

Toras Aish



Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"In order that your [future] generations should know that I (G-d) caused the Children of Israel to dwell in huts when I took them out from the land of Egypt" (Vayikra 23:43). Rashi (based on Succah 11b) tells us that this doesn't refer to actual huts, but to the "ananay hakavod," the clouds of glory that covered the Children of Israel in the desert. Elsewhere (Bamidbar 10:34), Rashi elaborates on these ananim, explaining that there were seven of them; four surrounded them on all 4 sides, one was above them, one below them, and one went in front of them "lowering what is high, raising what is low and killing snakes and scorpions." The Mizrachi asks (and leaves unanswered) why we aren't required to have "schach" (the type of material we use for the roof of the succah) surround us from all directions, since the succah (hut) we build to "live in" for Succos is for the ananim, which surrounded us on all 6 sides. Yet, the walls (and floor) of the succah can be made from any material, and we don't even need 4 walls (only 2+).

Previously (www.aishdas.org/ta/5766/bahaalosecha.pdf), I discussed Rashi's omission of the anan that contained the Shechina (divine presence) and covered the Mishkan (as well as other issues pertaining to the ananim), suggesting that the anan that traveled before them was the same "Anan haShechina" that based itself in the Mishkan when they camped. There would seem to be no reason to have both, as when they camped they didn't need to be led, and the Mishkan wasn't intact when they traveled, but was transported in pieces. Both are referred to as the "Amud heAnan" (Shemos 13:22 and 14:19, Bamidbar 14:14, Devarim 31:15), and while the anan that traveled before them is often described as preparing the way by smoothing the landscape and killing dangerous creatures, the same is said of the Ark that was 3 days in front (see Berachos 54b, Bamidbar Rabbah 1:2, Devarim Rabbah 7:9 and Tosefta Sotah 4:1), indicating

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 Ruth and Joseph Schwarz
 in honor of the birth of their daughter,
 Talia Bracha.
 Mazal Tov also to the big sister,
 Shoshana Rayzel.

that it was G-d's presence in the anan accompanying the Ark that performed these miraculous preparations. The Mechilta (Hakdama Beshalach) says explicitly that the Shechina was with this anan, and the Sifray Zuta (Behaalosecha 33) calls it the "Anan Shechina." It would therefore seem that it was the same anan that was in the Mishkan that traveled 3 days in front of them before returning to the Mishkan when they camped.

I also suggested that this anan didn't just stay in and above the Mishkan, but actually covered the entire camp (despite having another anan above it). There are several indications that this is so. Chazal (in numerous places, including the Sifray Zuta) tell us that the "Amud heAnan" (anan pillar) would extend behind any individual that left the camp. It wasn't the anan on that side that stretched to still encompass the individual, but the "Amud heAnan" that stretched above. If it would stretch in order to stay over each individual, it would seem obvious that it would already be covering the rest of the nation!

A further proof can be brought from Yisro's inability to enter the camp, thereby having to send a message to Moshe that he had arrived (Shemos 18:6, see Rashi). The Midrash Aggadah explains that Yisro couldn't enter because of the ananim, so Moshe (and a multitude of others) went outside the camp (and, therefore, the ananim as well) to meet him. But how could they be outside the ananim (where Yisro was) if they (the ananim) followed every individual? If it was only the "Anan haShechina" that "stretched," it could have covered Moshe (et al) even when they were outside the camp (and the other ananim), allowing them to meet with Yisro.

Rabbeinu Chananel (quoted by Rabbeinu Bachye on Shemos 12:2) says that for the 40 years in the desert, the new month had to be figured out by calculation (similar to how our calendar was set) rather than by witnesses testifying that they saw the new moon, because the sky (including the moon) wasn't visible through the anan. Which anan? The one that was "a cloud" by day and a "pillar of fire at night," i.e. the one that led them during their travels! Not only was this over the nation when they camped, but it covered the *entire* camp, so that no one could see the new moon! And, lest you ask why they couldn't just leave the camp (and the ananim) to see the sky, remember that this anan followed them even when they left the protection of the other ananim!

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So in essence we have 6 "regular" ananim that afforded them protection from all sides, and one "special" anan that contained the Shechina within it. This was obviously the main "anan," which indicated that G-d was with them.

Being "with" them included protected them, accomplished via the other ananim. (Why there would need to be two above them is not the focus here, although I will mention briefly that the "Anan haShechina" might not have covered everyone all the time, such as after sinning, leaving them "exposed" above if not for the protective cloud above it. It might also be inappropriate for the "Anan haShechina" to act as an awning.)

If we made our succah out of the same material on all sides, we would be focusing on the "protective clouds" that came as a result of G-d's presence rather than on G-d's presence itself. It is therefore possible that we only need "schach" above to symbolize the main anan, the "Anan haShechina," to make sure that it is G-d being with us that we remember, not the manifestation of His protecting us.

One more note: The Talmud (Succah 11b) brings two opinions about why we are commanded to live in a Succah on Succos. Rabbi Eliezer says that the "huts" referred to were the "ananay hakavod," while Rabbi Akiva says that they had actual huts. Normally, we follow Rabbi Akiva's opinion when he is not the minority, yet we seem to follow Rabbi Eliezer's here that the "succos" referred to are the ananim. The Netziv (Succah 2b) suggests that Rabbi Akiva is not saying that it is *only* for the actual huts that we build a succah, but as a reminder of both the ananim *and* the actual huts. If so, we could actually be following his opinion when we discuss the succah reminding us of the ananim. It could also be another reason why we only have "schach" for the "Anan haShechina" and can use any materials for the rest, representing both the ananim and the huts that we lived in when G-d took us out of Egypt. © 2006 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Synagogues have been packed. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the busiest times for synagogues everywhere. In stark contrast, just

five days after Yom Kippur, when Sukkot, the Holiday of Booths arrives, many synagogues will be far less crowded. But the truth is, Sukkot is more reflective of the genuine Jewish spirit than is Yom Kippur.

In his Ish Ha-Halakha, Halakhic Man, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, distinguishes between the universal religious person and the Jewish religious person. Universal religious person perceives the body and soul to be in conflict. For this individual, the pathway to spiritual bliss is the rejection of the body, the limiting of the physical, the escaping from these worldly pleasures. This is the philosophy of fundamental Christianity, of the Eastern religions. Theirs is a world of asceticism, of self-denial.

For the Ish Ha-Halakhah, however, the body is neither to be glorified nor denigrated, deified nor rejected; rather it is to be sanctified. The pathway to spirituality is not the rejection of the physical, but rather the discovery of meaning and spirituality within it. For the Ish Ha-Halakhah, there is no activity devoid of religious significance. The way one loves, the way one conducts himself-herself in business, the way one eats, are all no less holy than praying and fasting.

Viewed in a vacuum, Yom Kippur is the universal religious experience—an escape from this-worldly pleasures. Those activities which are associated with life energy—such as eating and cohabitation—are prohibited. On Yom Kippur, we look more like angels than people, as we wear white and wear no shoes. Yom Kippur is a simulation of death, intended to help us better appreciate life. It is a dramatic educational tool, used to remind people of the value of life.

Sukkot arrives on the heels of Yom Kippur so that no one would mistakenly think that Yom Kippur is the normative Jewish experience. Sukkot is a corrective, a counterweight to Yom Kippur.

In absolute contrast with Yom Kippur, Sukkot is the holiday that celebrates the physical. We eat in the Sukkah—a booth whose roof must be constructed from that which grows from the ground. We take the fruit of the land—the four species—and joyously recite blessings over them, using them as instruments through which we sing songs and praises to G-d. With all of this, we sanctify the mundane, we elevate the physical. We compress the infinite spirit of G-d into the finite world. We elevate earth to heaven, and draw heaven down to earth. Far from a fanciful flight from the world, Sukkot is a sanctification of the world.

A story: A chassid living in Minsk decided to seek the heavenly world which was in Pinsk. Overnight, he slept in an open field, having carefully left his shoes pointed in the direction of Pinsk. As he slept, a scoundrel came by and turned his shoes around. The next morning the chassid continued on in the direction that he found his shoes to be pointing in. When he reached his destination, he noticed landscape, streets,

homes and people that all seemed familiar. He was puzzled, but delighted to have found heavenly bliss. Heaven on earth. This is the mission of the Ish Ha-Halakhah and such is the message of Sukkot; to find spirituality in earthliness.

Sadly, for most Jewish Americans, however, there is only Yom Kippur, and not Sukkot. Taken by itself, Yom Kippur cannot communicate the goal of Judaism. Only in context, when experienced together with Sukkot can we understand Yom Kippur's message properly. © 2006 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI YAAKOV HABER

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The festival of Sukkos is associated with simcha (joy): "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered the produce of the land, you will celebrate the feast of the L-rd seven days ... and you will rejoice before the L-rd your G-d seven days" (Lev. 23:39-40). The Gemara tells us about a joyful event that used to take place during Chol HaMoed Sukkos. That was the celebration of Simchas Beis HaShoeva, in which men would dance in the sukka, and sing songs that they had composed. However there are certain things about this celebration that we should be aware of: only tzaddikim, and the Gedolei HaDor, would be eligible to participate. Others could watch from the sidelines. The Gemara records the type of songs that would be sung on these occasions: tzaddikim would sing: "Happy am I that the behavior of my youth does not compromise my old age", and baalei tshuva would sing: "Happy am I that my old age redeems the behavior of my youth". It also records what one of the participants, R' Shimon ben Gamliel, did: he would juggle eight lit torches in the sukka, without any two of them touching each other; and he would also stand on his thumbs.

The Mishne says: "Anyone who has not witnessed Simchas Beis HaShoeva does not know what simcha is."

The question comes to mind: Why is simcha so associated with the sukka? We know that living in a sukka can be an uncomfortable experience, what with cold weather, and insects sharing our meals. No matter how humble our homes may be, we realize their comfort when we spend some time in a sukka, which, after all, does not even have a roof!

I was thinking about this, and concluded that that is the very reason for the joy! When we are in our homes, we tend to become involved with material concerns: Is the pile on our carpet thick enough? Should the wall-paper be changed? Should we get a better VCR? And so on, and so on. In a sukka, these concerns melt away, our neshamos (souls) have a

chance to blossom, and each person can develop self-esteem, a feeling of his or her own worth.

This may explain the songs sung by the participants of Simchas Beis HaShoeva. The "B.T.'s", who might otherwise be depressed about their youthful behavior, would be glad about their present status, which more than compensated for it, and the other tzaddikim (the "F.F.B.'s"), who might otherwise be concerned about their apparent secondary status compared to B.T.'s (for it is written that "No tzaddik may stand in the place of a baal tshuva"), would be glad about their unsullied youth, as well they might.

The Gemara (*ibid.*) says that Hillel, on entering a sukka to participate in a Simcha Beis HaShoeva, would say, "Now that I am here, it is as if everyone is here," and on leaving, he would say, "Now it is as if everyone is leaving." This may seem uncharacteristically immodest of Hillel, who was a very humble man, but is understandable in terms of what we said above: he was, after all, the Gadol HaDor, and could justifiably view himself as such.

In the Talmud Yerushalmi is written that the prophet Jonah, while on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival of Sukkos, entered a sukka during the Simchas Beis HaShoeva, and it was on this occasion that the spirit of prophecy descended on him. From here, says the Gemara, we learn that simcha is necessary for prophecy. Happiness is not an end, but the beginning of the loftiest spiritual heights. © 1995 Rabbi Y. Haber

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Contrary to common belief, Rosh Hashana is not the only day of the year when judgment is passed. We discover in the Mishna that over the course of the year, four separate judgments are handed down, the last during the festival of Succot, when we are judged concerning water. (Mishna Rosh Hashana 1:2)

At first glance, the word "water" seems an odd choice. Would it not have made more sense to speak in terms of rain (geshem)? On the day after Succot, Shmini Atzeret, the prayer for rain (*t'filat hageshem*) is chanted in every synagogue around the world.

Rabbi Yisrael Lipschutz (1782-1860) acknowledges this problem by noting that the judgment on water refers to drinking water. The use of the word "water" may be significant. Succot ushers in the rainy season, rain being critical for an agricultural society. But water, while it includes rain, contains an even deeper symbolism. Water symbolizes redemption, according to the Zohar Hakadosh, the mystical commentary on the Bible.

After all, what is water? Much of the earth is covered by it, our bodies are largely composed of it; we need it to generate life, to keep clean, to quench our

thirst, to cook food, to ritually immerse for purposes of ritual purification. Hence among the many metaphors for Torah borrowed from the natural world, living waters (mayim haim) would undoubtedly qualify as the most exact and persuasive. Moreover, according to the world of emanations described by the mystical commentaries, the earth symbolizes divine judgment and law, since it sets limits upon the waters. The waters, on the other hand, symbolize overflowing divine loving-kindness and compassion.

Redemption will arrive when divine compassion overcomes divine judgment; the Messiah will arrive when "your wellsprings extend roundabout." And so the prayer for Hoshana Rabba, the last day of Succot, anticipates the coming of the Messiah and world redemption, suggesting that - at least from a mystical perspective - the judgment on Succot deals not so much with rain as with redemption.

This idea gains even more strength when we view the entire period from Rosh Hashana to Hoshana Raba as variations on the theme of battle, spiritual even more than physical, with ultimate victory expressed by redemption. The Mishna teaches that on Rosh Hashana, everyone passes before G-d "like the children of Maron," a strange phrase that is difficult to define. First we are informed that in Babylon, the difficult words were translated as "like a flock of sheep." Then Resh Lakish identifies it in terms of a specific place: the narrow ascent of Beit Maron. Finally R. Yehuda, quoting Shmuel, identifies it as soldiers in the house of King David. (B.T. Rosh Hashana 18a)

On the surface, these differences are worlds apart, but in fact there is a definite pattern here, even a developmental progression in ways of viewing the relative position of the Jews as they stand before G-d in judgment. When sheep are crowded into a small area, the head of one facing the tail of the other, their heads turn to the ground. All too often we find ourselves sheepishly standing before G-d on Rosh Hashana with downcast eyes, frightened of the Divine decision. Resh Lakish's Beit Maron, according to Rashi, refers to an ascent so narrow that a false move could plunge you into the deep valley on either side. With room for only one to pass at a time, no one takes a step without being utterly serious about his direction. Sheep symbolize depressed fear; ascent on a narrow bridge - even though a fall could mean a plunge into the abyss - nonetheless suggests that serious concentration will lead only upwards. One must be careful, but not afraid.

But when we finally get to the battling soldiers of R. Yehuda, we enter another league altogether. Soldiers are faithful, tough, disciplined and, insofar as they protect the kingdom, in partnership with the king, whether the king of Israel or the King of the Universe. As soldiers in the house of David, they must be an elite corps, determined and courageous. Undoubtedly their lives are on the line, but they are filled with the

optimistic confidence and high morale so necessary for victory.

The image of soldiers in battle turns out to be a thematic motif extending from Rosh Hashana all the way through to Succot. According to Numbers 10:2, the shofar was sounded to gather the nation for war: an external battle fought to redeem the Jewish people and an inner battle to perfect our imperfections. After all, our Sages insist that there can be no redemption without repentance, so we have to be worthy if we are to succeed strategically.

On Yom Kippur, the battle intensifies so dramatically that it is impossible to eat; we fast because the last thing a fighting soldier is concerned about is his stomach. Indeed, a soldier in battle is the ultimate existential creature because the words "who will live and who will die" - part of the Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur prayer which includes the "children of Maron" metaphor - are his very thoughts as he faces the next attack. This theme of battle continues with the succa, which can be seen as symbolizing the temporary dwellings which soldiers set up in their camp - fragile, temporary structures hastily erected in an open area.

Now that we can sit in these dwellings without fear of attack, it means we have won the battle. We celebrate the first morning of our new existence with the four species, holding the lulav, the palm branch, high and shaking it in all directions. The midrash looks upon the lulav as a sword after victory over the enemy from without and the enemy from within.

We have been through all the battles, all the judgments. It's hardly a surprise that the day after Succot, when we're judged for water, or life-giving redemption, is known as Simhat Torah, a day devoted to expressing our joy in the Torah, our Tree of Life. Torah is our hidden weapon, guaranteeing victory when properly observed: "And it came to pass, when the Ark set forward that Moses said: 'Rise up O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered ...'" (Numbers 10:35)

So Succot is a magnificent synthesis - and even dialectic - of nature and spirit, of agriculture and symbolism, of this-world involvement and coming-world involvement. May the post-Succot rain yield bountiful produce in Israel, and may the spiritual waters of Redemption bring peace to the world. © 1994 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Both of the holidays of Pesach and Succot are weeklong festivals. In the Land of Israel they are seven days in length while in the Diaspora they are eight days in length. In Israel, the first day and seventh days of Pesach are full holidays, while in the Diaspora the first, second, seventh and eighth days of Pesach are full holidays. For Succot, in Israel, the first day is a full holiday and in the Diaspora, the first two

days are full holidays. The balance of the days of these holidays is called Chol Hamoed - the intermediate, less holy days of the holiday. This extremely sophisticated concept of days that are holidays but not completely so, is a unique Jewish creation. Unlike the actual full holy days of the holidays, these intermediate days do not carry with them the entire gamut of restrictions on work. In fact, any work that is necessary for comfort and/or to prevent monetary loss is permissible. However, the intermediate days are not to be treated as ordinary workdays. Unnecessary work, work that is easily postponed till after the holidays, lawsuits and other contentious matters, etc. are all not to be pursued during Chol Hamoed. Therefore, in Israel and in many parts of the Diaspora, Chol Hamoed is a vacation and leisure time. Stores and offices are closed and entire families participate in touring, visiting friends and relatives and attending concerts and other forms of entertainment. On Chol Hamoed, holiday clothing and finery is worn and festive meals are served. It is a joyous and sweet time of the year for all concerned, especially for the children who are free of school and their routines for the week.

Chol Hamoed is a practical example of the Jewish ability to transform the everyday into the special and the mundane into holy. We can all understand the concept of Sabbath and holidays and the fact that work is somehow inconsistent with the spirit and message of those days. But Chol Hamoed affords us an opportunity to work and not work, celebrate and yet not divorce ourselves from the occurrences and tasks of everyday life. There is a ritual and rhythm to Chol Hamoed that governs this remarkable time. It is a time for family and friends, for study and reading, for relaxation and refreshment. But it is not summer vacation or midwinter break. It has holiness, ritual, and halacha attached to it. That it is what gives Chol Hamoed its special resonance and feeling in the Jewish world.

Part of the custom of Chol Hamoed is to pay one's respects to the great rabbis and scholars of Israel. In Israel, and in the Diaspora as well, the great rabbis, the Chassidic leaders, and the heads of the yeshivot all hold open house and court during Chol Hamoed. There are Jews who travel from all corners of the world to visit their spiritual leaders and pay their homage to the Torah and its scholars. In Jerusalem, there is a special "Blessing by the Kohanim" (priests descended from the family of Aaron) ceremony conducted at the plaza of the Western Wall. Hundreds of priests gather there to bless the tens of thousands of Jews who gather at the Wall to receive their heavenly blessing on Chol Hamoed.

During Chol Hamoed of Succot, there are parties held every night to celebrate the "drawing of the water" service that took place in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Talmud describes how in Temple times this ceremony was celebrated with song, dance,

torches and bonfires, jugglers and performers. The "drawing of the water" from the spring of Gichon south of Jerusalem and its libation on the altar of the Temple symbolically marked the beginning of the rainy season in Israel and the prayers for a bountiful rainfall during the winter months. Though the Temple and its altar are not now present, the celebrations of Chol Hamoed Succot have survived and prospered. Throughout Jerusalem's many neighborhoods, the parties and celebrations take place. The Talmud stated that 'sleep did not find our eyes' at these festive Chol Hamoed nights. That still is pretty much the case for the young today during these Chol Hamoed celebrations. © 2002 *Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.*

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by *Rabbi Amnon Bazak*

The Torah commands us twice to offer our fruits to G-d, both times using similar language. The first time, related to the agricultural calendar, we are commanded to bring the Bikurim-the first fruits-"Take from the first fruit of the earth... And place it before your G-d" [Devarim 26:2,10]. The Torah emphasizes, "You shall be happy with all the good that your G-d has given you and your house" [26:11]. The second time, in relation to the harvest festival, the Torah commands, "Take for you on the first day a fruit of a citrus tree... And you shall be happy before your G-d" [Vayikra 23:40]. How are these two mitzvot related to each other?

First and foremost, a comparison of the two mitzvot shows that the Torah wants to teach man to recognize that everything he has was given to him by G-d. Bikurim and the harvest are linked to each other by two holidays. This is seen, for example, in the Torah portion of Mishpatim. "The holiday of the harvest of what you planted in the field, and the festival of the gathering at the end of the year, when you gather your produce from the field." [Shemot 23:16]. Both in the first stage-when a man begins to harvest his crop- and in the later stage-when he finishes gathering it-he must thank G-d, who gave him the power to become rich. And as a result of this feeling, he should be happy about his labors. It should be noted that the oral Torah suggested a similar meaning to these two festivals with respect to studying Torah. The first holiday represents the giving of the Torah, while Succot- and especially the end, Shemini Atzeret-is linked to reading the final chapters of the Torah.

However, the two occasions for bringing an offering of fruit are very different from each other. At the time of Bikurim, on Shavuot, a man is commanded to

give his crops to G-d, while on Succot the command is to "take for you." The four species of Succot remain in a person's hand even when he returns home. Thus, it seems that the two holidays represent two different approaches to the relationship between man and the Almighty. Bikurim is a time of absolute giving of "the first fruit of the earth." This is one of a group of mitzvot that obligate a man to give his first products to G-d. For example: "The beginning of your dough, challah, shall you set aside as teruma" [Bamidbar 15:20]; "The first of your grain, your wine, your oil, and the first wool of your sheep shall you give to him" [Devarim 18:4]. This is in addition to the mitzva of a firstborn, and others. Giving the first object of a group is a way of recognizing that "The earth and all its products belongs to G-d" [Tehillim 24:1], and that in principle man does not truly own anything in the world.

On the other hand, the mitzva of the four species symbolizes a different verse, "But He has given the earth to mankind" [115:16]. Man has been given permission and the privilege to enjoy the fruits of his labors and to consider it as his own, as long as he recognizes that he is obliged to give thanks to G-d, whose blessing is the source of the crop that came from the earth. The four species represent the good part of the crop. "For this memory, one should take the nicest fruit of the land, that with the best scent, the most beautiful leaves, and the best grass" [Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim 3:43]. The role of man is to be happy that G-d gave him this satisfactory harvest.

These two approaches demonstrate two sides that do not conflict but rather complement each other. Thus, the two gifts on the two holidays teach man to maintain a proper balance in his relationship to the Almighty.

Revelation of the Shechina!

by Rabbi Shlomo Shushan, Head of Post-Graduate Yeshiva, Beit She'an

The main property of the holiday of Succot is the mitzva of happiness, so much so that the Torah repeated the command three times: "You shall be happy before your G-d for seven days" [Vayikra 23:40]; "You shall be happy on your festival, you and your son and your daughter" [Devarim 16:14]; "Seven days shall you celebrate for your G-d... And you shall be happy." [16:15].

The words of the GRA are well known: The command to be happy for seven days during the holiday is one of the most difficult mitzvot of the Torah. Many people linked the reason for this happiness to the agricultural aspect of the holiday, since it occurs in the season when the crops are being gathered in and there is great joy. But it is not easy to accept this reasoning, since this is a natural happiness, and there should be no need to command the people to be happy. In addition, how can we expect those who are not

agricultural workers or those whose crops fail to observe the mitzva of happiness?

Succot is the only holiday that is not linked to a specific historic event. The Torah gives the reason for the holiday: "For I sat Bnei Yisrael in succot when I took them out of Egypt" [Vayikra 23:43]. But the holiday is in Tishrei and not in Nissan, when the redemption took place. According to the Yalkut Shimoni, the fact that Succot is close to the High Holy Days can teach us about its essence: The fact that Yisrael are seen in public with their lulavim in their hands is a sign that they succeeded in their dispute against the other nations, which accused them during the Days of Judgment. This approach explains the link between the four species—which become ripe at this time of the year—and the High Holy Days. But there is still a question why we have been commanded to dwell in a Succah during this time.

During the High Holy Days, the main factors we encounter are royalty and the Almighty's justice. We stand before Him, with our eyes upon Him waiting for Him to publicize the results of the judgment. This process might lead us to think that we are a passive element in establishing the kingdom of G-d and in the revelation of the Shechina in this world, since everything depends on His judgment. But then the holiday of Succot appears, showing us what an important role we have in the revelation of the Shechina and the appearance of sanctity in the world. Succot teaches us that we can build a Succah from the residue of the crops in the fields and the vineyards, and that it will become holy. While during the High Holy Days the link with the Almighty came from the top down, on Succot we return to our main task in the world: to lift reality from the bottom up into a state of sanctity, and to make even the residue of the fields into holy material.

This is the source of the great happiness, for there can be no greater true joy than that of a person for whom the simplest and most natural acts provide a path for the revelation of the Shechina. This is just as true for building a Succah as it is for sitting inside. The most natural activities, like eating and sleeping, are transformed into a mitzva which helps to bring the Shechina down to the earth.

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Somebody's a Nobody

One of the most joyous customs associated with the holiday of Sukkos is the celebration of Simchas Bais Hashoaevah. In the times of the Bais HaMikdash, a water libation accompanied the customary offerings. Simchas Bais Hashoaevah, literally, the Joy of the Water Drawing, was observed with a most ebullient celebration. It included a marvelously varied array of harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets, among other instruments. The greatest sages and most pious of rabbis performed acrobatics and antics that would have normally been below their

dignity. In fact, the sages in Tractate Sukkah 51, note that, "one who has not seen the celebration of the Bais Hashoaev has never seen true joy."

Rambam (Maimonides) discusses this aspect of exuberance and adds that "one who in his insolence restrains himself from serving Hashem in a joyous manner is a sinner and fool." Yet the Rambam adds a caveat. "But this joy was not performed by the ignorant ones and by anyone who wanted (to dance). Only the great sages of Israel, the heads of Yeshivos and the Sanhedrin, the pious, the elders and men of righteous action would dance, clap, and sing in the Bais haMikdash on Sukkos. Everyone else, men and women would come to watch and listen" (Rambam Hilchos Lulav 8:14).

This passage begs explanation. Why shouldn't everyone, even the most profane of men, sing and dance and make merry in celebration of the L-rd? Further what does the Rambam mean by not including "those who want to dance"?

Ultimately, anyone who ended up dancing, even the most pious of sages, obviously wanted to dance. What, then, does he Rambam mean when he said that this joy was not performed by anyone who wanted to dance? A classic story circulates in all Jewish humor anthologies.

Before the start of the Ne'eilah service, the holiest and final supplication of Yom Kippur, the rabbi rose from his seat and bolted toward the Holy Ark. He spread his hands toward heaven and cried out, "Ribono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe, I am a total nothing before you! Please inscribe me in the book of life!"

All of a sudden the chazzan (cantor) ran toward the Aron and joined the rabbi! "G-d Almighty," he shouted, "please forgive me, too, for I am truly a nothing before you!" There is an awed silence amongst the congregants.

The shammes (sexton) then followed suit. He, too, ran up toward the ark and in tearful supplication pronounced, I too am a nothing!"

Mouths around the congregation dropped open. The President of the synagogue's men's club, Ed Goldstein, a large man, was also caught up in the fervor of the moment. Suddenly, he, too, bolted from his seat in the back, and lumbered toward the front of the shul. With great eagerness he prostrated himself in front of the Ark and cried out at the top of his lungs. "Forgive me Oh L-rd he shouts, for I too am a nothing! Suddenly a shout from the back of the synagogue was directed toward Goldstein's hulk of a figure. It shouted with incredulity. "Harrumph! Look who thinks he's a nothing!"

Rambam teaches us that whoever runs to dance and sing and make himself crazy is not truly lowering himself before the Almighty. If someone inherently likes to cavort wildly, then he is not dancing

for the sake of lowering himself before the Almighty, rather he is having a wonderful time. When King David liberated the Aron (Ark of the Covenant) from the Philistines, he danced in front it as if he were a lowly slave. When confronted by his wife, Michal, for dancing like a servant, he retorted. "I would make myself even lower before Hashem."

When rejoicing during the festivities we must bear in mind our true reasons for enthusiasm—who we are, and why we dance. Because in order to be a nobody, you gotta be a somebody. © 1999 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & Project Genesis, Inc.

RABBI ELIYAHU HOFFMANN

Bullish Outlook

Sukkos is a unique Yom Tov in so many ways, one of which is its karbanos (ritual offerings). While the number of rams and sheep sacrificed on each of Sukkos' seven days remained constant (2 rams, 14 sheep), the bulls were offered in varying quantities. Specifically, 13 bulls were sacrificed on day one, 12 on the second day, 11 on the third day, and so on. Over seven days, 70 bulls were sacrificed.

Chazal, our Sages of blessed memory, offer a fascinating insight into the "diminishing bulls." There are, according to the Talmud (Sukkah 55b), seventy nations of the world. The seventy bulls correspond to those seventy nations, and it was in the merit of these bulls that the nations flourished and succeeded. Regarding this, the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Bamidbar 684) quotes the verse (Tehillim/Psalms 109:4), "In place of my love - they hated me." Rabbi Yehuda said: How foolish the nations are! They have lost, yet they know not what they have lost. When the Holy Temple stood, the Altar [with its seventy bulls] would bring them forgiveness. Now - who will bring them forgiveness? (Sukkah ibid.)

Seemingly, the seventy bulls were a gesture of (largely unappreciated) generosity offered by the Jews on behalf of the nations. Yet Chazal (see Rashi, Bamidbar 29:18) also note that although the quantity of sheep (symbolizing the Jews) remained constant, the bulls were offered in diminishing quantities, which is a sign of weakness and vulnerability. How can we reconcile these two seemingly opposite ideas?

Perhaps both concepts are necessary: We wish the nations much success and prosperity. At the same time, we are concerned that their success and prosperity not "go to their heads," leading them to arrogance, pride, and irreverence, which can often be the precursor to anti-semitism. Therefore, we "weaken their resolve" by offering the bulls in diminishing quantities. Now that we have no Temple, the unparalleled prosperity of earlier days is no longer with us, nor them. On the other hand, nothing is left now to weaken their resolve and their natural inclination to hate the Jew for being different. (Need more be said?)

If we dig a little deeper, we may wonder why it is that Sukkos, among all the Yamim Tovim, was chosen to offer this token sacrifice on behalf of the nations?

Rav Aaron Kotler zt"l (Mishnas Rav Aaron vol.3 p.61) writes that he heard the following story from the holy Chafetz Chaim zt"l: In the times of the Gaon of Vilna, there was a famous convert, known as the Ger Tzedek (righteous convert) of Vilna. He came from an aristocratic family, and risked his life to become a Jew. He lived as a Jew in hiding for many years. By chance, however, he was recognized, and was taken prisoner and subjected to brutal torture in an effort to have him renounce his Judaism. But it was all for nought; the Ger Tzedek of Vilna had become a pious and committed Jew, and no amount of torture could change that. He was sentenced to death. Before putting him to death, his detainers had second thoughts about the brutal torture to which they had subjected him. They asked for his forgiveness. Otherwise, they feared, he would take his revenge in the World to Come.

"Let me tell you something," he told them. "It is written (Tehillim/Psalms 117:1-2), 'Praise Hashem all the nations - praise Him, all the states! For His kindness has overwhelmed us!' This seems contradictory: Why should the nations praise Hashem, if His kindness has overwhelmed us [i.e. the Jews]?" (See Pesachim 118b which poses this question.) The answer, however, is simple. Right now, as things stand, it is impossible for me to forgive you for the barbaric and inhumane treatment you have given me. Yet worry not. Because after you kill me, my Jewish soul will ascend on High, and I will be so overwhelmed by the Almighty's kindness and love, that it will no longer be possible for me to bear a grudge against you. To the contrary, for every beating you gave me, I will experience infinite bliss and light in the World to Come!"

Rav Kotler explains: Sukkos is a period of extreme joy in the Jewish calendar. We sinned, we were judged, we were forgiven, and we've been given an invitation into the Almighty's private tent. In many ways, it must not have been easy for the Jews to offer sacrifices on behalf of the nations. These are the same nations that have persecuted, victimized, and exploited our nation for millennia. And now we are to beseech Hashem and offer sacrifices on their behalf? So Hashem says: First come into My tent. Sleep in My shelter. Let us rejoice together. And then, once you have come to feel My great love for you, you will be able to wholeheartedly do what needs to be done on their behalf, offering love in the place of hatred.

While there may be those who decry the aggression and militancy of our nation, the truth is obvious and self-evident. We are a peace loving nation. All we ask for - all we have ever asked for - is to be allowed exist as Jews, and serve Hashem in peace. In these difficult times, we beseech the Almighty that the

moment may come that we may once again offer sacrifices on behalf of ourselves, and on behalf of the nations of the world; that we be so overwhelmed by His kindness, love, and goodness, that the bitterness and resentment in our hearts will cease to be recognizable. Ba'agalal u-vi'zeman kariv - may it come speedily, in our days. Have a good Shabbos, and a joyous Sukkos!

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Weekly Dvar

by Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

Sukkot is a happy time. In fact, it's so happy that the Torah says it is! It's called Zman Simchateynu (the time of our happiness). But it's even more than that. The Torah COMMANDS us to be happy. So what's all this happiness for? You have to eat in a shack and shake a fruit, palm branches, and leaves. Why should we be happy, and why should we be COMMANDED to be happy?

Part of the answer lies in the reasons for what we do, and what they symbolize. The Sukkah needs to be made so that it's temporary in nature, to symbolize the way it was in the desert when the Jews left Egypt. But it also symbolizes the way it is in this world! We're living in a temporary world, with weak walls, a leaky ceiling, and decorations. And that's exactly what's supposed to make us so happy! That leaky ceiling is the connection we have with the REAL reality (heaven/G-d), and it's the light from above that reflects from the decorations onto the walls, shining on everything. This Sukkot, we should look around us and think about all the temporary decorations in our lives, and how we can increase the number of permanent decorations we prepare! Especially right after Yom Kippur, when we (hopefully) committed to some sort of spiritual improvement, Sukkot is the perfect opportunity to exercise it. Whether we promised to give more charity, or even to just give charity with a smile. Whether it was to learn one Jewish law every day, or to perform one. The point of Sukkot is for us to be able to DO something right to start our year, to do it proudly and happily, and with flying colors, decorations and enthusiasm! © 2004 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.



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