the significance of the omer as an appellation for this offering?

4) At the end of the section detailing the festival of Shavu'ot (vv. 15-22), the Torah interjects the laws of Pe'ah (leaving the corner of the field unharvested for the poor) and Leket (leaving the gleaning of the harvest - again for the poor). What is the

rationale behind the inclusion of these "non-holiday" laws in our list?

5) In v. 24, the holiday of the first day of the seventh month (which we commonly call "Rosh haShanah") is denoted not only as a Shabbaton , but also as a Zikhron T'ruah - meaning "commemoration of a [Shofar's] blast". Although Rashi explains that this refers to the obligation to recite the various theme-driven verses during Musaf of Rosh haShanah, this only works if we read Zikhron T'ruah as "a mention of a Shofar blast "; however, a simpler read is "a commemoration of a Shofar blast ". What is being commemorated by the blasting of the Shofar?

6) In v. 32, Yom haKippurim is called a Shabbat Shabbaton (just as it is earlier in Vayyikra - 16:31). Why is Yom haKippurim given this title - which is otherwise only accorded to Shabbat?

7) A careful look at the "parashah" of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret (vv. 33-44) reveals that there are really two distinct sections within this one parashah. Note that v. 37 begins with Ele Mo'adei Hashem , a perfect conclusion to the opening Ele Mo'adei Hashem (v. 4). Once that "conclusion" is finished (v. 38), the Torah adds another perspective of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret. Note the differences between the two sections:

a) In the first section, the holiday is called Hag haSukkot , but does not explain the meaning for this title; the second refers to it as Hag l'Hashem - but associates the timing with the end of the harvest season.

b) In the first section, both the first and eighth days area called Mikra'ei Kodesh ; in the second section both are called Shabbaton.

c) The first section only includes the commands regarding not working and bringing the proper offerings; the second includes the two Mitzvot unique to the holiday - the four species (Lulav, Etrog, Hadas, Aravah) and residing in the Sukkah. Our final question: Why are there two independent texts of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret?

III THE VILNA GA'ON'S EXPLANATION

R. Eliyahu Kramer zt"l, known as the Ga'on miVilna (d. 1799), suggests a brilliant and innovative approach to understanding the first section which answers our second question - and a bit of the first.

[Introductory note: as the Torah instructs us in Sh'mot 12:16, we are not allowed to do M'lakhah on a Yom Tov, with the exception of Okhel Nephesh (M'lakhah needed for eating purposes for that day; this is permitted only when Yom Tov falls on a weekday). This is not true regarding Shabbat, on which all M'lakhah is forbidden - nor is it true for Yom haKippurim, where there is no permit for any food-related M'lakhah].

The Ga'on maintains that the first section (vv. 1-3) is not addressing [the weekly] Shabbat; rather, it operates as a header for the rest of the Parashah:

Six days shall work be done - this refers to the six holidays (first day of Pesach, last day of Pesach, Shavu'ot, Rosh haShanah [remember that from the Torah's perspective, even Rosh haShanah is only one day], first day of Sukkot and Sh'mini 'Atzeret) when some type of M'lakhah (Okhel Nephesh) may be done;

But the seventh day is a Shabbat Shabbaton- this refers to the seventh of these days, Yom haKippurim;

You shall do no work- on Yom haKippurim, all types of M'lakhah are forbidden.

In this fashion, the Ga'on explains the inclusion of Shabbat on our list - it isn't there at all! It also explains the use of the phrase Shabbat Shabbaton in v. 3 - it is referring to Yom haKippurim, which has already been titled Shabbat Shabbaton in Ch. 16.

Although there is much to recommend this approach, I would like to suggest one that not only responds to all of our questions, but also addresses this "Shabbat" section from a "p'shat" perspective.

IV. WHAT IS A "MIKRA KODESH"?

Before addressing the overall theme of this parashah, I would like to pose two questions of a general nature:

a) What is the meaning of the phrase Mikra Kodesh , which is the description of each one of these special days (along with a general name for all of them: v. 2,4,37)?

b) What is the rationale behind the placement of this list? Why is it set towards the end of Sefer Vayyikra? (Of course, this question could be posed no matter where it is placed; nevertheless, if we can find a solid reason why this parashah "belongs" here, that is a path we should pursue.)

REEXPERIENCING THE EVOLUTION OF THE GOY KADOSH

Every one of the days under discussion is liturgically referred to as a Zekher liY'tziat Mitzrayim - a "commemoration of the Exodus". Although it is abundantly clear why Pesach serves this purpose - and both Shabbat (D'varim 5:15) and Sukkot (Vayyikra 23:43) are connected with the Exodus in the Torah - the rest of the holidays don't have an apparent connection with the Exodus. Even the Sukkot association is weak if we understand Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim as the plagues and the crossing of the Reed Sea. Why is each of these holy days considered a Zekher liY'tziat Mitzrayim?

I would like to suggest that the entire system of the Jewish calendar - including both Shabbat and all of the Yamim Tovim - is designed to help us reexperience and internalize the "higlights" of our travels through the desert. In other words, we must adopt a more complete and inclusive understanding of Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim . As we examine the salient features of each of these holy days, specifically as they are outlined - and alluded to - in our text, we will find that each of them reinforces a component of that experience which the Torah desires us to maintain. We will also find that the order of the holy days can be viewed as deliberate and sequentially significant.

When we stood at the foot of Har Sinai - which was the intermediary goal of the Exodus (Sh'mot 3:12) - God assured us that if we keep His covenant, we will become a Goy Kadosh (a holy nation). There are two distinct elements in this formula: A nation, implying a unified purpose, common concern and pervasive sense of mutual responsibility. The second element is holiness, wherein that unified group is directed towards a sanctified purpose. This order is significant and indispensable; we must first achieve a sense of unity and fellowship before moving that group into the realm of the holy. It is only after this dual goal has been achieved that we can construct the Mishkan and allow God's Presence to rest among us - which is the pinnacle of the Goy Kadosh. The system of the Jewish calendar can best be understood through the prism of the evolution of the B'nei Yisra'el towards their destiny as a Goy Kadosh.

This explains why each of these holy days is considered a Mikra Kodesh . The word Mikra is used in only one other context (besides Sh'mot 12 - Pesach; our parashah and the other "listing" at Bamidbar 28) - in Bamidbar 10:2. God commanded Mosheh to fashion two trumpets of silver, which were to be used l'Mikra ha'Edah - to assemble the people. A Mikra is, therefore, a call of assembly. What then is a Mikra Kodesh? Simply an assembly for a holy purpose. In other words, a Mikra Kodesh is an actualization of the ideal of the Goy Kadosh - the group coming together for a holy purpose.

This also explains the placement of this parashah at this juncture in Vayyikra. After detailing the parameters of "public" Kedushah (the Mishkan and those impurities which cause defilement) and "private" Kedushah (see last week's shiur), along with the special Kedushah of the Kohanim (Chapters 21-22), the Torah brings these together as the private/individual Kedushah is manifested in the public domain, chiefly through the offices of the Kohanim.

After this introduction, we can re-examine the parashah, note the underlying theme and answer our questions.

V. ANALYZING THE PARASHAH

SHABBAT

Even though we are accustomed to thinking of Shabbat as a commemoration of - and testimony to - God's creation (see Sh'mot 20:12), Shabbat also has an explicit Zekher liY'tziat Mitzrayim dimension, as mentioned above. Besides the explicit verse (D'varim 5:15) cited previously, there is a direct Shabbat association with the desert experience which is uniquely tied up with the notion of national unity.

One introductory note: As we have mentioned in earlier shiurim, when studying Tanakh, we must simultaneously view the text as outsiders while experiencing it as participants. As outsiders, we are enriched with the global view of the entire

canonized text and the interpretations and comments of our sages. As participants, we only know what the original target audience (be it Mosheh, Aharon or the B'nei Yisra'el) knew; we must try to understand (to whatever extent possible) the impact of these particular words and phrases on the ears of this original audience.

When Shabbaton - a relatively rare word - is used, it certainly must evoke in the listener the original context in which it was used. A quick search of the Tanakh reveals that the earliest appearance of this word is in the Chapter 16 of Sh'mot - in the story of the Mahn (Manna).

The story of the Mahn is, (as we indicated in this year's shiur on Parashat Beshalach), the central turning point in the preparation of the B'nei Yisra'el for their arrival at Sinai.

A quick review of the story will help us understand the relevance of the story of the Mahn to our goal of building a holy nation.

There are two central features of how the B'nei Yisra'el were to respond to the Mahn.

* They were to only take the proper amount per person in the household.

* They were to take double on Friday and take none on Shabbat.

Each of these commands (which, for the most part, the whole nation followed) carries a critical step in the development of the holy nation.

R. Yaakov Medan, in a wonderful article (Megadim 17:61-90), points out that the command for each person to restrict himself to a daily portion for each member of the household represented not only a good deal of faith in God - but also tremendous self-restraint and concern for one's fellow. This is how he explains the "test" of the Mahn (16:4) - that we were tested to see how much concern each of us could demonstrate for our fellow, knowing that if we took more than our portion, someone else would go hungry. Indeed, the B'nei Yisra'el passed this test with flying colors! (v. 18) For a slave people, wandering in a desert to exercise this much self-restraint was a demonstration of their readiness to stand as a unified nation and to enter into a covenant which includes mutual responsibility.

This self-restraint was the first building block in the process of turning a multitude of slaves into a unified nation. The ability to maintain concern for one's fellow in the face of such temptation was the first indication that we would indeed be able to become a Goy Kadosh.

By beginning the parashah of Mikra'ei Kodesh with Shabbat - and by specifically referring to that day as a Shabbat Shabbaton , we are immediately reminded of - and brought back to - that wonderful demonstration of mutual concern with the Mahn. Indeed, Shabbat carries a powerful "social-justice" component (see Ramban at D'varim 5:15); by stepping back from our daily attempt to conquer the world and amass more for ourselves, we are given the golden opportunity to allow others in to our lives and to develop our own empathy for those less fortunate. In addition, the cessation from M'lakhah heightens our awareness of Who is really in charge and of our obligation to look out for all of His creatures.

HAG HAMATZOT

This one is pretty straightforward. In order to keep the experience of the Exodus at the forefront of our consciousness, the Torah commanded us to relive it (therefore calling it Hag haMatzot, underscoring the method by which we reexperience it) every year. Note that these holy days are also called Mikra'ei Kodesh , in that they remind us of our holy ingathering. Besides the overarching thematic Mikra Kodesh, this one is a bit special - if we think back to the various guidelines and restrictions given us in the context of the Korban Pesach (e.g. to be eaten as a household - see our shiur on Parashat Bo).

One question about this section which we must address is the repeated introduction in v. 4. Once the Torah already captioned this chapter (in v. 2) with the phrase "These are the appointed times..." why repeat it two verses later?

We will only get to this question near the end of the shiur in our discussion about the two sections of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret.

OMER HAT'NUFAH

On the day after Hag haPesach (the second day of Hag haMatzot), we are commanded to offer up an Omer's worth of grain (barley). Why this amount - and why mention it so often?

When we look back at the Mahn story, we note that each portion of Mahn that fell was 1/10th of an Ephah - or 1 Omer's worth! It is not surprising that the Torah commands us to "lift up" (symbolically returning the Mahn to its rightful Owner) exactly that amount of grain the day after Pesach. The lesson is clear: Liberation must carry with it a renewed sense of concern for social welfare and a mutual responsibility. As soon as we have celebrated our freedom, the Torah commands us to remember the miracle of the Mahn - and our miraculous response to the test.

PE'AH AND LEKET

The exact middle verse of our parashah is the "interjected" command to leave Pe'ah (the corner of the field) and Leket (gleanings) for the poor. Now we can understand the significance of this addition - while harvesting, celebrating with a new grain offering (v. 16) etc., we must not forget our brothers and sisters who have fallen on hard times. The Torah interrupts the flow of the calendar to remind us that we can not be Holy without ensuring that we are doing so as a Nation.

ZIKHRON T'RUAH

When we come to evaluate the meaning of this phrase within the context of our parashah, we have to again return to the mode of "participant" as opposed to "observer". If the B'nei Yisra'el are commanded to perform an act of commemoration of a Shofar-blast, it must refer to a particular blast which they had already experienced - and are now being commanded to commemorate.

The only Shofar blast which we know of in their past was the blast (or series of blasts) at Har Sinai which prefaced and followed the Revelation. The festival of the first day of the seventh month ("Rosh haShanah") is, therefore, a commemoration of the stand at Sinai. The Shofar which we blow is intended to remind us of that great event.

When we first arrived at Sinai, the Torah describes us as "encamping opposite the mountain" (Sh'mot 19:2). The Hebrew verb for this encampment is not the expected vaYahanu ("and they encamped"), rather it is the singular vaYihan (lit. "and he encamped"). Rashi (ibid) is sensitive to this anomaly and explains that we encamped there "as one person, with one heart".

The stand at Sinai was the next step of the process begun with the Mahn (hence, Rosh haShanah is also called a Shabbaton) - moving from a Goy to a Goy Kadosh.

YOM HAKIPPURIM

We then move to a new level of Goy Kadosh . Previously, the unity we experienced was the product of the spirit of sharing and self-restraint. We now come to the day on which we allow ourselves to be stripped of all that divides us. We have no food, drink, fancy clothes (we dress in white because we are either angels or dead) or family life - we have all been "equalized". Yom haKippurim gives us the opportunity to move to a new level of mutual concern - and to focus that concern on a holy enterprise. The sole focus of Yom haKippurim in its first presentation in the Torah (Vayyikra 16) is the purification of the Mishkan. We have now moved from a Goy Kadosh in the abstract (the stand at Sinai) to a Goy Kadosh with a purpose and a focus of activity - sanctity of the camp and a reenshrinement of God's Presence. Yom haKippurim is called Shabbat Shabbaton because it is a "super-Mahn" experience; mutual concern focused on a holy goal.

SUKKOT AND SH'MINI ATZERET

At this point, it pays to review the three points of contrast between the two treatments of this holiday:

a) In the first section, the holiday is called Hag haSukkot , but does not explain the meaning for this title; the second refers to it as Hag l'Hashem - but associates the timing with the end of the harvest season.

b) In the first section, both the first and eighth days area called Mikra'ei Kodesh ; in the second section both are called

Shabbaton.

c) The first section only includes the commands regarding not working and bringing the proper offerings; the second includes the two Mitzvot unique to the holiday - the four species (Lulav, Etrog, Hadas, Aravah) and residing in the Sukkah. And now to the answers:

The first section of Sukkot / Sh'mini Atzeret deals with the holiday as a part of the agricultural cycle of celebration - a cycle which began with Hag haMatzot.

[This also explains why the first section here ends with the concluding Ele Mo'adei Hashem - closing off the "middle" section of the list which began at v. 4. This answers the question asked above (in the section on Hag haMatzot) as to why there is a second caption of our list in v. 4.] As such, it is simply called Hag haSukkot - a purely agricultural connotation. Keep in mind that a Sukkah is a booth used by the workers during harvest season when they could not return home every night - and to rest during the heat of the summer noontime. These days are denoted as Mikra'ei Kodesh - a teleology which is only realized in the second section. They are also replete with offerings and two days of non-work - dedicated to God - but there is no "unity" factor here.

The second treatment, beginning (v. 39) with Akh (which evokes the beginning of the Yom haKippurim section), is a dramatic turn. Instead of being a harvest festival, it is to take place "when you have gathered in the produce of the land" (i.e. that is when you are to celebrate, not the focus of the celebration). This festival includes a Shabbaton at the beginning and the end - bringing us back to the unity theme.

We are then given the two Mitzvot unique to Sukkot: Arba Minim (the Four Species) and Sukkah.

There are many Midrashim explaining the symbolism of the Arba Minim (e.g. they represent the four types of Jews, the four climes of Eretz Yisra'el, four part of the body) - but all of them rest on two basic Halakhic premises: All four species are indispensable for the Mitzvah (inclusion) and all four must be taken as one (community). The introduction of this Mitzvah here underscores the Shabbaton aspect of Sukkot.

Regarding the Mitzvah of Sukkah, the Rabbis said (BT Sukkah 27b): " 'all that are citizens in Yisra'el shall live in Sukkot' - this teaches that all of Yisra'el are worthy to reside in one Sukkah" (this is playing off the way that Sukkot is written in the verse - it could be read Sukkat which is singular, indicating all citizens residing in one Sukkah). This is, again, a Mitzvah which is indicative and symbolic of inclusion of all Jews. The Goy Kadosh is reinforced as we celebrate the end of the harvest.

What can we make of the culmination of our parashah? In what way is Sukkot an appropriate "pinnacle experience" in this sequence? Note that unlike the first treatment, in this second section the festival is called a Hag l'Hashem - a festival of God; that surely indicates something significant...what is it?

Looking back over the sequence of Hag haMatzot (freedom), Omer (the Mahn), Pe'ah (more social concern), Zikhron T'ruah (Har Sinai) and Yom haKippurim (Goy Kadosh) - we note that there is one critical, final step in the desert experience which has not yet been internalized.

As Ramban points out in his introduction to Sefer Sh'mot, the goal of the entire Exodus enterprise was to restore us to the glorious stature of our ancestors, with the Shekhinah residing in our midst. This was accomplished only when we constructed and successfully dedicated the Mishkan (which is, according to Ramban, why Sefer Sh'mot concludes at that point).

The Mishkan, although in the public domain, held a personal connection with each Jew. Not only were all prayers directed there (see MT Hilkhot T'fillah 1:3), but Aharon constantly wore the Hoshen, which included the names of all 12 tribes (on 12 stones) and the Ephod, whose shoulder-straps included all 12 tribes (on two stones). Every Jew had a place in the Mishkan - but could not practically come in.

The Sukkah, coming at the culmination of the season of holy days which walk us through the evolution of the B'nei Yisra'el into a Goy Kadosh, is evocative of the Mishkan. It is indeed fitting that this holiday, from its Shabbaton perspective, with its inclusive and communal approach to Kedushah, be called Hag l'Hashem .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REMEMBERING 'WHAT', OR REMEMBERING 'WHY'

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

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

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

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

LIFE IN THE DESERT - A TRANSITION STAGE

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

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

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

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

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

"All these mitzvot which I command you... keep in order that you live... and inherit the Land...
remember the way that God has led you during your wanderings of forty years in the **desert** - in order to **test** you with hardships to **know** what is in your hearts; whether you would keep His commandments, or not...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE MOST FITTING TIME OF THE YEAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

KNOWING SOMETHING - In the Biblical Sense

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Note as well how Moshe Rabbeinu used this very same word when he explained the purpose of the original desert experience: "And you shall **know** in your hearts..." [that this was a 'training' experience] (see Devarim 8:5).

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

WHY SEVEN DAYS?

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

* 7 days of chag ha-matzot in the spring;
* 7 weeks until chag ha-shavu'ot;
* 7 days of chag ha-sukkot

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

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

FROM SUCCOT TO SHMINI ATZERET

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

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

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

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

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chag sameiach,
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN & some mini-shiurim

A. FROM THE SUKKA TO THE HOUSE

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

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

B. PRI ETZ HADAR

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

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

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

This is a bit difficult to explain, [and the following is an over simplification of a very complex topic] but in a 'nutshell', when the tree gives fruit every year, it appears that the tree itself creates the fruit. When man contemplates this phenomena in nature, that trees 'on their own' can create fruit, he may conclude that trees have their own power - or that there may be some nature god who 'programs' these trees (how else does it know what fruit to make). In other words, man begins to see various powers within nature, and relates them to many gods (e.g. fertility gods, rain gods, grain gods, sun gods etc.). This leads man to 'worship' these gods to ensure that nature produces the proper produce and provide a successful harvest.

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

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

C KOHELET & the Harvest Season

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

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

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

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

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

SOME ADDITIONAL MINI-SHIURIM

I. FROM YOM KIPPUR TO SUKKOT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. THE DOUBLE MUSSAF ON SUKKOT

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, the extra ayil & kevasim also require explanation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

This 'double nature' is reflected by the two times in daily davening on **Sukkot** when we hold the lulav & etrog, during:
1) **Hallel** - to **thank** God for the harvest of the past year;
2) **Hoshanot** - to **pray** to God in anticipation of the **new** Year.

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

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

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

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

III. NOT BY CHANCE

Regarding for celebrating each of the shalosh regalim.

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

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

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

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

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

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

We discussed this aspect in detail in the above shiur.