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Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

With Ha'azinu we climb to one of the peaks of Jewish spirituality. For a month Moses had taught the people. He had told them their history and destiny, and the laws that would make theirs a unique society of people bound in covenant with one another and with G-d. He renewed the covenant and then handed the leadership on to his successor and disciple Joshua. His final act would be blessing the people, tribe by tribe. But before that, there was one more thing he had to do. He had to sum up his prophetic message in a way the people would always remember and be inspired by. He knew that the best way of doing so is by music. So the last thing Moses did before giving the people his deathbed blessing was to teach them a song.

There is something profoundly spiritual about music. When language aspires to the transcendent, and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Jewish history is not so much read as sung. The rabbis enumerated ten songs at key moments in the life of the nation. There was the song of the Israelites in Egypt (see Is. 30:29), the song at the Red Sea (Ex. 15), the song at the well (Num. 21), and Ha'azinu, Moses' song at the end of his life. Joshua sang a song (Josh. 10:12-13). So did Deborah (Jud. 5), Hannah (1 Sam. 2) and David (2 Sam. 22). There was the Song of Solomon, Shir ha-Shirim, about which Rabbi Akiva said, "All songs are holy but the Song of Songs is the holy of holies."[1] The tenth song has not yet been sung. It is the song of the Messiah.[2]

Many biblical texts speak of the power of music to restore the soul. When Saul was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (1 Sam. 16). David himself was known as the "sweet singer of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (2 Kings 3:15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with Pesukei de-Zimra, the 'Verses of Song' with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing G-d's praises.

Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called "the music of the spheres". This is what Psalm 19 means when it says, "The heavens declare the glory of G-d; the skies proclaim the work of His hands . . . There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music [3] carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world." Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.

So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for shacharit, mincha and maariv, the morning, afternoon and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the Yamim Noraim, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation for Torah, another for the haftorah from the prophetic books, and yet another for Ketuvim, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the written Torah: Mishnah and Gemarah. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is and what kind of text is being used. Jewish texts and times are not colour-coded but music-coded. The map of holy words is written in melodies and songs.

Music has extraordinary power to evoke emotion. The Kol Nidrei prayer with which Yom Kippur begins is not really a prayer at all. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. There can be little doubt that it is its ancient, haunting melody that has given it its hold over the Jewish imagination. It is hard to hear those notes and not feel that you are in the

[1] Mishna, Yadayim 3:5.

[2] Tanhuma, Beshallach, 10; Midrash Zuta, Shir ha-Shirim, 1:1.

[3] Kavam, literally "their line", possibly meaning the reverberating string of a musical instrument.

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presence of G-d on the Day of Judgment, standing in the company of Jews of all places and times as they plead with heaven for forgiveness. It is the holy of holies of the Jewish soul.[4]

Nor can you sit on Tisha B'av reading Eichah, the book of Lamentations, with its own unique cantillation, and not feel the tears of Jews through the ages as they suffered for their faith and wept as they remembered what they had lost, the pain as fresh as it was the day the Temple was destroyed. Words without music are like a body without a soul.

Beethoven wrote over the manuscript of the third movement of his A Minor Quartet the words Neue Kraft fühlend, "Feeling new strength." That is what music expresses and evokes. It is the language of emotion unsicklied by the pale cast of thought. That is what King David meant when he sang to G-d the words: "You turned my grief into dance; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent." You feel the strength of the human spirit no terror can destroy.

In his book, Musicophilia, the late Oliver Sacks (no relative, alas) told the poignant story of Clive Wearing, an eminent musicologist who was struck by a devastating brain infection. The result was acute amnesia. He was unable to remember anything for more than a few seconds. As his wife Deborah put it, "It was as if every waking moment was the first waking moment."

Unable to thread experiences together, he was caught in an endless present that had no connection with anything that had gone before. One day his wife found him holding a chocolate in one hand and repeatedly covering and uncovering it with the other hand, saying each time, "Look, it's new." "It's the same chocolate," she said. "No," he replied, "Look. It's changed." He had no past at all.

Two things broke through his isolation. One was his love for his wife. The other was music. He could still sing, play the organ and conduct a choir with all his old skill and verve. What was it about music, Sacks asked, that enabled him, while playing or conducting, to overcome his amnesia? He suggests that when we "remember" a melody, we recall one note at a time, yet each note relates to the whole. He quotes the philosopher of music, Victor Zuckerkandl, who wrote, "Hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once. Every melody declares to us that the past can be there without being remembered, the future without being foreknown." Music is a form of sensed continuity that can sometimes break through the most overpowering disconnections in our experience of time.

Faith is more like music than science.[5] Science analyses, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. G-d is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of G-d's song. Faith is the ability to hear the music beneath the noise.

So music is a signal of transcendence. The philosopher and musician Roger Scruton writes that it is "an encounter with the pure subject, released from the world of objects, and moving in obedience to the laws of freedom alone."[6] He quotes Rilke: "Words still go softly out towards the unsayable / And music, always new, from palpitating stones / builds in useless space its godly home."[7] The history of the Jewish spirit is written in its songs.

I once watched a teacher explaining to young children the difference between a physical possession and a spiritual one. He had them build a paper model of Jerusalem. Then (this was in the days of tape-recorders) he put on a tape with a song about Jerusalem that he taught to the class. At the end of the session he did something very dramatic. He tore up the model and shredded the tape. He asked the children, "Do we still have the model?" They replied, No. "Do we still have the song?" They replied, Yes.

We lose physical possessions, but not spiritual ones. We lost the physical Moses. But we still have the song.

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

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 sukka commemorates yields a fascinating answer to this

[4] Beethoven came close to it in the opening notes of the sixth movement of the C Sharp Minor Quartet op. 131, his most sublime and spiritual work.

[5] I once said to the well-known atheist Richard Dawkins, in the course of a radio conversation, "Richard, religion is music, and you are tone deaf." He replied, "Yes, it's true, I am tone deaf, but there is no music."

[6] Roger Scruton, An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy, Duckworth, 1996, 151.

[7] Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, II, 10.

question.

Rabbi Akiva [Tractate Sukka 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 G-d during this period of repentance is rendered on the seventh day of Sukkot (Hoshana Rabba), it is clear that the sukka 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 sukka, reminiscent of the flimsy desert structures, is linked to the lower form of repentance, and R. Eliezer's "clouds of glory" sukka 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 G-d 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 sukka. 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 sukka 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 sukka 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 G-d and alienated and abominable. But today he is beloved, delightful, close, a beloved friend." [Ibid, 7:6]

A friend of G-d! 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 G-d (lifnei Hashem) like angels in heaven. But on Sukkot, which arrives just days afterward, our presence before G-d 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… " [Ps. 27:1]

Finally, on Sukkot our desires are answered. In effect, G-d 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 sukka 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 sukka 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 sukka of R. Akiva before we can enter the marriage chamber of the glorious sukka 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 BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Haazinu is a poem with definite stanzas. It is one of the few places in the Torah where Jewish law dictates where the stops in the Torah reading should take place. This is done in order to retain the integrity of the poetic form of the reading. Aside from the aesthetic value of poetry itself, the Torah wishes to emphasize to us that there is a rhythm, order and cadence in life that influences us in myriad ways.

Though poetry can be freestyle, non-rhyming and sometimes jarringly dissonant, it nevertheless always carries with it a sense of melody. It allows for memory to operate in a way that prose does not. It emphasizes to us the infinite wisdom and beauty of language itself and always carries with it a sense of nuance; of words not written or expressed, but evoked by the rhythm of the poetry.

The Torah describes itself as a poem, a song,

the melody of which is intangible but always present within us. It is no wonder that the concluding chapters of the Torah are written in this poetic form, for it is the memory of these words that has guided and preserved the Jewish people for the many millennia of our existence.

Language is not only words but rather how the words are put together. The Torah is always read as a melody accompanied by musical notes and poetic punctuation. The words of the Torah enter our ears and minds while the melody and poetry reach our hearts and souls.

The Torah reading begins with the instruction to listen. This is not only a request that is made to the Jewish people and to humanity generally but is made to the entire universe, to nature itself and to the heavens and the earth. This comes to inform us that there is a poetic rhythm to the universe itself, and part of our life challenge is to hear and recognize that melody.

There are very different melodies that exist in the world. There is a famous anecdote regarding a well-known Jewish philosopher of the past generation who was raised in a German school in the 1930s. He underwent the horror of Hitler and after the war emigrated to Canada. He wrote, as a preface to one of his books, that when he was a schoolchild in Germany his father allowed him to sing the melody of the German and Christian songs along with his class as long as he did not mouth the actual words. He now realizes, he wrote, that he should not even have sung the melody. Heaven and earth transmitted to us the melody of the Creator, so to speak.

The Jewish soul also has the capacity to tune in to that eternal melody and find the right frequency to be able to hear it and absorb it. Moshe, in his final oration to the Jewish people inspires us to live by the words of the Torah and to sing its melody with our voices and to hear it in our hearts.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The central theme of Yom Kippur is teshuva, commonly translated as "repentance." We hear so much about this term, but what, in fact does it truly mean?

On the simplest behavioral level, writes Maimonides, teshuvah involves "returning" to a situation in which one had previously failed, and not making the same mistake a second time. (Laws of Repentance 2:1) It means being given a second chance. No wonder, Yom Kippur has elements of joy. We celebrate being given a second chance. In too many of life's pursuits, we are given only one shot. If we miss, it's all over. On Yom Kippur, G-d says, "no matter if you have failed before; you can still return."

A chassid once asked his rebbe, "why pray on Yom Kippur, after all, we'll inevitably sin again." In response, the rebbe asked him to look out the window behind him. Outside was a toddler learning to walk. "What do you see?" asked the master. "A child, standing and falling," replied the disciple. Day after day the chassid returned to witness the same scene. At the week's end, the child stood and didn't fall. The child's eyes expressed the achievement of having attained the impossible. "So with us," said the rebbe. "We may fail again and again, but in the end, a loving G-d gives us the opportunities we need to succeed."

The mystics understand teshuvah differently. For them, teshuvah means "returning," to being righteous. But suppose one has never been righteous, what does one return to? Says the Sefat Emet, the soul of every person is fundamentally righteous. There may be a layer of evil obscuring the inner being, but all people created in the image of G-d are inherently good. Teshuvah then, means to return to the inner kernel of goodness we all possess. And so, we sing, and dance on Yom Kippur. We celebrate the opportunity to discover our true selves.

Another classic story. Reb Zusha was on his death bed, and tears were streaming down his face. "Why are you crying?" asked his disciples. "If G-d asks me why I wasn't like Moses or Maimonides," answered Reb Zusha, "I'll say, I wasn't blessed with that kind of leadership ability and wisdom." But I'm afraid of another question," continued Reb Zusha, "what if G-d asks, 'Reb Zusha, why weren't you like Reb Zusha? Why didn't you find your inner being and realize your inner potential? Why didn't you find yourself?' That is why I am crying."

A third approach. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, among many other thinkers, understands teshuvah to mean "answer." That is to say teshuvah is a dialogue. On Yom Kippur we stand before G-d, a caring G-d who asks the question(s). We offer the answer(s). A G-d of love seeks us out. As much as we are in search of Him, He is in search of us. A comforting thought on Yom Kippur.

Yet another chassidic legend. A young girl came to the Ba'al Shem Tov – the father of chassidism – crying. "Why do you cry?" the rebbe lovingly asked. "I was playing hide and seek," said the young girl, "but no one came looking for me." "So, too, is it with G-d," reflected the Ba'al Shem Tov. "He, too, is crying. For as much as He is looking for us, we rarely look for Him."

It was left for Rav Avraham Yitzchak ha-Cohen Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel to offer an understanding related to the establishment of the modern State of Israel. Teshuvah, according to Rav

Kook, ought be understood eschatologically. It quite literally means “go home,” to our homeland. It is not only an individual quest, but a communal mandate to establish a land that is different from all others. A land that is a light to the nations of the world: a land that marks the dawn of redemption, a land at peace. On this Yom Kippur – let it be, let it be.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg
Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne
Translated by Moshe Goldberg

The words of the sages with respect to the above verse were a source of great worry for Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, and he wrote about this matter to his father-in-law, the "Aderet." "I will openly state to my honorable sir, that I am bothered by the Midrash Sifri in the portion of Ha'azinu which quotes the verse, 'And their land will be filled with silver and gold,' in commenting on the verse, 'You are fat, you are thick,' writing about three generations before the coming of the Mashiach. And you will understand my thoughts. However, in any case the Holy One, Blessed be He, will do what is necessary for the good of His name, and He will bring His redemption closer, and G-d will act alone, let it be quickly in our time." [Orach Mishpat, Orach Chaim 48].

Here are some more details from the Sifri which caused Rav Kook to be so afraid. "'And Yeshurun became fat and kicked' [Devarim 32:15] -- The people rebel when they are satiated. You can see this with the people of the Deluge, who only rebelled before the Holy One, Blessed be He, out of an excess of food and drink, and out of calm... And when you enter the land, you will only rebel in response to food and drink and calm... And another point: It is written, 'You are fat, you are thick...' [Ibid] -- These represent three generations before the days of the Mashiach, as is written, 'And their land is full of silver and gold...'" [Sifri Ha'azinu 318].

The last verse quoted above in the Sifri is the following: "And their land is full of silver and gold, with no end to their treasures. Their land is full of horses, with no end to their chariots. And their land is full of idols, they bow down to their own handiwork." [Yeshayahu 2:7-8]. The prophet is describing moral decay. First the land fills up with treasures of silver. In the next stage the excessive wealth is used to buy luxuries -- horses, chariots (and cars?). The way is then clear for the third stage -- silver and gold become idols, and the people become enslaved to them. All of this happens three generations before the coming of the Mashiach.

This subjugation to silver and gold can even be attributed to intellectuals and Torah scholars. The Netziv wrote that the main ones who influenced the others to sin were Torah scholars, "and that was the trait of the love of wealth in the Second Temple, and it still dances around among us to this very day" [Harchev Davar, Devarim]. This also appears in Sforno in this week's Torah portion: "'And Yeshurun became fat' -- People who are skilled in analysis are called Yeshurun... you have turned the community of Torah masters and analysis to physical pleasures, and you have thus become too fat to understand the details of the truth... 'And he abandoned the G-d who made him' -- therefore the multitudes have abandoned G-d, and they have 'shown contempt for the Rock of their salvation.' [Devarim 32:15]."

Evidently these words of the Sifri were in Rav Kook's mind when he wrote the following: "We accept that there will be a spiritual revolt in Eretz Yisrael and within Yisrael at the time when the beginning of the revitalization of the nation will begin. The physical calm that will be achieved by part of the nation... will diminish the soul... the yearning for exalted and holy ideals will cease, and as a consequence the spirit will decline." [Orot Hatechiya, 44].

It is interesting to note that the poet Chaim Nachman Bialik also blamed the love of wealth for the sickness of the new settlement Tel Aviv. When he moved away from the inhabitants of "sick Tel Aviv," he said that the signs of the illness, among other things, included recent events when people took advantage of the poverty of new Olim in order to increase their own wealth, stealing their last prutot by increasing the rent. "The result is internal disintegration of the nation, a rise in the number of political parties, unfounded hate, and more. The entire settlement movement is sick, and our Tel Aviv is sick."

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Breaking Open the Vault

"When I will proclaim the Name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to our G-d." Meshech Chochmah: We can conceptually telescope the function of the Jewish people into a simple, neat formula: Our purpose is to live within the natural world, but to demonstrate the imprint of Hashem's providential supervision of our individual lives. We are to sow and plant and reap -- but to then take the first portions of our crops to the beis hamikdosh, and to G-d's holy servants there. Three times yearly, we are to entrust our possessions to Hashem's protection, as we show ourselves before Him in the Temple. The enmity of surrounding peoples is held in check by their fear of Hashem. In all of our doings, we invoke and bless the name of Hashem. The upshot of living this way is that when we act properly, the earth itself acknowledges our

behavior by more generously yielding its produce. This happens within the laws of nature, and does not require altering them through miraculous intervention.

This kind of life style is, despite its physical and material trappings, a spiritual existence. To those who understand, it is dearer that olam habo.

Such, however, was not the life the Bnei Yisrael lived in the time of Moshe. That life tore asunder all laws of nature. The ordinary conventions of life did not operate. The mohn fell daily; the Pillar of Cloud and the Presence of Hashem were open and manifest.

G-d truly walked before them. It was a grand moment -- but did it have anything to do with the actual purpose of life that we outlined above? They lived in a kind of olam habo -- not in this world! Chazal emphasize how surreal was their existence. "'Grace is false' (Mishlei 31:30) -- this refers to the generations of Moshe and Yehoshua; 'Beauty is vain' -- this is the generation of Chizkiyahu; 'The woman who fears Hashem -- she is to be praised' -- this is the generation of R. Yehudah b'rebi Ela'i." The grace shown to the generation of the Wilderness is false, as we showed above. Chizkiyahu's time was also punctuated by the miraculous, including the incredible defeat of Sancherev's army. But in the time of R. Yehudah b'rebi Ela'I, six yeshiva students shared a single garment and studied Torah. They lived entirely within the confines of natural law, and elevated it by their decision to study Torah even in poverty. In those other generations mentioned in the midrash, their was almost no room left for the exercise of free will; Hashem and His Will were so apparent, that the room for struggle was constricted. (Sanhedrin 20A) If commonplace miracles make life artificial, what was the point of those generations? The answer is that they placed our people on a firm footing for the future. Just as the first two commandments of the Ten establish the most important foundational elements of the Torah, the forty years in the wilderness created an experiential basis for emunah. It was not the miracles per se that accomplished this (other than for the least astute among them), but what the Bnei Yisrael were able to do with their time, once their needs were miraculously provided. They had four magical decades to pore over the Torah, to explain it well and deeply, and in so doing, acquire a bedrock faith which they transmitted to their offspring.

For this, they needed a Moshe. Moshe redirected their energies to the task of deeply comprehending Torah. This was a very different role from that of previous greats. The avos did not generally see Hashem as a constant worker of miracles. Avrohom, our Founding Father, was not even granted a burial plot for his wife through G-d working out a miracle or a deal for him. He had to acquire title the hard way, paying a premium price. Not so Moshe, who was entirely at home with miraculous existence -- and understood its place and its value.

Thus, the Zohar (Zohar 236B) calls Moshe the "spouse of the matron." The latter, according to the Gra, (Aderes Eliyahu, Devarim 33:1 in the second approach) means the Shechinah, which relates to the world through natural means, in accordance with the name Elokim, the aspect of G-d that uses fixed law.

Moshe is the complementary spouse of the fixity of law. Through his mastery of the miraculous -- the opposite of law -- he instructed the Bnei Yisrael to be able to live lives within the limitations of natural law, but to live them so richly as to bring blessing and abundance even within the world of teva.

This, then, is the meaning of our pasuk: When I (singular, i.e. Moshe) will proclaim the Name of Hashem -- the Doer of miracles, who breaks the laws of nature at will -- then you (plural, i.e. the Bnei Yisrael) -- ascribe greatness to Elokenu, to the aspect of law. The life you lead in the here and now, in the ordinary non-miraculous world will lend power to the Heavenly Court to shower blessing in return, even within the confines of the laws of nature. *(Based on Meshech Chochmah, Devarim 32:3)*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

The Torah refers to the holiday of Succos by two names. Besides "Chag HaSuccos," the holiday of temporary huts (Vayikra 23:34, D'varim 16:13 and 31:10), it is also referred to as "Chag HaAsif," the holiday of gathering (Sh'mos 23:16 and 34:22). Interestingly, it is only the first two times that the holiday is referred to as "Chag HaAsif." After that (including the numerous times it is mention in Nevi'im and K'suvim), it is always referred to as Chag HaSuccos. The Meshech Chuchmuh (Sh'mos 23:16) provides a compelling reason for this change, based on the Vilna Ga'on's explanation (Sir HaShirim 1:4) for why we celebrate Succos in Tishray rather than Nisan. After all, the "huts" (in the verse, which our huts are supposed to remind us of) refer to the Ananay HaKavod ("clouds of glory") that protected us in the desert (see Succah 11b), and they started accompanying us when we left Egypt, in Nisan. After the sin of the golden calf, the Ananim left, and only returned when the building of the Mishkan began, which was on the 15th of Tishray. [Moshe attained forgiveness, and was given the second Luchos, on the 10th (Yom Kippur), he told the nation about the Mishkan on the 11th, the materials were donated on the 12th and 13th (see Sh'mos 36:3), on the inventory of the materials was taken on the 14th and found to be enough (see 36:5); the work itself started on the 15th.] Therefore, we celebrate the return of the Ananim after the covenant was reinstated, which was on the 15th of Tishray. The first two times the holiday is referenced, though, it was prior to this occurring, so the name of the holiday could not yet reflect the "succos" (huts) that would eventually become a primary part of the holiday.

Rabbi Dovid Cohen, sh'lita (Birkas Ya'avetz, Z'manim u'Moadim II) uses this to explain why, when the Torah tells us about the holidays in Vayikra (23:4-44) it seems to close the section (23:37-38) before reopening it and adding the mitzvos of the four species and living in a Succah (23:39-43), as the "holiday" aspect was complete before the 15th of Tishray 2449, even without these mitzvos. [Which leaves us wondering why the four species were either only included in the "addition" or were only added later; would we have had to deal with buying a lulav and esrog while cleaning the house for Pesach? It is possible that the "first day" (23:40) hinting to "the first sins" after Yom Kippur (see Midrash Tanchuma, Emor, 22/30 and Tur O"C 581) was also only relevant after that first Yom Kippur in 2449.] Rabbi Cohen also applies this to the section of the offerings brought on the holidays (Bamidbar 28:16-29:39), where the mitzvos of Succos aren't mentioned, even though those of the other holidays are (see 28:17, 28:26, 29:1 and 29:7). [The holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur aren't mentioned before the Mishkan, so including blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashana and fasting on Yom Kippur is not a change from any earlier mention, and bringing the first fruits is mentioned with the first two Shavuos references.] Since living in a succah wasn't originally part of the holiday, and the offerings reflect the holiday itself (which was in place even before the requirement to live in a succah was added), it wasn't mentioned there.

It is a bit curious that the first time Shavuos is referenced (Sh'mos 23:16) it is called "Chag HaKatzir" (the holiday of the harvest) while the second time it is called "Shavuos" (Sh'mos 34:22). This difference becomes a bit more curious when we consider that the holidays mentioned that second time are part of a restatement of the covenant, which was being reinstated after the sin of the golden calf (which is why Sh'mos 23:12-19 so closely resembles 34:17-26), and we would therefore expect the terms for the holidays to match. [This covenant was restated again at Arvos Moav, which is why Sh'mini Atzeres is omitted in D'varim 16:1-16, matching the original covenant (see http://tinyurl.com/hxjhzmu). Although it is called "Chag HaSuccos" there rather than "Chag HaAsif," it being the "holiday of gathering" is highlighted as well (16:13).] Nevertheless, by the time the holidays are mentioned the second time, the Torah had already been given, and along with it the requirement to bring the Omer offering on the second day of Pesach, which is where the name "Shavuos" (referring to the seven weeks that are counted after it is brought) comes from. This "change" does not reflect a change in the essence of the holiday, only how it is referred to, whereas the name "Succos" reflects a major aspect of the holiday itself, which did not apply until after the covenant was restated to Moshe. Even though G-d had already promised Moshe that He would "do wonders" for Israel, which refers to G-d's presence dwelling amongst them (see Rashi on Sh'mos 34:10), which manifested itself in the "Ananim," and at that point in time Moshe only wrote this restatement of the covenant down (34:27), so by the time it was transmitted to the nation the "Ananim" had already returned, since at the time these words were said to Moshe they had not yet actually returned, the holiday is still referred to as "Chag HaAsif" rather than "Chag HaSuccos."

There is one additional point I'd like to make. The Meshech Chuchmuh concludes his (short) piece by saying that his explanation removes Rabbi Chanina's question (Rosh Hashana 13a) undermining a Talmudic proof, which was based on the term "Chag HaAsif" teaching us that there was something to be gathered, as there is a Talmudic teaching (Succah 12a) that this term teaches us what type of materials should be used for the succah, so may not refer to gathering at all. Although saying that the reason it was called "Chag HaAsif" is because living in a succah did not yet apply would leave the Talmud's suggestion that it refers to gathering intact, we are left instead with a question on the Talmudic teaching Rabbi Chanina quotes. How could this term teach us anything about a succah if it was used specifically because the concept of living in a succah in Tishray didn't apply yet? If anything, this Talmudic teaching disproves the Meshech Chuchmuh's suggestion!

Several years ago (see page 5 of http://tinyurl.com/zqhr9ag) I discussed Abarbanel's question of how the laws of a Jewish maidservant can be compared with those of a non-Jewish servant if the latter hadn't been taught yet, so couldn't be used as a frame of reference. I quoted Chizkuni's approach, that the words can be understood differently, having nothing to do with a non-Jewish servant, and suggested that both meanings were embedded into the Torah's words. Until the laws of a non-Jewish servant were taught, Chizkuni's approach was the way the verse was understood, but afterwards, it was able to take on its full meaning. This concept can be applied here as well.

Until the 15th of Tishray in 2449 (when the "Ananim" returned), the holiday could not have been referred to as "Chag HaSuccos." Instead, it was referred to as "Chag HaAsif," which was thought to have been referring to gathering crops. After the term "Chag HaSuccos" became applicable, and the only way the holiday was referred to, it became unclear why the term "Chag HaAsif" was used. Did it only refer to the gathering of the crops, a temporary name that would become outdated, or did it also refer to an aspect of the succah, even though this embedded meaning would not be understood until the holiday could be called "Chag HaSuccos"? The Talmudic teaching does not preclude the reason for the name change being a later introduction of the succah; it could merely be teaching

us that the reason this name was used initially is precisely because eventually living in a succah will be a primary aspect of the holiday.

The Meshech Chuchmuh is telling us that since even before the holiday could be called "Succos" the term had to make sense, and its plain meaning was that it was the "holiday of gathering," the Talmud's original point that there must have been something to gather is valid, even if the term also teachus us something about the succah.

[It could be argued that once "Chag HaAsif" is only a temporary name, and the term is needed to teach us which materials to use in the succah, there could be a different "temporary" meaning to "Chag HaAsif," which has nothing to do with gathering. If this is true, Rabbi Chanina's question stands even after the Mechech Chuchmuh's explanation of the name change. But if the Meshech Chuchmuh wants to insist that he could think of a valid approach that the Talmud hadn't thought of (as otherwise they could have answered Rabbi Chanina's question rather than finding a different proof), who am I to argue?] *© 2016 Rabbi D. Kramer*

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Hazin Lach

Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

This title is not the beginning of a liturgical poem that one might recite, but rather signify the letters that start the various Aliyot in the portion of "*H'azinu.* The Kohen starts from the "He" of "*H'azinu".* The second letter appears six sentences later and starts with a *"Zayin"* signifying the word "*Zacho*r". The third Aliya starts with a "*Yud*" referencing the word "*Yarkivehu".* The next Aliya starts with the letter "*Vav*" symbolizing "*va'yare"*.The fifth Aliya starts with the letter *"lamed"* symbolizing the word "*Lu".*The sixth Aliya starts with the letter *"Kaf"* referring to the word "*ki".* This continues to the end of the song and the seventh and last Aliya completes the portion to be read.

The purpose of these exact divisions is not to allow any stops during the song of "Ha'ziunu" except those enumerated above. The only possibility of adding an Aliya is at the end between the seventh Aliya and the end of the portion.

This division is found in the Code of Jewish Law ("Shulchan Aruch 428;5") but there are those sages that divide the contents of the song in a different way, however still maintaining the format of beginning letters that was enumerated above. The *Rambam ,* Maimonides ,(Laws of Prayer 13;5) states that these intervals represent words that hint at the act of repentance, since this portion is read before Yom kippur and though we generally shy away from beginning or ending an Aliya with words of rebuke, in this case it is acceptable since we are standing at the threshold of seeking repentance. Perhaps as well the words "*Haziv Lach*, indicates that the light (Ziv) and beauty is with the Jewish people at this time since they are actively involved in seeking repentance.

Additionally, there is a difference of opinion amongst our sages if we must retain this division stated when we read the Torah on Monday and Thursday and on Shabbat Mincha. *© 2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah tells us in Leviticus 23:40 a special commandments for Sukkot -- to take the arbah minim, the Four Species (etrog, lulav, hadassim, and aravot). We wave them in the four directions of the compass as well as up and down. The symbolism of the waving in all directions is to remind us that G-d is everywhere. However, why are these four species designated for the mitzvah?

Our rabbis teach that these four species are symbolic of four types of Jews: the etrog (citron) which has a fragrance and a taste represents those Jews who have both Torah wisdom and good deeds; the lulav (date palm branch) which has a taste (from the dates), but no fragrance represents those Jews who have Torah wisdom, but no good deeds; the hadassim (myrtle branches) have a fragrance, but no taste representing those Jews who have good deeds, but no Torah wisdom; and lastly, the aravot (willow branches) have neither a taste nor a smell representing those Jews who are lacking in Torah wisdom and good deeds.

What do we do on Sukkot? We symbolically bind together and recognize every Jew as an integral and important part of the Jewish people. If even one is missing, the mitzvah is incomplete. Our People is one; we must do all we can to bind together the Jewish people and work to strengthen the Jewish future! *© 2016 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*