

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

A Breath of Life

The sedra of Emor outlines the festivals that give rhythm and structure to the Jewish year. Examining them carefully, however, we see that Sukkot is unusual, unique.

One detail which had a significant influence on Jewish liturgy appears later on in the book of Deuteronomy: "Be joyful at your Feast . . . For seven days celebrate the Feast to the Lord your G-d at the place the Lord will choose. For the Lord your G-d will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete." (Dt. 16: 14-15)

Speaking of the three pilgrimage festivals – Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot – Deuteronomy speaks of 'joy'. But it does not do so equally. In the context of Pesach, it makes no reference to joy; in that of Shavuot, it speaks of it once; in Sukkot, as we see from the above quotation, it speaks of it twice. Is this significant? If so, how? (It was this double reference that gave Sukkot its alternative name in Jewish tradition: zeman simhatenu, 'the season of our joy'.)

The second strange feature appears in our sedra. Uniquely, Sukkot is associated with two mitzvot, not one. The first: Beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days . . . On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and willows of the brook, and rejoice before the Lord your G-d for seven days. (Lev. 23: 39-40)

This is a reference to the arba minim, the 'four kinds' – palm branch, citron, myrtle and willow leaves – taken and waved on Sukkot. The second command is quite different: Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths, so your descendants will know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your G-d. (Lev. 23: 42-43)

This is the command to leave our house and live in the temporary dwelling that gives Sukkot its name: the festival of Tabernacles, booths, huts, an annual reminder of portable homes in which the Israelites lived during their journey through the wilderness.

No other festival has this dual symbolism. Not only are the 'four kinds' and the tabernacle different in

character: they are even seemingly opposed to one another. The 'four kinds' and the rituals associated with them are about rain. They were, says Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed, III: 43), the most readily available products of the land of Israel, reminders of the fertility of the land. By contrast, the command to live for seven days in booths, with only leaves for a roof, presupposes the absence of rain. If it rains on Sukkot we are exempt from the command (for as long as the rain lasts, and providing it is sufficiently strong to spoil food on the table).

The difference goes deeper. On the one hand, Sukkot is the most universalistic of all festivals. The prophet Zekhariah foresees the day when it will be celebrated by all humanity: The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day the Lord will be one, and His name the only name . . . Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, they will have no rain. If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. (Zekhariah 14: 9, 16-17)

The sages interpreted the fact that seventy bulls were sacrificed in the course of the festival (Numbers 29: 12-34) to refer to the seventy nations (the traditional number of civilizations). Following the cues in Zekhariah, they said that 'On the festival [of Sukkot], the world is judged in the matter of rain' (Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 1: 2). Sukkot is about the universal need for rain.

At the same time, however, it is the most particularist of festivals. When we sit in the Sukkah we recall Jewish history – not just the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, but also the entire experience of exile. The Sukkah is defined as a 'temporary dwelling' (dirat arai). It is the most powerful symbol of Jewish history. No other nation could see its home not as a castle, a fortress or a triumphal arch, but as a fragile tabernacle. No other nation was born, not in its land, but in the desert. Far from being universalist, Sukkot is intensely particularistic, the festival of a people like no other, whose only protection was its faith in the sheltering wings of the Divine presence.

It is almost as if Sukkot were two festivals, not one.

It is. Although all the festivals are listed

together, they in fact represent two quite different cycles. The first is the cycle of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. These tell the unique story of Jewish identity and history: the exodus (Pesach), the revelation at Mount Sinai (Shavuot), and the journey through the wilderness (Sukkot). Celebrating them, we re-enact the key moments of Jewish memory. We celebrate what it is to be a Jew.

There is, however, a second cycle – the festivals of the seventh month: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are not only about Jews and Judaism. They are about G-d and humanity as a whole. The language of the prayers is different. We say: 'Instill your awe upon all Your works, and fear of You on all that You have created.' The entire liturgy is strikingly universalist. The 'Days of Awe' are about the sovereignty of G-d over all humankind. On them, we reflect on the human, not just the Jewish, condition.

The two cycles reflect the dual aspect of G-d: as creator, and as redeemer. As creator, G-d is universal. We are all in G-d's image, formed in His likeness. We share a covenant of human solidarity (the Noahide covenant). We are fellow citizens of the world G-d made and entrusted to our care. As redeemer, however, G-d is particular. Whatever His relationship to other nations (and He has a relationship with other nations: so Amos and Isaiah insist), Jews know Him through His saving acts in Israel's history: exodus, revelation and the journey to the Promised Land.

No sooner have we identified the two cycles than we see what makes Sukkot unique. It is the only festival belonging to both. It is part of the cycle of Jewish history (Pesach-Shavuot-Sukkot), and part of the sequence of the seventh month (Rosh Hashanah-Yom Kippur-Sukkot). Hence the double joy.

The 'four kinds' represent the universality of the festival. They symbolize nature, rain, the cycle of the seasons – things common to all humanity. The Sukkah / tabernacle represents the singular character of Jewish history, the experience of exile and homecoming, the long journey across the wilderness of time.

In a way not shared by any other festival, Sukkot celebrates the dual nature of Jewish faith: the universality of G-d and the particularity of Jewish existence. We all need rain; we are all part of nature; we are all dependent on the complex ecology of the created world. Hence the 'four kinds'. But each nation, civilization, religion is different. As Jews we are heirs to a history unlike that of any other people: small, vulnerable, suffering exile after exile, yet surviving. Hence the Sukkah.

Humanity is formed out of our commonalities and differences. As I once put it: If we were completely different, we could not communicate. If we were all the same, we would have nothing to say. Sukkot brings both together: our uniqueness as a people, and our

participation in the universal fate of mankind. *This article was originally published as Rabbi Sacks' 'Covenant & Conversation' piece for parsha Emor 5769. ©2014 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

One of the most picturesque and creative festivals of the year is the Festival of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) – when the entire family is involved in building and decorating a special “nature home” which will be lived in for an entire week. But what are we actually celebrating and what is the true meaning of the symbol of the sukka? Is it the sukka of our desert wanderings, the temporary hut which the Israelites constructed in the desert when they wandered from place to place? If so, then the sukka becomes a reminder of all of the exiles of Israel throughout our 4,000-year history, and our thanksgiving to God is for the fact that we have survived despite the difficult “climates” – the persecution and pogroms and assimilation – which still threaten to overwhelm those who unfortunately still live in the Diaspora (may the wise reader take my “hint”).

Or is the sukka meant to be reminiscent of the Divine “clouds of glory” which encompassed us in the desert with God's rays of splendor, a fore-taste of the Sanctuary which served as the forerunner of our Holy Temple in Jerusalem? In the Grace after Meals during the Sukkot festival we pray that “the Merciful One restore for us the fallen tabernacle of David,” which would certainly imply that the sukka symbolizes the Holy Temple. The Talmud (B.T. Succot 11) brings a difference of opinion between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer as to which of these options is the true significance of our celebration. I would like to attempt to analyze which I believe to be the true symbolic meaning and why.

The major biblical description of the festivals is found in Chapter 23 of the Book of Leviticus. There are two textual curiosities which need to be examined. The three festivals which were always considered to be our national festivals, and which also biblically appear as the “desert” festivals, are Pessah, Shavuot and Sukkot – commemorating when we left Egypt, when we received the Torah at Sinai and when we lived in desert booths. Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are more universal in nature and not at all related to the desert sojourn. It seems strange that in the biblical exposition of the Hebrew calendar Pessah and Shavuot are explained, after which comes Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and only at the conclusion of the description comes Sukkot.

Now, of course one can argue that this is the way the months fall out on the calendar year! However, that too is strange. After all, the Israelites left Egypt for the desert; presumably they built their booths

immediately after the Festival of Pessah. Would it not have been more logical for the order to have been Pesach, Sukkot, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?

Secondly, the Festival of Sukkot is broken up into two parts. Initially, the Torah tells us: "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying: on the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Festival of Sukkot, seven days for God these are the Festivals of the Lord which you shall call holy convocations" (Leviticus 23:33-38). It would seem that these last words conclude the biblical description of the festivals and the Hebrew calendar. But then, in the very next verse, the Torah comes back again to Sukkot, as if for the first time: "but on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the crop of the land, you shall celebrate God's festival for a seven day period... You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree (myrtle) and willows of brooks; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven-day period... You shall dwell in booths for a seven-day period... so that your generations will know that I caused the people of Israel to dwell in booths when I took them from the Land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (ibid. Leviticus 23:39-44). Why the repetition? And if the Bible now wishes to tell us about the four species which we are to wave in all directions in thanksgiving to God for his agricultural bounty, why was this verse not linked to the previous discussion of the Sukkot booths? And why repeat the booths again this second time?

I have heard it said in the name of the Vilna Gaon that this repetition of Sukkot with the commandment concerning the Four Species is introducing an entirely new aspect of the Sukkot festival: the celebration of our entering into the Land of Israel. Indeed, the great philosopher-legalist Maimonides explains the great joy of the festival of Sukkot as expressing the transition of the Israelites from the arid desert to a place of trees and rivers, fruits and vegetables, as symbolized by the Four Species (Guide for the Perplexed, Part 3 Chapter 43). In fact, this second Sukkot segment opens with the words, "But on the fifteenth day of the seventh month when you gather the crop of the land (of Israel), you shall celebrate this festival to the Lord."

Hence, there are two identities to the festival of Sukkot. On the one hand, it is a desert festival, alongside Pessah and Shavuot, which celebrates our desert wanderings and survivals while living in flimsy booths. From that perspective, perhaps it ought to have found its place immediately after Pessah in terms of the calendar and certainly before the description of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in the biblical text. However, the second identity of Sukkot, the Four Species, which represent our conquest and inhabitation of our homeland and signals the beginning of redemption,

belongs after Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur – the festivals of God's kingship over the world and his Divine Temple, which is to be "a house of prayer for all the nations." This aspect of Sukkot turns the sukka into rays of Divine splendor and an expression of the Holy Temple.

So which Sukkot do we celebrate? Both at the very same time! But when we sit in the sukka, are we sitting in transitory booths representative of our wandering or rather in a Divine sanctuary protected by rays of God's glory? I think it depends on whether we are celebrating the festival in the Diaspora or in the Land of Israel! ©2020 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The holiday of Succot is, perhaps, unique amongst all the holidays of the Jewish calendar year. The laws pertaining to the commandments particular to this holiday are almost all exclusively derived from the oral law given to our teacher Moshe on Sinai

There is no way that a succah can be successfully and traditionally constructed without recourse to the intricacies and nuances that the oral law that the Torah provides for us. This will be especially true for this holiday, that is so burdened by the terrible Corona virus that afflicts the world.

Here in Israel where a lockdown is in force, the construction of succot is much more muted and minimal than in previous years. There is a far greater reliance upon the so-called imaginary walls that the oral law envisions for us, to somehow be halachically acceptable and valid, and allows much outside air to enter and escape, as mandated by the health authorities.

Simply reading the text in the Torah itself does not allow for partial walls to be considered as complete walls, and for walls and roofs to be considered as touching each other, even though strictly speaking to our human eyes, they do not touch.

There are myriad laws involved in the proper construction of a succah. But these laws are not readily apparent from the reading of the text of the Torah itself. It is only the oral law that breathes life into words and letters of the Torah and gives them meaning and practical vitality. ©2020 *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*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

There is a common thread throughout the Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Hoshanah Rabbah and Simchat

Torah festivals – a thread that binds our people. It intersects with the portion of Ve'zot Habracha, read on Simchat Torah – the only Torah portion of the week read during these holidays.

Note the four species we take as the Sukkot holiday begins. Each represents a different kind of Jew. But for Rabbi Jacob Riemer the most important part of the lulav and etrog is what he calls the “thingamejng” or the agudah, the strip that binds the lulav together. Without that strip a lulav and its parts would separate, making it impossible to take as one as described in the Torah.

Hoshanah Rabbah adds a similar dimension. After all, of all the species the arava seems least significant. It is the one without smell or taste, symbolic of the person without good deeds or knowledge. Still it is the arava and none of the others that plays the central role on Hashanah Rabbah, the day which completes the Days of Judgement – teaching that every individual, even the seemingly less important play a crucial role in the fabric of our nation.

At the center of Shemini Atzeret is the prayer for geshem – rain. The mystics note that water by definition teaches the message of togetherness. There is no one molecule of water that can exist alone. Hence the Hebrew word for water is only in the plural – mayim.

All this reaches its crescendo on Simchat Torah, when, in the spirit of unity, all come to the Torah for an aliya; all children gather at the Torah under a tallit serving as a chuppah and are blessed; all join celebrating with those honored to complete and begin the Torah.

It is not coincidental that Ve'zot Habracha is read on Simchat Torah. The central theme of Ve'zot Habracha are the blessings Moshe gives to the respective tribes. Unlike Ya'akov's (Jacob's) blessings to his sons, which included rebuke, Moshe's was purely positive. Moshe offers the hope and prayer that the tribes of Israel, as different as they were, live united, recognizing they each had important complementary roles to play.

Years back, at the first Soviet Jewry conference in Brussels, a young Argentinean spoke of how lonely he felt as a Jew in Buenos Aires. In those days, the sixties and seventies, the fascists ruled Argentina; Hitler's picture could be seen everywhere.

The young man shared that at the conference he began learning the Hebrew language. He learned that the smallest letter was the yud, or the pintele yid. But, he continued, if one writes a second yud near the first it spells God's name. Two Jews together, no matter their differences, reflect the unity of God. No matter how small each may be, together they can overcome everything. That's what this young man felt at that conference – a sense of unity which made him believe that our people would prevail.

Central to the unity of our people is ahavat Yisrael, loving our fellow Jew. And the test of love is not how we care for each other when we agree, but how we care for each other when we disagree. ©2020 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

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

A Hybrid Etrog

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

The *etrog* tree is very delicate. In order to make it stronger and live longer, people have grafted *etrog* branches onto other citrus trees, such as that of the bitter orange. The part of the tree that hosts the grafted branch is known as the rootstock. Most *poskim* say that this *etrog murkav* (hybrid *etrog*) may not be used on Sukkot to fulfill the mitzva of *lulav* and *etrog*. A number of reasons are given for this disqualification:

1. This fruit is not considered fruit of the *etrog* tree, but rather of the rootstock's tree.

2. Even if it is not considered a fruit of the rootstock's tree, it is still a fruit which is a mixture of two species. But the Torah requires an *etrog*, not a partial *etrog*.

3. The share the rootstock has in the tree may take away from the size of the *etrog*. If the *etrog* is the size of an egg (*kebeitzah*), but we deduct the part of the rootstock, it is smaller than an egg (and thus not large enough to use for the mitzva).

4. Even if the *etrog* is larger than an egg, it is still invalid because part of it is missing (*chaser*). Being partly composed of the rootstock means it is partially bitter orange, not *etrog*. Since the part that is bitter orange does not count, the *etrog* is missing a part. It is as if a bite has been taken out of it, and so it is invalid.

5. Sometimes the grafting itself is prohibited. Even if a non-Jew did it, the *etrog* is the product of a sin and may not be used to fulfill the mitzva.

Those *poskim* who permit a hybrid *etrog* offer responses to each of the above challenges:

1. The Torah never specifies that an *etrog* must be used. Rather, the phrase in the verse is “*pri etz hadar*” (“a fruit that is beautiful”). An *etrog murkav* is beautiful.

2. The idea that the rootstock is more important than the original tree in determining the nature of the fruit is correct only when speaking of prohibitions. However, the fruit produced by the graft is considered that of the original tree (i.e., the *etrog* tree).

3-4. Even a partial *etrog* is acceptable, and the part of the fruit contributed by the rootstock does not mean the *etrog* is missing anything.

5. Even if the grafting is prohibited (which is not at all clear, since both trees are species of citrus), this would not disqualify the *etrog*. The idea that the product

of a sin may not be used is correct only when speaking of sacrifices. However, it is not disqualified for use in other *mitzvot*.

The question of the hybrid *etrog* (*etrog murkav*) is indeed complicated (*murkevot*). The *Encyclopedia Talmudit* can provide the interested reader with references to many books and responsa that deal with this topic at length – a very appropriate topic of study for Sukkot. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"Seven days you shall bring offerings through fire to Hashem. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and offer through fire to Hashem, it is a solemn gathering, and you shall not work at your occupations." (Vayikra 23:36)

On Sukkos, we read the section that refers to the various holidays. If we go through the *pesukim*, we find something unusual about Sukkos. The holiday list begins with Shabbos. Six days we work and the seventh is a holy day for Hashem; we don't work on it. Then comes Pesach. On the fourteenth of Nisan we offer the Pesach sacrifice; on the fifteenth we celebrate for seven days by eating matzah. After outlining the specific practice of the day, we are told that no work is to be done on the first or seventh days and we bring fire offerings.

We move on to Shavuos. After discussing that we bring a grain offering on the day after Pesach begins, we are told to count fifty days to the next holiday, one on which first fruits are offered. There are specific offerings of bread related to the first fruits on this holiday. Then we are told that it is a day when no work should be done.

Rosh Hashana is a day of rest with remembrance by sounding the shofar; and don't do any work. Then Yom Kippur, the day of atonement; you shall afflict yourselves, and bring a fire offering to Hashem.

Finally, we reach Sukkos. "On the holiday of Sukkos, you shall make the first day holy and do no work. For seven days you shall offer fire offerings, and on the eighth day, which is a special day, bring a fire offering and don't work." That ends the list of holidays. Do you notice anything missing? We have no idea how to celebrate Sukkos!

The special mitzvos are not mentioned. Only a few verses later, almost sounding like an afterthought, does the Torah tell us, "Oh! And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you've gathered in your produce, you shall make a holiday to Hashem. Then comes Lulav and Esrog and the Sukkah itself. What happened? Why did the other holidays have their observances mentioned right away while Sukkos did not? The answer is that the primary observance of

Sukkos WAS mentioned, but we may have missed it.

The explanation is in our *posuk*, in the word "atzeres." Rashi says it means to hold back, and refers to the parable conveyed by the Gemara in Sukkah 55b. It says that the seventy bulls offered throughout Sukkos correspond to the seventy nations, and the solitary bull sacrificed on Shmini Atzeres corresponds to the solitary nation, Klal Yisrael. The Gemara then compares it to a king who made a feast for all his subjects. On the last day, when he sent everyone else home, he asked his loved one to stay another day so they could enjoy each other's company.

THAT is how to celebrate Sukkos: by basking in the warmth of Hashem's closeness and feeling that relationship. All the other things relate to why we should love Hashem; because He gives us rain and protected us in the desert. But those are not the main thing. The main thing is being close. Put everything else aside, and focus on the love of your life, HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

One year there were no esrogim to be had in Berditchev. Finally, a traveler passing through who had a beautiful esrog was convinced to remain for Yom Tov and allow everyone to use his lulav and esrog by a promise from R' Levi Yitzchak that they would sit together in Gan Eden.

When Sukkos came, the man returned to his inn after davening only to be denied entry to the Sukkah. Unbeknownst to him, R' Levi Yitzchak had told everyone not to allow him to sit in a Sukkah. He came to R' Levi Yitzchak confused. The rabbi told him, "If you release me from my oath, you may sit in my Sukkah."

The man was stunned at the words of the tzaddik. Had he been hoodwinked to remain in town and let people use his Esrog? But he still needed to sit in a Sukkah and fulfill the mitzvah! Reluctantly, he agreed.

After Sukkos, R' Levi Yitzchak summoned him. "I am giving you back my promise. I didn't want you to be with me in Olam HaBa because of a 'good deal.' Now you and I will be together because you deserve it!"
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RABBI YOCHANAN ZWEIG

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

"You shall take for yourselves on the first day..." (23:40) The Tur records a custom among Ashkenazim to fast on the eve of Rosh Hashana. (Orech Chaim #582) As the source for this custom, he cites a Midrash which questions why the Torah identifies the time for taking the lulav as "the first day" -- "bayom harishon"; should the day not be identified as the fifteenth of the month? The Midrash concludes that the first day of Sukkos is "rishon l'cheshbon avonos" -- "the first day for the accounting of our sins" and therefore Sukkos is identified as "yom harishon".

The Midrash offers the following parable: There was once a city that owed the king a large sum of money in taxes. As a result of the residents' failure to pay, the king marched against the city with an armed garrison. Prior to reaching the city, a delegation consisting of the elders of the community was sent to appease the king. After meeting with the delegation the king discharged one-third of the debt, but still continued to advance. Fearing for their safety, the city sent a second delegation comprised of common-folk to meet with the king.

They succeeded in convincing him to discharge another one-third of the debt. However, the king continued to advance towards the city. Finally, all of the residents of the city emerged from their homes to beseech the king, who had already reached the city gates, to deal with them kindly. Moved by this display, the king discharged the remaining one-third of the debt. Similarly, the Jewish people amass a large number of sins throughout the year. On the eve of Rosh Hashana the men of distinction fast and Hashem absolves the nation of one-third of their sins. During the "aseres y'mei teshuva" -- "ten days of repentance", another one-third of the sins are absolved. The entire nation fasts on Yom Kippur, absolving them of their remaining transgressions. With the onset of Sukkos a new account of sins for the year begins.

Why is Sukkos, rather than the day immediately following Yom Kippur identified as the "first day for the new accounting"? Furthermore, Sukkos appears to play no part in Bnei Yisroel's atonement. Why does the Midrash use this parable to extol the virtue of Sukkos?

The Beis Yoseif asks why the fast on the eve of Rosh Hashana appears to have the same efficacy as the fast of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, each one discharging one-third of the sins. (ad loc)

The Bach notes that there are three chapters concerning aspects of Sukkos recorded in the Torah, sitting in the Sukkah, bringing the festive offerings and finally, taking the four species. Why does the Torah specifically choose the four species to relate the message that Sukkos is the "first day for the new accounting"?

In English common law a person who defaulted on a debt was subject to incarceration. However, in the modern era almost every civilized society has bankruptcy laws which allow a person to discharge debts that he is unable to repay by declaring bankruptcy, protecting him from his creditors. What is the logic behind the institution of bankruptcy? Why would society allow a person to sidestep accountability for his actions?

A person who is mired in debt, unable to extricate himself from his predicament, eventually ceases to be a productive member of society and becomes a liability. By allowing this person to discharge his debt either partially or completely, we are enabling

him to stand on his own two feet, once again contributing as a productive member of society. Great care must be taken however, to ensure that this institution is not abused. The potential danger of a person using bankruptcy as a crutch to protect him from his own negligence and irresponsible behavior always exists.

It is a mistake to think that Hashem forgives us only because of His great benevolence. What we must realize is that His absolution is not a crutch upon which we can continuously rely, to discharge our irresponsible behavior. Rather, we are given a respite so that we can become, once again, functioning members of society, earning our keep, unburdened by our great number of transgressions. If we fail to view atonement in this manner, instead of being a tool which allows us to become responsible for our actions, it will have the opposite effect. Atonement becomes a crutch which breeds irresponsibility.

If a person is responsible for at least a portion of his debts, the danger of bankruptcy being used to encourage irresponsible behavior is smaller than if the entire debt were discharged. Therefore, although Yom Kippur discharges the same amount of sin as Rosh Hashana eve, there exists a great difference between the two absolutions. After Rosh Hashana a person is still responsible for a portion of his sins. On Yom Kippur, when complete absolution occurs, the danger of misusing atonement is greater, and only a day such as Yom Kippur can afford such a service to the Jewish people.

For atonement to be complete it must be accompanied by a commitment to begin paying our debts and accepting responsibility for our actions. Sukkos is the time when new responsibilities are placed upon us and therefore serves as the litmus test for the veracity of our commitment. Consequently, Sukkos is identified as "the first day for the accounting of our sins".

The Ran cites the Yerushalmi which disqualifies a dried-out lulav based upon the verse "lo hameisim yehallelu kah" -- "the dead cannot praise Hashem". (Sukkah 29b) The lulav is a symbol of freshness and vitality, reflecting the new lease on life that we have gained following Yom Kippur. We therefore use the lulav as the tool to praise Hashem for His beneficence. The Torah most appropriately delivers the message concerning the beginning of a new accounting in the chapter of the four species which symbolize this concept. © 2020 Rabbi Y. Zweig & torah.org

RABBI DANIEL STEIN

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According to Chazal, both of the mitzvos that we perform on the holiday of Sukkos, taking the daled minim, the four species, as well as dwelling in the sukkah, represent achdus, unity. The Medrash

compares the esrog, which has an appetizing taste and a pleasing aroma, to Jews who possess both Torah learning and the performance of mitzvos; the lulav, the date palm, which has a positive flavor but no fragrance, to those Jews who have Torah learning but lack good deeds; the hadasim, the myrtle, which has fragrance but no taste, to Jews who perform mitzvos but lack the learning of Torah; and the aravos, the willow, to those Jews who lack both Torah learning and as well as good deeds. During Sukkos we bind all of these species together to underscore the necessity of uniting all Jews together under the mutual banner of serving the Ribbono Shel Olam. Similarly, the Gemara (Sukkah 27b) derives from the pasuk "Every citizen in Yisrael shall dwell in sukkos" (Vaykira 23, 42), that all of the people of Israel could theoretically dwell in one sukkah for the sukkah need not be owned by those sitting within it. Undoubtedly, all of Klal Yisrael inhabiting one sukkah, coexisting under the same roof for seven consecutive days, would be a powerful statement of unity, and achdus.

However, in actuality these two symbols of achdus, correspond to two distinct forms of unity. In Parshas Vayechi, Yaakov Avinu twice summons all of his children before his death, "Gather, and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days. Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisrael, your father" (Breishis 49, 1-2). The Sfas Emes explains that Yaakov beseeched his children to gather together in a show of unity two times, corresponding to two discrete types of achdus. There is the achdus of individuals who don't necessarily enjoy each other inherently, however, they share a common goal and agenda which breeds a bond born out of convenience and expediency. Much like siblings who gather sparingly only to honor their parents. This is the unity being described in Yaakov's latter plea "Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisrael your father." However, in Yaakov's first call for achdus, which provided no further context other than a directive to "gather", he was hoping for a deeper and more profound kind of unity, which is the aspiration of every parent. He was yearning for the genuine achdus of loving siblings, who sincerely like each other, and for whom honoring their parents is not an anchor, but a pretext, or an excuse to see and spend time with each other.

The Chofetz Chaim observes that even though the daled minim signify the virtue of achdus, the esrog is not tied together with the other minim, and is generally held in a different hand from the other species. It only joins with the other species in order to perform and fulfill the mitzvah of daledminim. Therefore, while the mitzvah of daled minim represents unity, it is the type of achdus generated by those who possess a shared and collective goal, and unite expressly for that purpose. Whereas the achdus of the sukkah is entirely different. All of Klal Yisrael can

theoretically sit in one sukkah but there is certainly no mitzvah to do so. When many Jews choose to sit in the same sukkah together, they are bound together not by a communal obligation or common objective, but rather by a mutual fondness for one another. Rav Dov Weinberger (Shemen Hatov) suggests that the Arizal and the Shelah Hakadosh advised to take the daled minim in the sukkah each morning of Sukkos in an attempt to fuse these two notions of achdus together.

(However, see Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Mikraei Kodesh (Sukkos Vol. 2 Sec. 20-21) and Rav Herschel Schachter, Nefesh Harav (pg. 217) who raise certain objections to this practice.)

While we long to forge an honest and adoring relationship with one another, we also desire for that relationship to be grounded in a unified vision, mission, and purpose. Even the most loving relationships that are not founded in substance and shared beliefs can become temperamental and indecisive. We aspire to engender a genuine affection among all Jews and to reinforce that friendship with a harmonious resolve and determination to serve Hashem.

Despite the fact that both the sukkah and the daled minim remind us of the different strands of achdus, neither mitzvah calls for absolute uniformity, in fact they both allow and even lobby for diversity. Within the achdus of the daled minim there seems to be a pecking order and each species has its own assigned seat. The esrog is held in the right hand while all of the other species are in the left hand. The lulav is in the center and rises above the rest. The hadassim are positioned on the right of the lulav, but must be shorter than the lulav and taller than the aravos. The aravos should be on the left of the lulav and cut to be the shortest species in the bundle. How can a symbol of unity and togetherness be so rigidly segregated? Moreover, the Gemara (Sukkah 28a) derives from the very same pasuk, "Every citizen in Yisrael shall dwell in sukkos", which previously emphasized the universality of the sukkah, that women are exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah. How can the sukkah, which is purported to be a bold symbol of inclusivity, have exceptions or exclusions? Rav Yitzchok Menachem Weinberg, the Tolna Rebbe (Heimah Yenachamuni) explains that the sukkah and the daled minim teach us that true achdus must never come at the expense of legitimate diversity, but rather demands that we find common ground and build relationships despite our differences.

In fact, Yaakov Avinu seems to undermine his own impassioned appeal for unity amongst his children, by subsequently blessing each one of his children differently, as the pasuk states "each man according to his blessing he blessed them" (Breishis 49, 28), potentially sowing the seeds of jealousy and resentment in the future. For this reason, the pasuk concludes, "he blessed them", which according to Rashi was meant to convey that all of the children were

included in each one of the blessings. What then was the purpose of giving each their own individualized berachah in the first place? The Imrei Emes cites the Chiddushei Harim who suggests that Yaakov was training his children to realize that accentuating their individual roles and abilities, should never be an obstacle to unity, but the very foundation upon which genuine achdus must be built. Only when we appreciate and celebrate the differences that inherently exist between us, can we begin to form the bonds of true achdus and join together properly in the service of Hakadosh Baruch Hu! ©2017 Rabbi D. Stein & TorahWeb.com

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

The Limited

Last week, a friend pointed out to me a very interesting insight. He noted that both the first direct command in the Torah to an individual and the last have a striking similarity. Hashem's last charge in the Torah is the directive to His beloved servant Moshe. Hashem tells him to stand on a mountain and view the Land of Israel. He shows him its beautiful hills, valleys, and fertile plains. Then He says, "you shall not go there."

Similarly, the Torah begins with a very similar scenario. Adam, in the Garden of Eden, is shown the entire Garden of Eden. After he is shown the fruit of all its trees and invited to partake in all its delicious beauty, he is warned. One tree, The Tree of Knowledge, is forbidden.

Can there be a connection between the restrictions placed upon Adam in the Garden and those placed upon Moshe in the final stages of his life? Why does the Torah begin and end with bountiful visions that are bordered by restrictions?

As Rav of the tiny village of Tzitivyan, my grandfather, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, and his family lived in dire poverty. On his meager wages, the children went hungry and had hardly any clothes to wear. It was no wonder that jubilation filled Reb Yaakov's home upon hearing that he was the preferred candidate for the Rabbinate of Wilkomir, the third-largest Jewish city in Lithuania. He was assured of the position and was told that the K'sav Rabbanus, the Rabbinical contract, would be forthcoming.

After a few weeks of waiting, however, Reb Yaakov was informed that his hopes had been dashed. The position was given to a colleague whose influential family had affected the revised decision. Though the Kamenetzky family was almost in mourning, Reb Yaakov assured them that sometimes no is the best answer. "We may not always understand it at the time, but, there is a clear future even when your hopes and dreams seem to have been destroyed."

The continued dire poverty solidified my grandfather's decision to come to America, where he

eventually created a life of Torah leadership.

The town of Wilkomir was decimated by the Nazis, who killed almost all of its inhabitants along with their Rav.

Perhaps the Torah is sending an underlying message through its greatest mortals. Not everything you would like to have is yours for the asking. And not everything that your eyes behold is yours for the taking. This world is confined. You can't have it all. And what you don't take may be a true blessing. On this earth there will always be wants that we will not, can not, and should not obtain.

The Torah is replete with restrictions. They present themselves in what we put in our mouths, what we put in our minds, and what we wear on our bodies. Life must embrace self-control.

Torah Jews are lucky, however. Their sense of "no" is already in the know. By following the clear guidelines of the 365 negative commandments, they are safeguarded and conditioned for many of the difficult responses they face in a very tempting society.

The Torah surrounds its entirety with that message. Moshe on his exit had to hear it, just as Adam did upon his entry. As we just ended a year and begin a new one, it is important for us to hear it as well. © 1997 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

YITZ WEISS

Hug Samayach!

One of the themes of Sukkot is to recognize that Hashem is our protector. We go out of our permanent homes into a temporary dwelling and expose ourselves to the elements. In so doing we recall that Hashem was our guardian when we left Egypt into the desert and remains our protector today.

The minimum requirement for a kosher sukkah is not four walls, but two walls and a tefach (a handbreadth). If we were to construct a sukkah based on the minimum, we would really be exposed to the elements! Two walls and a bit don't seem to offer much protection! How are we to feel secure?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l compares the sukkah measurements to an arm: two "walls" - i.e. from the shoulder to the elbow, and from the elbow to the wrist, and a tefach - the hand. Rav Auerbach says that sitting in the sukkah one is literally in the embrace of G-d!

May this year be one where we see the protection of G-d on a daily basis and the coming of Moshiach! Have a great yom tov! This dvar torah was told by Rabbi Aaron Cohen in Cong. Tifereth Israel, Passaic, NJ

