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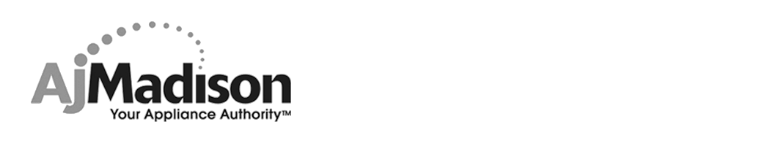
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**See page 25 for columns on last week’s parsha that were received after publication.**

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**Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**

**Meshech Chochmah**

**No Magic Kingdom(1)**

*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**(2)** emphasize how surreal was their existence. “‘Grace is false’**(3)** - 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.

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**(4)** calls Moshe the “spouse of the matron.” The latter, according to the Gra,**(5)** 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.

**1.** Based on Meshech Chochmah, Devarim 32:3

**2.** Sanhedrin 20A

**3.** Mishlei 31:30

**4.** Zohar 236B

**5.** Aderes Eliyahu, Devarim 33:1 in the second approach

**Rabbi Oizer Alport**

**Parsha Potpourri**

**Parshas Haazinu / Sukkos – Vol. 11, Issue 53**

Attached is an expanded issue of Parsha Potpourri for Parshas Haazinu, Sukkos, and Simchas Torah. This week's issue of Parsha Potpourri is dedicated l’zecher nishmas Rav Chaim Yaakov ben Tzvi Aharon z”l, whose yahrtzeit is next Thursday (18 Tishrei). Please have him in mind when reading and discussing this issue, and the Torah that is learned should be a merit for him and his entire family. At this point most of the issues in Sefer Bereishis are unsponsored. Each issue of Parsha Potpourri requires a tremendous amount of work, and sponsorships are greatly appreciated. For more information about dedications, which are $50 per issue, please send me an email. As the eleventh cycle of Parsha Potpourri comes to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support and encouragement throughout the year, for the emails sharing insights and comments on topics discussed in Parsha Potpourri, for generously supporting and sponsoring issues, and for sharing it to others and encouraging them to subscribe. I would also like to invite anyone who has suggestions about how Parsha Potpourri could be improved in the coming year in terms of content, layout, distribution, or in any way to please feel free to share them with me. Wishing you all a Good Shabbos and Yom Tov and G'mar Tov, and I hope that you enjoy the Divrei Torah and Points to Ponder!

לז״נ רב חיים יעקב בן צבי אהרן ז"ל

**ויבא משה וידבר את כל דברי השירה הזאת באזני העם הוא והושע בן נון (32:44)**

Prior to sending the twelve spies to bring back a report about the land of Israel and its inhabitants, Moshe blessed Hoshea and changed his name to Yehoshua (Bamidbar 13:16). From that time onward, he is always referred to by his new name. Why in our verse does the Torah suddenly revert and once again refer to him as Hoshea?

The Chanukas HaTorah answers by noting that the Gemora in Sanhedrin (107a) teaches that when Sorah’s name was changed from Sarai (שרי) to Sorah (שרה), the letter י complained that it would no longer be used in her name. It was only appeased when Hashem “paid it back” by adding it to Hoshea’s name when Moshe changed it to Yehoshua. Sorah’s name was changed when she was 89, one year before the birth of Yitzchok. Since she died at the age of 127 (Bereishis 23:1), the י was neglected for the final 38 years of her life.

Hoshea’s name was changed to Yehoshua when the spies were sent in the second year after the Exodus from Egypt. The events of Parshas Haazinu took place at the end of the 40th year of their sojourn in the wilderness. As such, it comes out that the י, which was added to Hoshea’s name to pacify it over its removal from Sarai’s name, had already been used for 38 years, which is precisely the amount of time that Sorah lived after her name was changed. At this point, the י had received its full “compensation,” as hinted to by the Torah referring to him once again as Hoshea.

**יעלה ויבא**

On Sukkos, as on other Yomim Tovim, we add the special יעלה ויבא paragraph to our prayers. Because we say this insertion so often, it unfortunately becomes easy to speed through it by rote without properly appreciating its depth and its meaning. To prevent this from occurring, it is worth calculating the tremendous number of bakashos (requests) that are packed into this paragraph. Although it may seem like a simple question of addition, the correct calculation involves a lot of multiplication.

We begin by asking Hashem יעלה, ויבא, ויגיע, ויראה, וירצה, וישמע, ויפקד, ויזכר – May there rise, come, reach, be noted, be favored, be heard, be considered, and be remembered. This is a total of eight verbs, each of which modifies each of the six nouns which follow: זכרוננו, ופקדוננו, וזכרון אבותינו, וזכרון משיח בן דוד עבדך, וזכרון ירושלים עיר קדשך, וזכרון כל עמך בית ישראל – our memory; our consideration; the rememberance of our forefathers; the rememberance of Your servant Moshiach ben Dovid; the rememberance of Yerushalayim, the city of Your holiness; and the rememberance of Your entire nation, the House of Israel. Multiplying the eight verbs by the six nouns to which each verb applies yields 48 requests.

Continuing through the paragraph, each of these 48 petitions pertains to each of the following seven requests: לפליטה, לטובה, לחן, ולחסד, ולרחמים, לחיים, ולשלום – for deliverance, for goodness, for grace, for kindness, for compassion, for life, and for peace. Multiplying 48 by seven yields 336 requests in the first section of this insertion. We then proceed to beseech Hashem זכרנו ד' אלקינו בו לטובה, ופקדנו בו לברכה, והושיענו בו לחיים – Remember us Hashem our G-d on this day for goodness, consider us on it for blessing, and save us on it for life – which is an additional three requests, bringing the total up to 339.

Finally, we ask Hashem ובדבר ישועה, ורחמים – in the matter of salvation and compassion – He should חוס, וחננו, ורחם עלינו, והושיענו – pity, be gracious with us, be compassionate with us, and save use us. Multiplying these two subjects by the four requests that we make for each of them yields an additional eight requests, which when added on to the previous count results in a grand total of 347 requests concisely packed into this paragraph that we will be saying more than 30 times throughout Sukkos, hopefully with a newfound appreciation for the tremendous depth of its content.

**בחמשה עשר יום לחדש השביעי הזה חג הסכות שבעת ימים לד' ביום הראשון מקרא קדש כל מלאכת עבדה לא תעשו (ויקרא 23:34-35)**

Parshas Emor introduces us to the Yomim Tovim. The last festival listed chronologically is Sukkos, although curiously, it is not described in the same manner as all of the other holidays. Regarding each of the other Yomim Tovim, the Torah mentions its date and then states what we are commanded to do at that time, such as eat matzah on Pesach, and blow the shofar on Rosh Hashana. However, when the Torah initially discusses Sukkos, it makes no mention of how it should be celebrated, stating simply that its duration is seven days and no work should be done on the first day. The Torah then digresses to state (23:37) that this concludes the list of all of the Yomim Tovim, at which point it reverts to discussing the laws of Sukkos (23:39-43) and mentions the requirements to dwell in a sukkah and take the four species. Why is the section discussing Sukkos split up in this peculiar manner?

Rav Menachem Tzvi Taksin suggests that the Torah is hinting to us that during the time that the Jewish people were in the wilderness, they were not obligated to sit in sukkos or to take the four species on Sukkos. The Torah explains (23:43) that the purpose of dwelling in booths is in order to remember the sukkos in which Hashem placed our ancestors after He took them out of Egypt. According to this reasoning, there would be no purpose in building temporary huts to remember something that they were experiencing on a daily basis. Similarly, the command to take the four species on Sukkos is predicated on (23:39) entering the land of Israel and gathering its produce, in which case it wasn't applicable as long as the Jewish people were wandering in the wilderness and hadn't yet entered Eretz Yisroel.

Rav Taksin adds that this understanding is alluded to by the fact that the Torah initially emphasizes (23:34) that the festival of Sukkos is to be celebrated in חודש השביעי הזה - this seventh month - but when it repeats the mitzvos of dwelling in the sukkah and taking the four species (23:39), it refers to them being done in חודש השביעי - the seventh month. Rav Taksin explains that initially, Moshe was speaking to his contemporaries about the Yom Tov that they would observe on the 15th day of the seventh month of that year, and for that reason he mentioned only that the first day is holy, as that was the primary commemoration of Sukkos in the wilderness. He then declared that he had summarized all of the Yomim Tovim that they would be observing, at which point he added that in the future, after they entered the land of Israel, Sukkos would also be celebrated by sitting in booths and taking the four species.

When this chiddush (original Torah thought) appeared in a Torah journal in 1928, it generated quite a controversy, as several learned readers argued that it was too novel to be relied upon without the support of earlier sources. At that point, Rav Yisroel Veltz, the head of the Rabbinical court in Budapest who had authored the original article in which he quoted Rav Taksin, attempted to come to Rav Taksin's defense by citing the explanation of the Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:43) that the reason for the mitzvah of taking the four species is to express our joy at coming out of the barren wilderness to the verdant land of Israel. In order to commemorate this, Hashem commanded us to take beautiful and fragrant fruits which grew in great abundance in Eretz Yisroel at that time and could easily be attained, which seems to support the claim that the mitzvah of taking the four species did not apply in the wilderness.

However, even with the apparent support of the Rambam, skeptics persisted in challenging Rav Taksin's chiddush, at which point Rav Veltz wrote to Rav Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg for his opinion on the matter. Rav Waldenberg responded by citing additional sources to support Rav Taksin's position, including the Abarbanel, who writes that the reason for including aravos as one of the four species is because they were not found in Egypt, and certainly not in the wilderness, so Hashem commanded the Jews to rejoice with them when they entered Eretz Yisroel, where they grow in large quantities.

Regarding Rav Taksin's claim that the mitzvah of dwelling in sukkos also did not apply in the wilderness, Rav Waldenberg cited the Mabit, who writes (Beis Elokim Shaar HaYesodos 37) that although the Jewish people observed Pesach and Shavuos in the wilderness, they were unable to celebrate Sukkos because they were surrounded by the Clouds of Glory, and they were unable to fulfill their obligations by sitting in a sukkah which rested underneath another sukkah (Sukkah 1:2). He adds that this is alluded to by the Torah's emphasis (23:43) that we should sit in booths so that future generations should remember that Hashem placed our ancestors in sukkos when they left Egypt, which implies that the obligation was not incumbent immediately, but only upon future generations.

**בסכת תשבו שבעת ימים כל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסכת למען ידעו דרתיכם**

**כי בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציאי אותם מארץ מצרים (23:42-43)**

The Torah commands us in Parshas Emor to dwell in sukkahs for seven days beginning on the 15th day of Tishrei. The Torah adds that the reason for this mitzvah is so that we will know that Hashem caused the Jewish people to dwell in booths when He took them out of Egypt. At first glance this information seems to merely be providing us with the rationale behind the mitzvah.

However, the Bach maintains (Orach Chaim 625) that although in general a person who performs a mitzvah without mentally concentrating on the mitzvah he is doing and the reason for it still fulfills his obligation, in a case such as sukkah where the Torah specifically writes that the mitzvah must be performed for a certain purpose, this reason becomes an integral part of the mitzvah, and a person who dwells in a sukkah without thinking about the underlying reason for doing so does not fulfill his obligation. While it is important to be cognizant of this legal opinion, it nevertheless begs the question: Why is the mitzvah of dwelling in a sukkah different than other mitzvos, regarding which the rationales need not be focused on to fulfill one’s basic obligation to perform the mitzvah?

According to one opinion in the Gemora (Sukkah 11b), we are commanded to dwell in sukkahs in order to remember the miracle of the Clouds of Glory that surrounded and protected the Jewish people during their travels through the wilderness. In light of the fact that this miracle began immediately after the Exodus from Egypt, a number of commentators question why the Yom Tov commemorating the miracle takes place in Tishrei and not in Nissan, when the miracle began?

The Tur (Orach Chaim 425) answers that the month of Nissan is in the spring, when people naturally go outdoors to enjoy the warm weather after a long, cold winter. As such, if the festival of Sukkos was celebrated in Nissan, leaving our homes to go to temporary outdoor dwellings would not demonstrate that we are doing so for the sake of the mitzvah, since at that time of year we would go outdoors regardless. Therefore, the Torah instead commanded us to observe Sukkos in Tishrei, when the weather begins to cool off and our natural inclination is to go indoors to stay warm, as at that time our decision to dwell in the sukkah clearly reveals our intention to perform a mitzvah.

Nevertheless, the Meged Yosef points out that even in Tishrei, the actions that we are required to do in the sukkah – eating and sleeping – are not inherently associated with the performance of mitzvos, as people eat and sleep every day even when it is not for the sake of a mitzvah. The commentators explain that one of the central themes of Sukkos is to elevate the physical world by using it for spiritual purposes. Therefore, the Torah specifically insists that at the time that we are dwelling in the sukkah, we must consciously focus on the mitzvah we are performing and the reason behind it, in order to imbue our otherwise mundane actions with sanctity as we transform them into holy acts that connect us to Hashem.

**על הסלע הך ויצאוקכ מים בצדקו חן חשרת מים (תפילת גשם)**

The Gemora in Sukkah (53a) recounts that at the Simchas Bais HaShoeivah celebration in the Temple on Sukkos, the pious Torah scholars rejoiced and sang a song praising the fact that even in their old age, they continued in the pious ways of their youth. The baalei teshuvah (sinners who have repented) who were present sang a different song, expressing their gratitude that in their old age they had atoned for the wayward choices they made when they were younger. Rav Yisroel Reisman points out that it is extremely unusual to find a song specifically associated with baalei teshuvah, and he explains that this is part of a unique emphasis that Sukkos places on the theme of repenting from sin.

One opinion in the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 15:7) maintains that the forbidden fruit from which Adam ate in the Garden of Eden was an esrog. If so, how are we able to use an esrog as one of the four species on Sukkos (Vayikra 23:42), when there is a Talmudic principle (Rosh Hashana 26a) that אין קטגור נעשה סניגור – an object that was used for a sin may not be used in to perform a mitzvah?

In the introduction to his sefer Shu”t Bais Ephraim, Rav Ephraim Zalman Margolios explains that the esrog teaches us the tremendous power of repentance. Because Adam did teshuvah for his sin, the very object that he used for his transgression was transformed into a mitzvah that brings great joy. This illustrates the idea expressed by the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 7:6) that before a sinner repents, he is disgusting to Hashem, but after he does teshuvah, he once again becomes beloved.

In the prayer for rain recited by the chazzan during his repetition of the Mussaf prayers on Shemini Atzeres, each stanza invokes the water-related merits of one of our righteous forefathers. In the stanza referring to Moshe, we mention the fact that when the Jewish people were thirsty, he struck the rock and caused water to come forth, and we pray that in the merit of his righteousness, Hashem should bless our water supply. Since Moshe was punished for his actions and was not allowed to enter the land of Israel as a result, why do we invoke an episode that is considered more of a sin than a merit? Rabbi Reisman suggests that because Sukkos comes just after we have done teshuvah and been forgiven for our sins on Yom Kippur, therefore it is a time when we do not need to fear prior misdeeds and specifically invoke them, as our teshuvah transforms them into merits.

In Parshas Vayeira, three angels came to Avrohom on Pesach to inform him that he would have a child. Upon hearing the blessing of the angels that she would merit to give birth to a child, Sorah laughed in wondrous disbelief and questioned how she and her elderly husband could possibly conceive a child (Bereishis 18:10-12). Hashem responded by questioning Avrohom regarding Sorah’s lack of belief in His ability to perform miracles, and reaffirmed that by the following holiday she would have a son (18:13-14).

The Gemora in Rosh Hashana (11a) notes that if the episode with the angels occurred on Pesach, it would be impossible for Sorah to conceive and give birth to a child before Shavuos, which is only seven weeks later. The Gemora explains that Hashem did not come together with the angels, but rather came back later on Sukkos to inform Avrohom that by the next holiday – Pesach, which was seven months away, since that year was a leap year – Sorah would have a son. Why did Hashem wait until Sukkos to approach Avrohom instead of coming together with the angels to inform him immediately?

The Chasam Sofer explains that Hashem did not want to speak lashon hara by telling Avrohom that Sorah’s emunah (faith) was lacking, and she had laughed upon hearing the angels’ promise. However, after Sorah did teshuvah for this on Yom Kippur, her sin was converted into a merit, and therefore on Sukkos Hashem was finally able to discuss it with Avrohom.

We also find the theme of teshuvah and Sukkos in the Vilna Gaon’s explanation that Sukkos is celebrated in Tishrei and not in Nissan, when the Clouds of Glory initially surrounded the Jewish people after the Exodus from Egypt, because those clouds were taken away at the time of the sin of the golden calf. Rather, we are commemorating the clouds that returned on the 15th day of Tishrei after Hashem forgave the Jewish people, which remained to surround and protect them for the duration of their sojourn in the wilderness.

The Vilna Gaon writes that the Jewish people were forgiven on the 10th of Tishrei (Yom Kippur), and on the 11th Moshe commanded them regarding the building of the Mishkan. They brought their contributions for the Mishkan for two days (Shemos 36:3), the 12th and the 13th, and on the 14th Moshe realized that the donations were sufficient and announced that no more should be brought (36:6). On the following day, the 15th of Tishrei, the work began on the building of the Mishkan and on that day, the Clouds of Glory returned to the Jewish camp, which we celebrate and remember on Sukkos.

As we enter Sukkos fresh off the spiritual high of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, our closeness to Hashem should continue as we rejoice and celebrate the uplifting feeling of being baalei teshuvah whose repentance was accepted.

**Parsha Points to Ponder (and sources which discuss them):**

**1)** The Torah instructs us (32:7) to ask our fathers and grandfathers for advice. Does this advice also apply to somebody whose father or grandfather isn’t a Torah scholar? (Lulei Soras’cha)

**2)** Hashem told Moshe (32:49-50) to ascend the mountain and die there just as his brother Aharon died. Rashi explains that Moshe coveted the way in which Aharon had died. Aharon merited seeing his son Elozar wearing the garments of the Kohen Gadol and preparing to succeed him, and Hashem promised Moshe that he would die a parallel death. In what way did Moshe enjoy a similar death, as Rashi writes (Bamidbar 27:16) that his request for his children to succeed him was denied and he was succeeded instead by Yehoshua? (Kol Dodi)

**3)** The Gemora in Shabbos (151b) rules that it is forbidden to sleep alone in a house. Does this prohibition also apply to sleeping alone in a sukkah? (Rokeach Hilchos Sukkah 219, Maaseh Rav 221, Shu”t Doveiv Meishorim 1:79, Daas Torah Orach Chaim 639:1, Orchos Rabbeinu Vol. 2 pg. 224, Piskei Teshuvos 639:5, Ma’adanei Asher Parshas Emor 5770)

**4)** If a person doesn’t recite the invitation to the seven ushpizin (guests) to join him in the sukkah, do they still come? (Yesod V’Shoresh HaAvodah 11:13, Kaf HaChaim 639:8, Shalmei Moed 28)

**5)** In what case would one not be required to bring out another Sefer Torah after an invalidating mistake was found in the Sefer Torah which is being read, even if the error was located in the first three verses of the reading? (China V'Chisda Kesuvos 7)

**Answers to Points to Ponder:**

**1)** An American boy wanted to study in a yeshiva in Israel, but his father felt that he would not succeed there. **Rav Shach** told them that in advising all youth to ask their fathers – even those who are not Torah scholars – the Torah is teaching that any father whose intentions are for the sake of Heaven and for the well-being of his children will be given Divine assistance to guide his children on a successful path.

**2)** **Rav Dovid Feinstein** explains that Moshe’s greatness was not in his role as leader, but in his position as the teacher of Torah par excellence. In this function, all of the Jewish people were his children, and his devoted disciple Yehoshua was like his “first-born.” In the sense that Yehoshua succeeded him and the entire generation inherited his greatness, Moshe’s death was comparable to Aharon’s.

**3)** The Mishnah (Sukkah 28a) records a dispute between Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai. Beis Shammai maintains that for a sukkah to be kosher, it must be large enough to contain a person's head, most of his body, and a table, while Beis Hillel argues that it need only have enough space for his head and the majority of his body. From the fact that Beis Hillel validates a sukkah which is only big enough for one person to sleep in, the **Tchebiner Rav** deduces that it is permissible to sleep alone in a sukkah. The **Ma'adanei Asher** notes that this proof is not ironclad, as Beis Hillel is perhaps referring to a case in which one's sukkah opens into the house where other people are sleeping. Nevertheless, the **Vilna Gaon** rules that it is permitted to sleep alone in a sukkah, as one who is performing a mitzvah will be protected from being harmed. This opinion is also supported by a Medrash cited by the **Rokeach**. The **Chazon Ish** and **Steipler Gaon** were careful not to sleep alone in a sukkah.

**4)** The **Yesod V'Shoresh HaAvodah** notes that the passage in the Zohar HaKadosh which discusses the ushpizin implies that they only come if they are verbally invited to come. The custom of **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** was to invite the ushpizin only once, on the first night of Sukkos, which he maintained sufficed for the entire Yom Tov. The **Kaf HaChaim** writes that just as a chair is designated for Eliyahu at a circumcision, so too should a chair be set up in the sukkah for the ushpizin. The **Chida** derives from the Zohar HaKadosh that if no chair is provided, the ushpizin will not come into the sukkah.

**5)** The **China V'Chisda** writes that if a mistake is found in the Sefer Torah from which the Torah reading for Chosson Bereishis is being read, even if it is located in the first three verses, there is no need to bring out an additional Sefer Torah to complete the reading. The reason for this unusual ruling is that the reading of Chosson Bereishis is not legally required and is only a custom; as such, once it has been begun, the custom has been fulfilled, and the laws governing the traditional Torah reading do not apply.

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**Rabbi Shlomo Caplan**

**Mishulchan Shlomo**

**Succos - The Reason For The Season**

The Tur Shulchan Aruch asks a classic question: If the Yom Tov of Succos commemorates the *sukkos* that Bnai Yisrael dwelt in when they left Mitzrayim, why is it celebrated in the month of Tishrei instead of Nissan when they left Mitzrayim? He answers that Nissan occurs during the springtime when it is common for people to sit outside in huts in order to enjoy the pleasant weather. Therefore it would not be obvious that our dwelling in *sukkos* is a fulfillment of the Mitzvah. Instead we enter our *sukkos* in Tishrei, in the fall when the weather becomes more inclement and people are more likely to retreat to their homes. This way we demonstrate that our dwelling in the *sukka* is strictly to fulfill the Mitzvah.

Rav Avraham Pam suggests another explanation. He bases it on an incident in the book of Nechemia (Chap. 1). Nechemia, who was the butler of the Persian King Artaxerxes, had recently heard about the disastrous state of affairs of the Jews living in Eretz Yisrael and was extremely distraught and morose. When he approached the King to serve him his wine, the King immediately detected Nechemia’s sour disposition. “Why is your face downcast? You are not ill. This can only signify that you have ill will [towards me].” Nechemia was terrified by the King’s assumption that he did not relish serving him and he immediately explained the reason for his sadness.

This story conveys the importance of serving a king with a radiant disposition. Therefore, after Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur when we have proclaimed countless times that Hashem is our King and King of the universe, Hashem provides us with Zeman Simchaseinu – the Season of our Joy - to demonstrate that our service of Him is suffused with joy. This joy confirms our intense loyalty to our King.

Rav Pam’s approach becomes even more poignant when we bear in mind the Gemara in Rosh Hashana (32b). The angels said to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, “Ribono Shel Olam, Why doesn’t Yisrael recite Hallel on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?” He answered, “Is it appropriate to say Hallel when the King is sitting on the throne of judgment and the Books of Life and Death are open before Him?”

While it would make sense to say Hallel on these days of the Coronation of Hashem, the austerity of the days of judgment precludes our doing so. How fitting it is that immediately after the solemnity of Yom Kippur has passed and we are confident that our prayers have been accepted, we celebrate Zeman Simchaseinu filled with Hallel and jubilation. Now we can express our true pleasure and happiness for the privilege of serving our King.

One final point. During the Days of Awe the prevalent emotion is one of fear. It is this fear that motivates and propels us to reach for a higher spiritual level and to experience sincere feelings of Teshuva. But this type of fear cannot last and it doesn’t take long to evaporate. How can we hold on to our growth and accomplishments of these Holy Days? Through *simcha.* *Simcha* in Mitzvos - in the *sukka,* in the *lulav* and *esrog* – and *simcha* in Hashem. “This is the day that Hashem has made, we will rejoice and be happy in Him!”

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**Rabbi J. Gewirtz**

**Migdal Ohr**

**Volume 18 – Issue 55 Parshas Haazinu – Sukkos 5777**

**Z”EwT TWKWS-WNYZAH ’P**

*A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah*

***(U:BL OYRBD) „WTLXN LBX BQEY ,WME ’H QLX YK‰***

***“For the portion of HaShem is His nation; Yaakov is the measure of His inheritance.” (Deut. 32:9)***

The Universe belongs to HaShem, and yet the Torah now tells us that G-d’s “portion,” is His chosen people. Further, Yaakov, a name for the Jewish People is called the measure of that inheritance. Though HaShem is the master of everything He created, it is what Mankind returns to him as a “gift” that He truly treasures.

However, what G-d appreciates is not the physical items, sacrifices or donations to the Bais HaMikdash. What HaShem places in His storehouse is the reverence, love, and devotion to him which we develop within ourselves.

The word “chevel,” used for “measure” in this posuk, means rope. Ropes were commonly used to measure lot lines in ancient times and therefore this word is used. Rashi, however, points out a further connotation.

A rope is twisted from at least three strands of fiber. Its strength comes from the combination of these strands, as it says in Koheles (4:12) “and the tripled thread shall not easily be broken.” Says Rashi, Yaakov was the third strand in the connection to HaShem, because he used the lessons and experiences of his father and grandfather to shape his own service to HaShem. By combining their ways with his own, he created a strong connection to G-d, and it is through this rope that HaShem holds tight to His inheritance.

(It should be noted that Yishmael was only a second-generation, and though Esav was a third-generation, he did not serve HaShem. That is why only Yaakov, i.e. Klal Yisrael, is called the measure of HaShem’s inheritance.)

As this Parsha is often read just before Sukkos, it is interesting to note a certain parallel between the Avos and the holidays of Tishrei.

Avraham was the first to recognize HaShem as the Creator of the world. He would teach people to thank G-d for the food they ate. He essentially crowned HaShem as King of the world, and said everything belongs to Him. This is like Rosh HaShana. The shofar we sound was a remembrance of Avraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son, the most valuable physical “item” a person can have. (Though Yitzchak agreed to be sacrificed, the ram offered in his place was still Avraham’s offering.)

Yitzchak represented a much more austere way of serving HaShem. He turned inwardly and prayed to build his connection to HaShem. With his willingness to be offered as a sacrifice, Yitzchak represented an eschewing or negation of the physical world. This is like Yom Kippur, when we don’t eat or drink and spent many hours in prayer. The selichos we say Erev Yom Kippur refer to the ‘ashes of Yitzchak’ which are a boon for his descendants on the day of Atonement. These refer not only to his willingness to be a sacrifice, but for to his approach to life in which he gave priority to the spiritual.

Yaakov came along and combined these two approaches. He took everything physical and used it in the service of HaShem. The Midrash tells us that Yaakov and Esav made a deal. Yaakov made a huge mound of gold, jewels, and everything “money” that he had, and offered it to Esav in exchange for the birthright. Essentially, Esav got “this world” and Yaakov got “the world to come.” When Esav met Yaakov coming back from Lavan with wealth, he asked, “Who are these to you?” He was asking how Yaakov was able to have physical things like family and wealth if he was supposed to only get “the next world.”

Yaakov explained that everything he had was only used to serve HaShem. There was no such thing as enjoying ‘this world’ for him. Rather, all he had was given to him by HaShem in order to serve Him and thereby earn a portion in the world to come, Olam Haba. This is similar to Sukkos, when we celebrate the ingathering of the crops by leaving the stability of our homes and going out to the Sukkah, the structure that declares HaShem’s mastery over us and this world.

We take the bounty and use it to serve HaShem. Instead of simply acknowledging G-d’s mastery as Avraham, or negating the physical as Yitzchak, on Sukkos we follow the lead of Yaakov in combining these two approaches and subjugate the physical, harnessing it as a vehicle for serving HaShem.

This is the source of our joy: knowing that all we have is for a purpose, and building on the connection of our forefathers to weave our own strong relationship with HaShem. Who knows? Perhaps this is one reason we read Koheles on Sukkos – to remind us to keep adding our own strands to the rope of our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

*Two boys once applied to the Pressburg Yeshiva. There was only one space available so it was left to the Dean, R’ Moshe Sofer (Chasam Sofer) to decide.*

*As the rebbeim watched, the Chasam Sofer tested each boy. One was a genius. His breadth of knowledge was vast, his understanding and sharp intellect astounding. He was the favorite among the assembled teachers.*

*The other boy did fine, but was not spectacular. However, after the boys left, it was the second one whom R’ Moshe chose. The rebbeim were stunned. “But the first boy would add so much to our Yeshiva; his mind is so sharp! Why did you choose the second?” “I watched them coming to the Bais Medresh through the window,” replied the sage. “On the ground was some s’chach from the Sukkah that was recently taken down. The first boy walked straight over the s’chach, trampling it as he approached. The second boy carefully walked around the s’chach, giving it the deference of something used for a mitzvah. If the first boy could show such disregard for HaShem’s mitzvos, not loving them, especially just days after Sukkos, then he does not belong here, no matter how much Torah he knows.”*

**Now You Know**

The posuk in Haazinu says: Ki shem hashem ekra havu godel L’ailokeinu, When I mention the name of HaShem, praise our G-d.

This is the source for the halacha to say “Baruch Hu U’Varuch Shmo,” blessed is He and blessed is His name, when we hear HaShem’s name mentioned in a bracha.

The question is, why would we praise HaShem every time we hear His name if it wasn’t in the context of a blessing or praise?

The Haftorah this week contains Shiras Dovid, a song of Dovid HaMelech, which comes from Shmuel. These verses also appear in Tehillim.

The Abarbanel explains that this series of verses were a compilation Dovid authored when he was young.

He would repeat these phrases often so they were fluent in his mouth. Whenever HaShem did something for which Dovid wanted to praise Him, this was his go-to piece.

Later, he modified it slightly to be used by any Jew in praising HaShem and that’s the version in Tehillim.

The point, it seems, is that we must constantly find opportunities to praise HaShem and have the right words prepared to do so.

Praising Him when we hear His name is a fantastic practice for this, and will even help us find reasons for praise.

**Thought Of The Week:**

A fool learns from his mistakes. A wise man learns from the mistakes of others.

***(DY,BY:UK RBDMB) „IMwB HLWLB TLS OTXNMW...YEYBwH wDXL OWY RsE HwMXBW‰***

***“On the fifteenth day of the seventh month… and its flour offering, mixed with oil...” (Numbers 29:12,14)***

Most korbanos have libations with them, but the korban on the first day of Pesach and the first day of Sukkos notably omit them. Why would these offerings not need libations? The Haamek Davar says that libations were intended to make the offerings more pleasing to HaShem, and he quotes a posuk in Hosea (9:4). However, on Pesach and Sukkos, everyone brought a korban chagigah (festival offering) and a korban re’iah (appearance offering.) Those already had libations so the communal sacrifices would also be pleasing. When Bilaam was going to curse the Jews, the donkey strayed and Bilaam struck it three times. HaShem opened the donkey’s mouth and it asked why he had struck the animal, ‘zeh shalosh regalim,’ these three times.

Chazal say he was hinting that Bilaam wanted to curse the Jews who appear at the Bais HaMikdash three times a year and while they ‘are seen’ they see the Shechina, HaShem’s closeness, yet Bilaam himself didn’t even see the angel G-d had sent!

Perhaps we can bring these two lessons together and have a great take-away from this. The communal korbanos were guaranteed to be pleasing because all the individuals had offered pleasing sacrifices. When a person sees the Shechina of G-d, he realizes that there is a place for him in the Universe. He has a role to play and it is between him and G-d, not anyone else. Just as he brings his own appearance korban, so does he have his own connection to HaShem and no one else stands in the way of that.

This lack of jealousy and willingness of each individual to play his or her part in the master plan of Klal Yisrael is what HaShem finds most-pleasing.

No further libation or enhancement is necessary.

**Now You Know**

The Shulchan Aruch says that we sit in the Sukkah as a reminder that when HaShem took us out of Egypt, He gave us the Clouds of Glory to protect us from the heat and the sun in the desert.

Ideally, when one sits in the Sukkah, he should have in mind both that he is remembering the Exodus itself, and also the Ananei HaKavod, the Clouds of Glory that surrounded and protected us.

If one simply has in mind to fulfill the obligation of sitting in the Sukkah, he has done so, though not as optimally.

The Tur explains that even though the Exodus took place in the Spring we do not sit in the Sukkah then because it would not be apparent that we are going out of our homes for the mitzvah since that is a time when everyone goes outside. Therefore Sukkos takes place in the Fall (in the Northern Hemisphere, at least.)

Others explain that when we sinned with the Golden Calf, we lost those clouds of protection and only when Moshe came back with the second set of luchos, on Yom Kippur, did the clouds return.

Therefore, we sit in the Sukkah now, because we are commemorating THOSE clouds, which HaShem gave us after we repented from our sins.

This gives an added dimension to our joy, to realize that even if we’ve gone away from HaShem, we can still repent, return and sit in the shade of His Divine protection.

We all know that the sukkah reminds us of the Clouds of Glory which protected us in the desert, but what about the mon and the Well of Miriam which fed us and quenched our thirst there?

The Bnai Yissaschar says that when we eat and drink in the Sukkah, and realize from Whom all the good we enjoy comes, this serves as a commemoration of these miracles as well.

**Thought of the week:**

No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it.

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**M'oray Ha'Aish**

**Haazinu: By Heaven**

In Ha’azinu, the penultimate parashah of the Torah, Moshe delivers his message in song. Although the parashah is replete with poetic allusions, the starting point for Moshe’s address is his call upon heaven to bear witness.

Give ear, oh heavens and I will speak, and hear, oh earth, the words of my mouth. (D’varim 32:1)

This is not simply a case of poetic license; Moshe’s opening statement is a crucial part of his message. In fact, in the verses that lead up to this poetic speech, Moshe gives notice of his intention to call upon heaven and earth as witnesses:

Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to witness against them. (D’varim 31:28)

This testimony was mentioned earlier, as well:

I call heaven and earth to witness on this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live. (D’varim 30:19)

What is the purpose of calling heaven as a witness? The simple answer is that Moshe will soon be leaving the stage; he knows that his death is imminent, and that he will no longer be there to chastise the people should they go astray. Therefore, he informs them that there are other, more permanent witnesses who will always be there to testify in his stead.

Similarly, in his treatise on the Laws of Teshuva (repentance), Rambam refers to a different sort of “supernatural testimony:”

What constitutes teshuvah? That a sinner should abandon his sins and remove them from his thoughts, resolving in his heart never to commit them again.... Similarly, he must regret the past, as [Jeremiah 31:18] states: "After I returned, I regretted." He who knows all mysteries will testify that he will never return to this sin again … He must verbally confess and state these matters which he resolved in his heart. (Rambam Teshuva 2:2)

Rambam states that one of the critical elements of teshuva is that “He who knows all mysteries,” God Himself who alone knows the future behavior of each and every one of us, testifies that this particular person will never repeat this sin. This passage has been much debated, with some opining that it indicates Rambam’s belief that the recidivist sinner’s behavior voids his penitence. The sin of which he was originally guilty still stands, unforgiven and uncleansed, because his later repetition of the sin proves that his penitence was insincere. In this view, a sinner is forgiven only if he or she never backslides or regresses into old, die-hard behaviors. Only when God Himself is able to attest that the sin was never revisited is the sin expunged from the sinner’s record.**(1)**

Rav Yisrael Salanter took issue with this interpretation, noting that if this were the case, the stages of repentance in Rambam’s formulation would have appeared in a different sequence: The reference to Divine testimony should have followed the words “resolving in his heart, never to commit (that sin) again.” Instead, the testimony of “He who knows all mysteries” regards the penitent’s regret. Therefore, Rav Yisrael Salanter theorized, Rambam’s statement regarding God’s testimony is not telling us as much about the penitent’s future behavior as it is about his or her current sincerity: A person must express regret for their sin with such sincerity that they are willing to call upon God as their witness. God’s testimony regards the penitent’s sincerity in the present tense, and does not attest to events that may or may not transpire in the future.**(2)** Therefore, if a person is sincere in their teshuva, they are forgiven – even if they stumble and fall again in the future.**(3)**

This reading of Rambam’s comments reveals a far more realistic view of human nature: There are – and always have been – times when even sincere penitents succumb to the Evil Inclination. The Talmud teaches that part of the insidiousness of sin is that it becomes habitual.

… R. Huna said: ‘Once a person has committed a sin once and twice, it is permitted to him.’ Permitted?! How could that occur to you? Rather, it appears to him as if it were permitted. (Talmud Bavli Yoma 86b)

While it may be the case that before a first offence a person undergoes an internal struggle, at a certain point the battle is won or lost and the struggle is over; the desire for immediate gratification overcomes the voice of long-term, logical thinking. The habitual sinner, on the other hand, no longer struggles; he creates a “new normal.” However, if this person gathers the strength to do sincere teshuva, and, despite the sincerity of his or her remorse and resolve never to sin again nonetheless falls prey to the Evil Inclination, he or she will experience a new struggle – perhaps even more fierce than the first. This sin is not a case of “business as usual;” the habit of sin has not been allowed to dictate behavior. The burning desire he or she once had for that particular sin had already been extinguished through sincere teshuva. The more recent sin is the result of a new struggle, a new “fire,” unrelated to the previous episode for which he or she had already been forgiven.**(4)**

Rabbi Soloveitchik focused on the significance of God’s involvement in this process: By virtue of being descendants of the matriarchs and patriarchs, each and every Jew is endowed with a special holiness. This holiness was given full expression in the covenant of Mount Sinai. It is this covenant that insures that an individual’s status as a Jew, and the status of the Jewish People as God’s chosen nation, can never be forfeited.

However, in the book of D’varim another covenant was forged between God and each Jew as an individual. When a person transgresses, it is this covenant that is broken. Behavior that violates this covenant will result in the forfeit of the privileges that this covenant with God endows.

Sin has a way of corrupting us; beyond the bad behavior, it sullies the sinner’s soul. Teshuva seeks to correct sin on two distinct levels, first by achieving forgiveness for the behavior itself, but also by cleansing the soul, freeing it from the burden with which sin has saddled it. Sin creates a distance between the two parties to the covenant; even when the misdeed itself is forgiven, the estrangement remains. Trust must be rebuilt; the sanctity of the covenant must be restored. By bringing God into the equation, by summoning God as a witness of one’s repentance, we replicate the forging of the covenant, in a manner akin to renewing vows. Just as heaven was called as a witness by Moshe, so, too, must the penitent invoke Heaven as a witness when he or she renews the covenant. The process of teshuva described by Rambam, in which God testifies to the sincerity of the teshuva, creates a parallel with the testimony of heaven and earth Moshe invokes before his death. Both are intended to enable us to connect – or reconnect – with the holiness our souls sorely need.**(5)**

The Mishnah in which the Yom Kippur ritual is described in detail, Tractate Yoma, concludes with an optimistic teaching by Rabbi Akiva:

Rabbi Akiva said: Fortunate are you, Israel! Who is it before whom you are purified? And who is it that purifies you? Your Father in Heaven, as it is said: ‘And I will sprinkle pure water upon you and you shall be pure.’ And it further says: ‘The hope (mikveh) of Israel is the Almighty!’ Just as the mikveh purifies the impure, so does the Holy One, blessed be He, purify Israel. (Mishna Yoma 8:9, Talmud Bavli 86b)

In this uplifting summary of the process of teshuva, Rabbi Akiva leads us away from the cold, impersonal accounting of sin and punishment, atonement and purity that is the world of jurisprudence; indeed, a judge would be likely to “throw the book” at the recidivist sinner. Instead, Rabbi Akiva draws a metaphor from the world of ritual purity. Surely, this metaphor supports a more forgiving understanding of teshuva: A person who immerses in the purifying waters of the mikveh will most certainly – inevitably, unavoidably – become impure again. And yet, this in no way impacts or diminishes the purity that is achieved in the present moment. So, too, a person who sins and repents – sincerely and wholeheartedly enough to invoke God as their witness – is forgiven, even if they repeat their sin in the future.

Regret is a powerful tool; it allows us to erase the past. Standing before God and expressing regret not only liberates us from the past, it allows us to renew our personal covenant with God. Sincere teshuva creates a moment of purity, in which God purifies us as if with pure waters of the mikveh, leaving us cleansed and holy. Even if we subsequently stumble, and are in need of cleansing once again, that moment of purity is not sullied by the specter of whatever missteps lurk in the future.

For a more in-depth analysis see: http://arikahn.blogspot.co.il/2016/10/parashat-haazinu-and-yom-kippur-audio.html

**Notes**

**1.** See R’ Yitzchak ben Nisim Rietbard, Beit Yitzchak, Drasha for Yom Kippurim.

**2.** Rav Yisrael Salanter, Kochvei Ohr; also see Rabbi Menachem Krakowsky, Avodat Hamelech Laws of Teshuva 2:2.

**3.** This position is taken by Rav Sa’adya Gaon, Ha’emunot v’Hadeyot maamar 5. It may also be the intention of the Sefer HaChinuch Mitzva 311.

**4.** R. Yaakov Lorberbaum (1770-1832), Nahalat Yaakov; Rambam, Laws of Teshuva 2:2.

**5.** Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Reshimot Shiurim, Nedarim 8b.

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**Rabbi Avraham Kahn**

**Torah Attitude**

**Torah Attitude: Parashas Haazinu & Succos: Real joy**

*October 10, 2016*

***Summary***

“Succos, the time of our gladness” does not seem to correspond to a special event that took place on a specific date. On the Festival of Succos we have two mitzvot: to take the four species and to dwell in the succah. The Talmud brings two interpretations of what the succah, that G’d provided us with in the wilderness, refers to. When we leave our homes and dwell in a succah in the beginning of the winter season, it is clear that we are doing so to fulfill the mitzvah. The Vilna Gaon explains that the Clouds of Glory returned to the Jewish nation on the fifteenth of Tishrei. We learn from Koheles that real joy can only be accomplished with mitzvot and good deeds. Real joy and gladness is not to be found in material wealth and comfort. Affluence and wealth often cause spiritual decline as well as shortcomings in interpersonal relationships.

**Time Of Our Gladness**

Each of our three festivals has a unique theme. As we say in our prayers (Shemona Esrei for Festivals): “Passover is the time of our freedom. Shavuous is the time of the giving of our Torah. And Succos is the time of our gladness.” We start to celebrate Passover on the date that G’d redeemed us from slavery in Egypt. Similarly, we celebrate Shavuous on the date we received the Torah. However, Succos does not seem to correspond to a special event that took place on a specific date. On a simple level, the reason why it is called “the time of our gladness” is because this is the time of the year when the harvest is brought home. As it says, (Vayikra 23:39-40) “But on the fifteenth day of the seventh month [counted from Nissan, see Shemos 12:2], when you gather the crop of the land, you shall celebrate G’d’s Festival for seven days … and you shall rejoice before HASHEM your G’d for seven days.” The Torah teaches that at the time we rejoice having the harvest in house, we shall utilize this celebration to rejoice before G’d. For He is the One who blessed our crop and constantly provides us with all our needs.

**Two Mitzvot**

On the Festival of Succos we have two mitzvot: to take the four species and to dwell in the succah. We can understand that taking the four species corresponds to the time of the harvest. But dwelling in the succah does not seem to have anything to do with bringing home the crop. As a matter of fact, the Torah gives a totally different reason for this mitzvah. As it says, (ibid 43) “So that your generations shall know that I provided Succos for the children of Israel, when I took them out of the land of Egypt.”

**Two Interpretations**

The Talmud (Succah 11b) brings two interpretations of what these succos refer to. On a simple level, the Talmud explains that our ancestors actually lived in some kind of booths during their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. On a deeper level the Talmud explains that this refers to the Clouds of Glory that enveloped the Jewish people throughout that period. The Clouds protected them from their enemies, wild animals, and other dangers. At the same time, they provided shade from the hot sun and other harsh elements.

**Winter Dwelling**

The Tur Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 625) asks an obvious question. If the succah is to commemorate what happened at the time of the exodus from Egypt, why do we not dwell in the succah during the Festival of Pesach, when we celebrate that exodus? Says the Tur, “We were not commanded to make a succah in the month of Nissan when the summer starts. At that time of the year it is common to sit in the shade of booths, and it would not be noticeable that we make our succah to fulfill the commandment of G’d. We are commanded to make s succah in Tishrei, at the beginning of the winter season, when everyone leaves their booths and go back home. When we leave our homes and dwell in a succah at this time of year, it is apparent that we do so to fulfill G’d’s mitzvah.”

**Clouds of Glory**

The Vilna Gaon explains that according to the Talmud’s deeper interpretation, that the succos in the wilderness refer to the Clouds of Glory, we gain an additional understanding why we leave our homes to dwell in succos on the fifteenth of Tishrei. He explains that the Clouds of Glory disappeared after the sin of the golden calf, and only came back to protect the Jewish people when they started to erect the Tabernacle. Our sages teach that the sin of the golden calf took place on the 17th of Tammuz. This caused Moses to destroy the first tablets. The next day, on the 18th of Tammuz, Moses ascended Mount Sinai again, to pray to G’d and beg Him not to annihilate the Jewish people. Moses returned forty days later, at the end of the month of Av, only to ascend for a third period of forty days to receive the second tablets. He returned on Yom Kippur, the 10th of Tishrei, with the second tablets. On the following day, Moses gathered the Jewish people to instruct them about erecting the Tabernacle. For the following two days, the Jews brought the materials needed to build the Tabernacle. On the next day, the materials were given to the craftsmen to start their jobs. On the following day, the 15th of Tishrei, the actual work started. Concludes the Vilna Gaon, this is the day the Clouds of Glory returned to the Jewish nation, and this is the day we start to celebrate Succos.

**Koheles**

It seems odd that specifically on the Festival that is “the time of our gladness”, we leave the comfort of our homes to dwell in a primitive booth. We eat there, and when possible we sleep there, and do as many of our activities as we can in the succah. We would expect that “the time of our gladness” should be celebrated in a more grandiose fashion. We might be able to gain a better understanding of this with the words of King Solomon in Koheles that we read on Succos. The Talmud (Shabbos 30b) asks that King Solomon seems to contradict himself. In one verse he writes (Koheles 8:15) “And I praised happiness”, but earlier he wrote (ibid 2:2) “And regarding happiness (I said) what does it achieve?” The Talmud answers that there are two kinds of happiness: one that comes from performing a mitzvah; this one King Solomon praises. The other one, that is not connected to a mitzvah, says King Solomon what does it achieve? It is well known that people who are constantly partying are not necessarily happy. They may enjoy themselves in the moment, but afterwards they often suffer from depression. For the superficial, materialistic happiness they experience is very fleeting. As our sages say, what makes you laugh today may make you cry tomorrow. On the other hand, when one does what is right, it gives a deeper satisfaction and happiness that stays with the person afterwards. That is why we only find real, lasting joy by people who fulfill mitzvot and do good deeds.

**Unique Mitzvah**

The Festival of Succos falls in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar: Chodesh HaSheviyi. If we change the “Shin” of Sheviyi to a “Sin”, it reads Chodesh Haseviyi which means the saturated month. No month in the Jewish calendar is so saturated with mitzvot as the month of Tishrei, starting with Rosh Hashanah with the blowing of the shofar, through the fast of Yom Kippur, culminating with Succos when we take the four species and dwell in the succah. The Mitzvah of Succah in itself is unique. We perform our regular activities, such as eating and sleeping in the Succah, and just by doing them in this primitive booth, they are transformed into mitzvot that we perform 24/7. This is the deeper message of Succos. Real joy and gladness is not found in material wealth and comfort. On the contrary, that often can bring problems and misfortune. As its says in this week’s parasha (Devarim 32:15) “And Jeshurun (the Jewish nation) became obese (affluent, see Targum) and kicked … and it deserted G’d its maker …they made Him angry with strangers and angered Him with abominations.”

**Spiritual Decline**

Affluence and wealth often cause spiritual decline as well as shortcomings in interpersonal relationships. We must understand that wealth is not an end in itself but a means to make a better society, where the more fortunate assist the less fortunate. When we realize this we can overcome the test of material wealth. The Rambam writes (Laws of Purim 2:17) “There is no greater and more beautiful joy than pleasing the poor.” This is especially relevant to the Festival of Succos. As it says (Devarim 16:13-14) “You shall rejoice on your festival, you, your son and your daughter, your slave and your maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, the orphan and the widow.” As we celebrate this beautiful festival of Succos, let us ensure that the spirit of this Festival, “the time of gladness”, is shared with everyone around us. Let us make sure to provide financial assistance to those less fortunate, or invite those who are lonely to join us in our succos. In this way, we will also feel true happiness derived from doing mitzvot and good deeds.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Chag Sameach.

These words were based on notes of Rabbi Avraham Kahn, the Rosh Yeshiva and Founder of Yeshivas Keser Torah in Toronto. Shalom. Michael Deverett P.S. If you have any questions or enjoyed reading this e-mail, we would appreciate hearing from you. If you know of others who may be interested in receiving e-mails similar to this, please let us know at michael@deverettlaw.com. For previous issues please see http://www.shemayisrael.com/a/kahn/archives/archives.htm.

**Rabbi Yosef Kalatzky**

**Beyond Pshat**

*L’Zeicher nishmas avi mori Reb Moshe Ben Yosef Kalatsky z’l u l’zeicher nishmas emee morasi Shaindel Bas Reb Chaim Tzvi z’l L’Zeicher nishmas ishtee Yehudis Chanah Kalatsky Bas Reb Kehas Z’l*

**Parshas Haazinu**

**1. The Expectation of Man**

The Torah states, “I call heaven and earth today to bear witness against you…” Rashi explains, “Hashem said to the Jewish people, “You should look at the heaven and the earth which I have created to serve you. Did it ever happen that the sun did not rise in the east and illuminate the world? The earth that I created to serve you – did it ever change its function? Did you ever plant and it did not grow? Did you ever plant wheat and barley grew in its place? If the creations of heaven and earth do not deviate from their function despite the fact that they are not deserving of reward when they function as they were intended to or receive punishment if they should fail, should it not be more so that the Jewish people not deviate from their responsibility because they are deserving of reward and subject to punishment?”

One of the methodologies given at Sinai as an approach to interpret the Torah is known as kal v’chomer. This logical principle states, for example, if one is deserving of reward for doing less, how much more so is one deserving for doing more (minimally the same degree of reward). To give the Jewish people a greater understanding of their responsibility, Moshe uses heaven and earth as the model to establish the kal v’chomer to give them an appreciation of the value of their actions. It seems that the function of heaven and earth is not comparable to the function of a human being. Heaven and earth are not “beings” that have the ability to choose. Therefore, they perform the function for which they were created. However, the human being who is a creature of choice continuously contends with an inclination which makes his choice difficult. If so, there is no basis for the kal v’chomer. Since the Torah communicates this as a valid kal v’chomer we must understand why it is the case.

Rambam states in Hilchos Yisodei HaTorah that malachim (angels) who were created to carry out the Will of G-d are not spiritual robots. An angel is a spiritual being who does not deviate from carrying out the Will of G-d because it recognizes and understands who Hashem is. Thus, the angel is not the spiritual robot. We find on the third day of creation that Hashem decreed, “Let the earth give forth fruit trees producing fruit.” Meaning that not only should the fruit of the tree be edible, but even the tree itself should be edible. However, G-d’s Command only brought about a tree which was itself inedible but that produced edible fruits. For some unknown reason, the angel, who is the spiritual being, who carries out the agency of Hashem, did not follow the order as it was given. Thus the result was not as perfect as G-d had wanted it to be. Now that we understand that the function of the angel is based on its own understanding of G-d, we are now able to appreciate the kal v’chomer which is being drawn by the Torah (from heaven and earth to the behavior of the human being). Meaning – although the angel is not deserving of reward or punishment it does not deviate from His Will because it is cognizant of the Will of Hashem. The Jew who is subject to reward and punishment should definitely be cognizant of His Will because if not, he will be held culpable for its violation or deserving of reward for its fulfillment. The only reason a Jew fails is because of his lack of cognizance.

The function of the evil inclination is to distract and overwhelm the Jew so he will not appreciate the Will of Hashem. He will lose perspective regarding his behavior. If one would continuously reflect on the consequences of his actions – for the positive or negative – then he would be no different than the angel. In fact the Jew would be even more inclined than the angel to do the Will of G-d because he is eligible for reward while the angel is not.

The Gemara in Tractate Sukkah states, “I (Hashem) created the evil inclination, and the Torah as its antidote.” The Torah is needed to give one the clarity to appreciate the consequences of his actions. It is when one achieves clarity through Torah study that he is able to subdue the evil inclination.

The Torah tells us that at the end of time Hashem will circumcise our hearts and the hearts of our children. Sforno explains this to mean, “Hashem will remove all confusion from our hearts. He will open our eyes and thus be removed from the pitfalls of life.” One will have the clarity to want to do “good” because the state of confusion in which we exist will be lifted. In order not to have this happen, one only has to realize the invaluable benefit of doing the Will of G-d and the grave consequences that result from deviating and not following His Will.

The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that a Torah Sage angers because the fire of Torah is within him. As the verse states, “Are not My Words like fire…” Rashi explains that the Torah contained within the Sage causes him to become angry. The Torah itself gives one an appreciation and depth of understanding of the wrong that is being perpetrated. However others who are not advanced in their Torah knowledge do not have the capacity to sense the wrong in what is contrary to the Torah.

It is only by gaining clarity that one can attain a semblance of the understanding of an angel. Thus, the comparison that is drawn by the Torah between the Jew and the angel is valid.

**2. The Success of the Evil is a Confirmation of G-d’s Justice**

The Torah states in the Portion of Haazinu, “Yeshurun became fat and kicked. You became fat, you became thick, you became corpulent – and it deserted G-d its maker, and was contemptuous of the Rock of its salvation.” Sforno explains “Yeshurun became fat and kicked” is referring to the Jewish people who are called “Yeshurun” because they are the congregation of those who uphold the Torah and have the ability to delve into its depth. He explains, “Just as the animal who kicks the owner who feeds it, so too the Jewish people shun (kick) Hashem who provides them with their sustenance and blessing. How did this happen? You, the Jewish people, who are “Yeshurun” who are able to delve and understand the Torah, you have turned to all of the material desires and through them have become thickened (lost your sensitivity) to unadulterated truth.” If the Jewish people become overly involved and immersed in the material they lose their sensitivity to truth; thus, they bolt from Hashem.

Moshe refers to Hashem as “the Rock whose action is perfect.” Meaning, even when one is punished and it seems that he is being treated unjustly by G-d, he must understand that G-d is Perfect and His Judgment is Perfect. Moshe continues and states, “All His ways are Just.” The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains this by citing the Midrash Tehillim, which cites the words of King David who rejoiced when he witnessed evil being rewarded. “Why did he rejoice? It is because he understood – if this is the way Hashem treats those who transgress His Will, how much more will He reward those who adhere to His Will.” How do we understand this?

We can explain it with the concept of rasha v’tov lo – an evil person (who despite his evil) experiences good fortune and tzaddik v’ra lo- a righteous person (who despite his devoutness) experiences misfortune. If one sees an evil person with good fortune while the righteous person is experiencing difficulty, one may perceive this wrongly and take a position that Hashem is not being Just. Thus, Moshe states, “All of His ways are Just.” How do we put this into perspective?

There is no individual who is completely evil or completely good. Although the vast majority of one’s deeds may be evil, if he had done even the minutest act of kindness (or other righteous deed), he is deserving of reward. Hashem does not withhold the rightful reward from any living creature. Thus, the rasha who is deserving of reward will receive it in a material context. Therefore, if G-d does not deny reward to the evil for even the minutest act of righteousness, how much more so will He bestow reward on the tzaddik who is so deserving. It is important to note that the rasha receives his reward in the physical context while the tzaddik receives his reward in a spiritual context – which is the world to come. Thus, when one sees a tzaddik experiencing misfortune and a rasha experiencing exceptional success in his life, one should understand that the rasha is being rewarded for the few good deeds that he had performed. This is the reason King David rejoiced when he saw the evil being rewarded.

If a Jew lives a life, which is focused on materialism and this becomes his value system, then his ability to comprehend and appreciate G-d’s Justice becomes impaired. He will not be able to understand why the rasha, despite his evil ways, deserves material success while the tzaddik suffers.

**3. Shofar, Entering into the Inner Sanctum of G-d**

Rambam states in Hilchos Teshuvah, “Although the obligation of blowing of the Shofar is a Divine Decree in the Torah, simultaneously the blowing of the Shofar is also an allusion (remez).” The message that the Shofar conveys is – all those who are asleep or in a deep slumber should awaken. They should introspect and reflect on their past behavior and do teshuvah (repent). Part of the teshuvah process is to remember one’s Creator. Those who are in a slumber have forgotten the truth because they are consumed with the vanities of time. They occupy themselves completely with pursuits of vanity and emptiness, which have no value. Gaze upon your souls and better yourselves and abandon your evil ways and improper thoughts.”

When hearing the blowing of the Shofar, it touches and affects a person’s spirituality to awaken and extricate himself from the material state of mind. Rambam suggests that the way one could maintain a level of spiritual cognizance throughout the year is to think of one’s self in the balance. He should consider his standing as one with 50% good deeds and 50% negative – a borderline case. He should regard his situation as one that can be swayed to the positive or to the negative by one act. If he were to sin then he would sway himself to the negative and bring destruction upon himself and the world. Conversely if he performs a mitzvah he will sway himself to the positive thus saving himself and existence.

If a non-Jew or one who is not obligated in the mitzvah of Shofar, (such as a minor), were to blow, would it have the same “awakening” affect on those who hear its sound? Since the blast has no halachic (legal) value, does it touch upon one’s spirituality to bring about this awakening? It is not the sound of the horn that causes the spiritual awakening but rather the “kol Shofar” (the sound of the Shofar) within the halachic context of fulfilling one’s obligation. Why is this the case?

The Mishna in Tractate Rosh Hashanah tells us that a Shofar cannot be made from the horn of a cow. The Mishna gives two reasons for this. The first reason is that the horn of a cow is referred to as “keren” and not “Shofar.” Secondly, there is a principle “Ein kateigor naaseh sanheigor - that a prosecutor cannot be an advocate.” The horn of the cow represents the Golden Calf (Chet Ha’Agle) with which the Jews sinned at Sinai. Anything which has relevance to the Golden Calf must be avoided at a time when we are in need of an advocate. Any derivative of the cow or gold arouses the most serious level of prosecution against the Jewish people.

On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol (the High Priest) officiated with two sets of vestments. He would wear the golden vestments when he performed the service in the outer sanctuary of the Temple. However, when he performed the service that was particular to Yom Kippur, which required him to enter the Holy of Holies, he wore white vestments. He was not permitted to wear the golden vestments for the Yom Kippur service because he had to enter the Holy of Holies (the location of the Shechina – the Divine Presence) to atone for the Jewish People. If he had worn gold, he could not have functioned in the capacity of an advocate because gold arouses prosecution.

The Gemara asks, since the principle “a prosecutor cannot be an advocate” only has relevance within the context of the Holy of Holies – the location of the Divine Presence- then why is it that one cannot utilize the horn of a cow to fulfill the mitzvah of Shofar since the mitzvah is fulfilled outside of the Holy of Holies?

The Gemara answers that when one blows the Shofar it is considered as if he is standing inside the Holy of Holies. The blowing of the Shofar brings about an intimacy between the Jew and G-d that is the equivalent of standing in the Holy of Holies. Thus, at this moment, the prosecutor cannot be an advocate (the cow horn cannot be used).

We say in the Amidah of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that all evil will be vanquished. It is because Hashem will enter into existence. Since evil cannot coexist within context of His Presence it will be eliminated. On Rosh Hashanah when we blow the Shofar, we reach a level of closeness with G-d that is similar to being in the Holy of Holies. Thus, when the Shofar is blown, all spiritual impurity that causes insensitivity to spirituality (slumber/sleep) dissipates.

The mitzvah is to “hear the sound of the Shofar” not to blow the Shofar. This is because hearing the sound of the Shofar within a halachic context penetrates the heart of those who are obligated in the mitzvah and awakens them from the slumber that is brought on by the material existence.

**4. The Worth of Every Jew**

The Torah states, “When I call out the Name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to our G-d.” Sforno explains that “calling the Name of Hashem” is referring to tefillah (prayer). He explains that Moshe was praying for the ultimate ingathering of the exile and that G-d should awaken His children as the eagle awakens its offspring in their nest. Rashi cites the Midrash which explains that when the eagle awakens its young it does so in a manner that does not startle them. It flutters its wings in order to alert its young so that they should awaken, just as the signs of the coming of Moshiach are intended to awaken the Jew.

The Gemara in Tractate Rosh Hashanah explains that the Jewish people pass before Hashem as sheep pass through a narrow opening to be counted singularly for the sake of tithing. When one owns a flock or a herd, one has an obligation to designate every tenth animal as maaser beheima (the tenth animal, which takes on a consecrated status). As each animal exited through a narrow opening, one would count it and paint a red marking on the tenth animal – thus designating it as maaser. Similarly, the Jewish people pass before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah.

Another interpretation of the Mishna, which is stated in the Gemara is that on the Day of Judgment, the Jewish people are compared to the soldiers in the army of King David. Reb Yisroel Salanter z’tl explains that each interpretation of the Mishna addresses another level of judgment on Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah there are two judgments given by Hashem. One is a judgment based on one’s individual performance. The other judgment is based on one’s value vis-à-vis the Jewish people as a whole. It is possible that even if one had failed in his personal obligations as a Jew (and is undeserving of a favorable judgment), because he is essential to the Jewish community he will be receive a favorable judgment for “life and success.” The more an individual is needed by others, the greater the likelihood that he would be judged favorably despite his personal lack of merit.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that each of the three tefillos (Amidahs) that we recite each day correspond to the tefillos of Patriarchs. Shacharis (morning prayer) corresponds to the prayer of Avraham. Mincha (afternoon prayer) corresponds to Yitzchak and Arvis (evening prayer) corresponds to Yaakov. The Gemara asks – where is it alluded to that Yitzchak prayed the tefillah of Mincha? The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah tells us based on the verse, “Yitzchak went to l’suach (walk) in the field” that the word “l’suach (to walk)” is alluding to the word “sichah” which means to speak. The Torah is telling us that Yitzchak our Patriarch went out into the field to pray before nightfall. Ritva (one of the early commentators) explains that when Yitzchak went out into the field he did not pray for himself but rather on behalf of the generation. As it is known that when tzaddikim pray, they do not pray on their own behalf but for the sake of their generation.

It is interesting to note that the text of the Amidah was authored by the Men of the Great Assembly in the plural. Even when we pray for ourselves, we simultaneously pray on behalf of the entire Jewish people. Although the mindset of the average Jew is selffocused, nevertheless, it is necessary for each person to express himself with a sense of responsibility for the needs of the entire Jewish people.

Every Jew has a responsibility vis-à-vis every Jew as an individual and the community. We pray to Hashem for the ingathering of the exiles. Although we as individuals may not have the capability to influence or encourage other Jews to return to Judaism, nevertheless, through our sincere tefillos to Hashem we are able to affect the entire Jewish people.

**5. Love the Key Element to Spiritual Growth**

The Torah states, “See - I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil, that which I command you today, to love Hashem, your G-d, to walk in His ways, to observe His commandments…” Moshe had presented the Jewish people with two possible paths – one of life and goodness and the other of death and evil. Immediately following this he states “…I command you today, to love Hashem, your G-d, to walk in His ways …” It is evident that the prerequisite for following the ways of Hashem and fulfilling His commandments, which is the path of life and the good, is through the “love” of Hashem.

The Gemara in Tractate Yivamos states, “If there is a conflict between a Positive Commandment and a Negative Commandment, the Positive Commandment supercedes the Negative Commandment.” This principle is derived from the Law of shatnes. A Jew is not permitted to wear a combination of wool and linen; nevertheless, the Torah alludes (through juxtaposition) that if one has a four-cornered linen garment, which requires tzitzis (fringes), one ties into its corners woolen strings dyed with techeiles. Although the combination of wool and linen has been created, the Positive Commandment of putting tzitzis on a four-cornered garment supercedes the Negative Commandment of shatnes.

Ramban explains that a Positive Commandment represents “ahavas Hashem – the love of G-d” and a Negative Commandment represents “yiras Hashem – the fear of G-d.” When there is a conflict between performing the mitzvah, which represents the “love of Hashem,” and a Negative Commandment which represents the “fear of G-d,” the Positive Commandment of love takes precedence because loving G-d is a more advanced level than fearing G-d. The reason for this is because in order for one to refrain from transgressing, the fear of G-d is sufficient; however, in order to perform a Positive Commandment, one must be motivated – which is an expression of one’s love for G-d. The natural inclination of man is to love himself. There is nothing that one will not do to accommodate his own need. Thus, the Torah states, “…I command you today, to love Hashem, your G-d, to walk in His ways …” because it is only through love that one will not find it difficult to walk in His ways and perform His mitzvos.

We say in the Amidah of Shabbos morning, “Moshe rejoiced in the gift of his portion: because You called him a faithful/dedicated servant.” Moshe rejoiced in the gift of Torah that was given to him by Hashem. Chazal explain the reason he rejoiced in his portion is because his level of dedication was that of a servant.

A servant is one who is completely subservient and subordinated to his master. The Torah states regarding the curses of Mount Eival, “Cursed is the one who does not uphold the Torah.” Rabbeinu Yonah explains in his work Shaarei Teshuvah (Gates of Repentance), that the Torah does not say “cursed is the one who does not observe the Torah” but rather it states cursed is one who does not uphold the Torah.” He explains that “the cursed” is referring to an individual who accepts the Torah in its entirety but rejects one of its precepts. He only accepts 612 out of the 613 mitzvos. This person is subject to be cursed. It is unheard of for a slave, who is the chattel of his master, to say “I will do everything that you command me except for one thing.” The rejection of authority in that one area, regardless of how minor it may be, is a revocation of acknowledging the master. So too, the individual who rejects even the most minor point of the Torah is dismissing G-d’s mastership. A slave/servant is one who is selflessly dedicated to the master. It was only because Moshe had totally negated himself to do the Will of Hashem that he rejoiced in the gift that was given to him by G-d.

The Jerusalem Talmud tells us that if Moshe had not initiated the praises of G-d that were sung after the closing of the Sea on the Egyptians (oz yashir) the Jewish people would have not done so on their own accord. Moshe needed to motivate them. How does one understand this? The Jewish people not only witnessed the Ten Plagues in Egypt but they also experienced and witnessed the splitting and closing of the Sea, which was a revealed miracle that was unparalleled in the history of creation. The revelation of the Divine Presence at the Sea was at such a level that even the lowly maidservant saw G-d’s Presence at a more advanced level than Yechezkel the prophet. Yet, had it not been for Moshe initiating the praises of Hashem, the Jewish people would not have done so. This is because they did not have the same level of motivation that Moshe possessed nor had they negated themselves before G-d as Moshe had. Thus, they were not “faithful/dedicated servants.”

The Chofetz Chaim writes regarding speaking negatively about one’s fellow (lashon hara), if one needs to continuously suppress his inclination not to speak negatively of others, he will eventually fail. However if one always sees his fellow in a positive light it is not difficult for him to refrain from speaking lashon hara (evil speech) about his fellow. This is similar to one having a positive mindset regarding fulfilling the Torah. If one perceives the Torah obligation as a privilege and not something that is burdensome, he will not have difficulty to continuously succeed in his quest for spiritual growth.

If one cultivates a love of Hashem and understands and internalizes that he is the servant of his Master, then he will be motivated to perform the mitzvos of the Torah without any difficulty. As Moshe had stated, ““…I command you today, to love Hashem, your G-d, to walk in His ways to observe His commandments …”

**6. The Importance of the Past**

The last Positive Commandment that was communicated to Moshe at the end of his life was the obligation for every Jewish male to write for himself a sefer Torah (Torah scroll). The Torah states, “So now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the Children of Israel, place it in their mouth so that this song shall be for Me a witness against the Children of Israel.” Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the “song” mentioned in the verse is referring to the Portion of Haazinu. This Portion should be written and taught to the Jewish people so that it should be imprinted in their hearts. It should be a testament for them so that when they enter into the Land and experience great levels of difficulties they should remember this song, which foretells the cause of all the difficulties they are experiencing. By recalling the song of Haazinu they will be able to understand the reason behind their suffering and thus correct their ways. The Torah states, “This song will not be forgotten from the mouth of your offspring.” Rashi cites this as the source for the promise given by Hashem to the Jewish people that the Torah will never be forgotten from them. Since the Torah will not be forgotten from the Jewish people, the song of Haazinu will have meaning. However, although the words of Haazinu are explicitly clear and meaningful, they would have no impact on the Jewish people without accepting the Torah in its entirety or without Torah study.

The Torah tells us that the reason it is important for the Jewish people to remember the “song” is so that when they experience difficulties they will be able to reflect upon them and understand why they are in such a predicament. If one does not understand the cause of his difficulties, then the difficulties have no value. It is only when one realizes the cause of his problems, that he can seek a solution to correct his ways.

One needs a frame of reference to which he can turn in order to understand who he is, what is expected of him and the standard to which he is held. Without this frame of reference one is lost and without direction.

The Mishna in Tractate Taanis tells us that five tragedies occurred on the 9th of Av (Tisha B’Av) – the decree that the generation of the spies needed to perish in the desert over a forty year period, the destruction of the First and Second Temple, the massacre of Beitar, and the plowing under of the city (of Jerusalem by the Romans). After the Jews were driven from the Land, the Romans plowed under the city of Jerusalem. How could the fifth tragedy- the plowing under of the city be equated with the first four tragedies mentioned in the Mishna that occurred on Tisha B’Av? Seemingly, it is not even within the same realm of tragedy. However since Chazal listed it among the others, evidently the plowing under of the city was as tragic as or even more so than the rest. How do we understand this?

The Romans understood that if they destroyed the past history of the Jewish people they would effectively destroy the future of the Jewish people. If there was no remnant of the holy city of Jerusalem – the location of the Temple Mount, then the Jew would have no frame of reference regarding his identity. If there is no past, then there is no future. The relevance of the Jew to spirituality would have been eliminated. Thus, the plowing of the city was as tragic if not more so than the others enumerated in the Mishna.

Similarly, the Portion of Haazinu is the frame of reference for every Jew to be able to understand what is expected of him in life. At one time, if a Jew had difficulty in his life –whether it is a tragedy or misfortune - he either would seek out a rabbi or an elder member of his family or community – who were for the most part committed to Torah Judaism. Unfortunately at present, most Jews, because they no longer have this frame of reference, have no inkling where to turn. The Torah tells us however, that since it will not be forgotten from the Jewish people, every Jew can turn to Hashem through the Torah to be able to understand the source of his problems and thus come upon a solution.

**Rabbi Shlomo Katz**

**HaMaayan**

**The Roadmap of History**

*Volume 30, No. 53 13 Tishrei 5777 October 15, 2016*

*Sponsored by Martin and Michelle Swartz on the yahrzeit of his mother, Lotte H. Meers a”h (16 Tishrei)*

R’ Zvi Hirsch Kalischer z”l (Germany; 1795-1874; a leading advocate for the resettlement of Eretz Yisrael before the advent of Zionism) writes: This parashah, Ha’azinu, includes allusions to every major encounter between the Jewish People and the nations of the world, from the beginning of history to the end of history. It teaches that Hashem has never punished the Jewish People unjustly. It also teaches that the gentiles are not to blame that Hashem did not draw them close, as He did to the Jewish People. Indeed, at the end of days, those nations that choose to be close to the Jewish People will be filled with knowledge of Hashem, as we read (Yeshayah 56:6-7), “And the gentiles who join Hashem to serve Him and to love the Name of Hashem to become His servants . . . I shall bring them to My holy mountain, and I shall gladden them in My house of prayer, their olah-offerings and their zevach-offerings will find favor on My Altar, for My House shall be a house of prayer for all the peoples.” But, of the wicked, who pain the Jewish People, it says (Yeshayah 66:54), “They shall go out and see the corpses of those who rebel against Me, . . . and they shall be a disgrace for all flesh.” R’ Kalischer continues: If all nations can come close to Hashem, what is the meaning of the verses spoken at the Giving of the Torah (Shmot 19:5-6), “You shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for the entire world is Mine. You shall be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation”? It means: The whole world is Mine, says Hashem, and it is fitting that I love anyone who follows Me. But, just as the Jewish People have kohanim to instruct them in the ways of Hashem, and those kohanim have a higher degree of holiness, so will be the relationship of the Jewish People to the nations. Indeed, all faith in G-d among the nations has its source in the teachings of the Jewish prophets. *(Sefer Ha’brit)*

***“Yeshurun [i.e., Yisrael] became fat and kicked.” (32:15)***

R’ Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z”l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes: We have a tradition that there will be a spiritual revolt in Eretz Yisrael and among the Jewish People in the very era in which the national life of our People reawakens. The reason is that the material tranquility that part of our nation will experience will lead it to believe that it already has attained its ultimate goal, thus causing the soul to become smaller, so-to-speak. Yearning for lofty and holy ideals will cease, and, as a natural consequence, the spirit will sink. Eventually, a storm will come and cause a revolution, and then it will be apparent that Yisrael’s strength lies in the Eternal Holy One, in the light of His Torah, and in the desire for spiritual light. *(Orot p.84)*

***“He will say, ‘I shall hide My face from them and see what their end will be–for they are a generation of reversals, children in whom there is no confidence. They provoked Me with a non-god, angered Me with their [things that were] nothing; so I shall provoke them with a non-people, with a nation that is no nation I shall anger them’.” (32:20-21)***

R’ Avraham Saba z”l (1440-1508; Spain and Portugal) writes: Hashem says in these verses, “I want to hide My face from them as if I don’t see what’s going on because they act like children who are inconsistent. I wish, so-to-speak, to see how far they will go–‘what their end will be’–for they are a ‘generation of reversals,’ constantly changing their deeds. They are children in whom there is no confidence [i.e., no truth], for they don’t maintain one position for very long. Maybe they will yet regret their deeds. Maybe, just as they abandoned Me for other gods, they will abandon those other gods and return to Me.”

But, G-d continues, they didn’t do that. “They provoked Me with a non-god, angered Me with their [things that were] nothing; so I shall provoke them with a non-people, with a nation that is no nation I shall anger them.” Hashem responds measure-for-measure. This, writes R’ Saba, is a recurring theme in our parashah. For example, Hashem gives us wealth so that we may study Torah in comfort, but, instead, we allow the wealth to cause us to rebel and forget G-d, as we read (verse 15), “Yeshurun became fat and kicked. You became fat, you became thick, you became corpulent–and it deserted Elokah its Maker, and was contemptuous of the Rock of its salvation.” Therefore, we read (verses 23-24), “I shall accumulate evils against them, My arrows shall I use up against them: bloating of famine . . .” The parashah continues (verse 29), “Were they wise they would comprehend this, they would discern it from their end.” We possess enough wisdom to discern that our troubles follow from our sins. *(Tzror Ha’mor)*

**Sukkot**

***“On that day [Hoshana Rabbah] they circled the mizbei’ach / altar seven times. Rabbi Acha said: ‘As a remembrance of Yericho’.” (Talmud Yerushalmi: Sukkah 4:3)***

When Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael, the first city they conquered was Yericho. They did this by circling Yericho once each day for six days, then seven times on the seventh day, whereupon the city’s walls collapsed (see Yehoshua ch.6). Paralleling this, when the Bet Hamikdash stood, a procession circled the mizbei’ach one time on each of the first days of Sukkot and seven times on Hoshana Rabbah. In turn, we recall that practice on the seven days of Sukkot by circling the bimah in shul a similar number of times while reciting Hoshanot.

But, what is the connection between the conquest of Yericho, which took place in Nissan, and Hoshanot on Sukkot?

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z”l (Spain 1255-1340) explains: On Sukkot, we sacrifice a total of 70 oxen–13 the first day, 12 the second day, etc. The 70 oxen parallel the 70 nations of the world, and the decreasing number offered each day alludes to the eventual disappearance of those nations. (Some explain that the “disappearance” of the nations refers to mankind’s eventual unification under the one, true G-d, at which time there will no longer be separate nations.) A procession marching in a circle likewise alludes to the disappearance of the nations, as is evident from the fact that that is how Yericho–the first place in Eretz Yisrael conquered by Bnei Yisrael–fell.

R’ Shmuel Eliezer Eidels z”l (Maharsha; Poland; 1555-1631) writes: The purpose of Hoshanot is to seek Hashem’s protection from our enemies. (The word “Hoshana” means “Please rescue [us].”) That was the very same thing that Bnei Yisrael sought when they circled Yericho.

R’ David ibn Zimra z”l (Radvaz; Eretz Yisrael and Egypt; 1479-1573) notes that there also is a custom to circle the deceased seven times before burial. He writes that these customs share a kabbalistic source that relates to chasing away forces of impurity.

Some explain the parallel between Yericho and Hoshanot as relating to the fact that the War of Gog and Magog will be fought on Sukkot and will culminate on Hoshana Rabbah. [That is why two of the Haftarot that we read on Sukkot relate to that war.] We allude in our prayers to Yericho, the first of our battles in Eretz Yisrael, as a surrogate for the final battle. Some say that that battle will take place in the plains surrounding Yericho. *(Quoted in Otzar Mefarshei Hoshanot pp. 28-31)*

***Why is there no berachah on building the sukkah? Because it is not a mitzvah which one must do with his own hands; indeed, one could even have a non-Jew build a sukkah for him. (Tractate Menachot 42a)***

Rashi explains: If there were a blessing, it would have to be (consistent with the usual formula), “Who sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us to build a sukkah.” However, that statement would not be true; Hashem did not command us to build a sukkah, as is evident from the fact that a sukkah built by a non-Jew is also kosher. (Rashi: Commentary to Menachot 42a)

Some say that the reason there no berachah on building the sukkah is that we only recite a blessing on a complete mitzvah. Building a sukkah is, at best, the beginning of a mitzvah. (Bet Yosef, Orach Chaim ch. 641)

Nevertheless, observes R’ Shaul Eliezer Yedidyah Taub z”l (1887-1947; the “Modzitzer Rebbe”), there is an allusion to a berachah in the sukkah itself, as follows:

Although halachah requires a sukkah to have only two full walls and a partial third wall, a “complete” sukkah is composed of four walls (“d’fanot”), with sechach on top. The gematria of the word “dofen” (singular for wall), multiplied by four (for the four walls), plus the gematria of the word sechach equals 660, which is also the gematria of the words, “Baruch Attah Hashem.” *(Imrei Shaul)*

The halachah states that one is exempt from sitting in the sukkah if doing so will cause him to suffer. Why? We do not find that one is exempt from other mitzvot (for example, eating matzah) merely because observing the mitzvah may be unpleasant!

R’ Menachem Mendel Morgenstern z”l (the “Kotzker Rebbe”; died 1859) explains: The idea of the sukkah is that one negates his independent existence and places himself completely in G-d’s hands. However, if one suffers from sitting in the sukkah, this is an indication that he has not succeeded in nullifying his independent existence. What, then, does he accomplish by remaining in the sukkah?! *(Emmet Ve’emunah No. 10)*

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**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 https://rabbidmk.wordpress.com/2013/08/01/parashas-re-ay-5773/). 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 www.aishdas.org/ta/5764/mishpatim.pdf) 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?]

**Rabbi Moshe Krieger**

**Bircas HaTorah Parsha Sheet**

**A Shira Like No Other**

Most of Parshas Haazinu is a shira, a song that Moshe Rabbeinu recited to the Jewish People. Rashi (Devarim 32:12) explains that this shira serves primarily as a rebuke of the nation.

Throughout the Tanach, shira serves to praise Hashem for great events of the nation’s history, except for here. Why is a song, which usually conveys a joyful, positive message, used here to convey rebuke? Moreover, why did Moshe find it necessary to add this rebuke? The nation had just heart the 98 curses we read in Parshas Ki Savo, and before, another lengthy rebuke appears in Parshas Bechukosai?

Harav Yechezkel Sarna answers that the other rebukes served to demonstrate to the nation that the world would not allow Klal Yisrael to stray from its spiritual charge. There is no such thing as “nature,” and the Jewish People cannot expect the functioning of the natural world to simply go on regardless of their behavior. On the contrary, there is a covenant between the natural world and the Jewish People; depending on whichever way the nation chooses to go, there will be either blessing or curse. If we engage in mitzvos, we merit blessing in creation. If we spurn the mitzvos, we are punished with curses. (See Ramban, Shmos 13:16.)

By contrast, Parshas Haazinu describes to the nation the greatness of its past and its great purpose in the future, in such eloquent terms that it is called shira. However, it contains an implied rebuke: Look how great you were in the past! You have great spiritual potential! Why are you falling short of it?

What can we counter? We should be like the towering spiritual figures of our past? Isn’t there a concept of yeridas hadoros, that the further we get from Sinai, the less each successive generation is capable of in terms of spiritual achievement? That being the case, how can this shira place such demands on the weaker generations that follow?

The answer is found in the shira itself, which describes not only the past but the nation’s glorious future as well (Rashi, Devarim 32:12). If so, “yeridas hadoros” is not our natural state and the demand upon us is legitimate.

This is why Moshe saw fit to add the rebuke of Haazinu. The previous rebukes were open warnings that we at least do teshuva out of fear of Hashem. Haazinu is a call to do teshuva out of love of Hashem. Meaning, when we appreciate our nation’s former greatness, recognize that this greatness is expected of us even today, and try to live up to this challenge – this is teshuva done out of love.

Rav Yechezkel Levinstein would ask his talmidim: “Every one of us has great spiritual abilities; are we aware of them? Let’s take just one small example. Chazal say that lashon hara gives a person absolutely no pleasure whatever — neither real nor imaginary (Taanis 9a). Do we feel that way? Even if we do not speak lashon hara, are we never tempted to do so? Do we never feel such an urge? This means that we are falling short of the ability that Chazal view as basic, that lashon hara offers us absolutely nothing!”

“With all matters,” Rav Levinstein concluded, “we have to assess if we are aware of our spiritual abilities and are bringing them out to the fullest.”

Harav Dan Segal uses this principle to defend a certain custom at sheva brachos, in which showers of praise are heaped upon the chassan and kalla. Perhaps this will lead them to conceit? Perhaps this is exaggerated and borders on outright lies?

No, counters Rav Segal. These praises are intended to point out to the chassan and kalla their great potential. Their response should not be to pat themselves on the back, but rather to recognize the high level of behavior and spiritual achievement that is expected from them.

Once, when Rav Shach was making a shiva call, he was asked: “Why is the mourner not allowed to learn Torah during these days? Is it so he shouldn’t feel simcha? Then why is he allowed to eat meat and drink wine?”

“You have a point,” conceded Rav Shach, “but the problem is not so much simcha as it is diverting the mourner’s attention from the great attributes and achievements of the departed. The mourner is given a week to focus on the achievements of his relative and to realize that he too is capable of such things. Even more, now that his relative is gone, it is incumbent upon him to continue the niftar’s achievements. He must use this week to reflect on those achievements, recognize his own spiritual potential and resolve to take action once the shiva is over.”

On a different occasion, a bachur who learned in Ponovezh came to inform Rav Shach that he was engaged, and after the wedding he would be living in Jerusalem.

Rav Shach wished the bachur mazal tov and then added a request: “Here, in Bnei Brak, many people use generators on Shabbos (to avoid electricity produced on Shabbos, as per the halachic position of the Chazon Ish). Where you will be living, many people are not strict about this, but I want you to accept upon yourself to use a generator on Shabbos.”

The bachur replied that he would make sure to follow the Rosh Yeshiva’s request.

After the bachur left, others who had been present asked Rav Shach why he had chosen to ask about use of a generator in particular. The bachur was not from Bnei Brak, they reasoned, nor was his family among those who follow all rulings of the Chazon Ish. Moreover, this bachur was not known as a “machmir” (interested in satisfying as many halachic opinions as possible).

“In the building where this bachur will live,” began Rav Shach, “there are most likely tenants that subscribe to newspapers. Now, when this bachur will come home from Shacharis, he’ll see newspapers in their mailboxes, and the norm is that whoever wants can open these newspapers up and browse through them.

“What can I do to make sure this bachur won’t put his head into the news and out of the Gemara? He has to feel that he has exceptional importance, that a mind such as his belongs in Shas and poskim and must not be wasted on petty matters. If he views himself as one of the machmirim — he will live up to it and not waste his time. That’s what I wanted to do,” Rav Shach explained.

May we be zoche to recognize and reach our potential!

**Rabbi Label Lam**

**Dvar Torah**

**To Draw Even Closer**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consider the Periodic Table of Elements. Everything in the physical universe, you and me and the air between us is made up of some combination of stuff listed there. All the various elements from Hydrogen to Uranium, from the lightest gas to the heavy metals is all composed of the very same stuff with differing densities of neutrons and protons and electrons orbiting at various valences. When you open up any one of them oceans of sublime energy comes pouring out. At the core is a rich concentration of the same pure power. Appreciate please that power, wisdom, kindliness, purpose, and unity are on open display.

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

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**National Council of Young Israel**

**Weekly Dvar Torah**

Parshat Ha'azinu

13 Tishrei 5777 /October 15, 2016

Daf Yomi: Bava Metzia 19 ; Nach Yomi: Yechezkel 29

Weekly Dvar Torah

A project of the National Council Of Young Israel Sponsored By The Henry, Bertha And Edward Rothman Foundation Rochester, Ny,Cleveland, Ohio, Circleville, Ohio

Questions on the Parsha by Rabbi Edward Davis

Mara D'atra, Young Israel of Hollywood/Ft. Lauderdale

Ha'azinu 5777 Parsha Questions click here

The Weekly Sidra

“A Literal Heavenly Fear”

Rabbi Moshe Greebel

Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis

This week’s Sidra opens with:

“Give ear, you Heavens, and I will speak; and hear, you earth, the words of My mouth.” (D’varim 32:1)

In the text Ohel Torah, by the celebrated Rav Elchanan Wasserman (1874- 1941) of blessed memory, this beginning of this Passuk (verse) is simply referred to as ‘Ha’azaina Sh’mimis,’ or the ‘Heavenly Listening.’ In order to comprehend what is meant by this ‘Ha’azaina Sh’mimis,’ Rav Elchanan drew our attentions to the words of the renown Admur (Chassidic master) Rav M’nachem Mendel Morgensztern of Kotzk (1787– 1859) of blessed memory, who regaled us with the following observations.

Describing a Torah true Jew, our Rabbanim of blessed memory utilized the term ‘Yiras Shamayim,’ or one who fears Heaven. Examples abound:

“Rav Chelbo further said in the name of Rav Huna, ‘If one is filled with the fear of Heaven, his words are listened to…..’” (B’rachos 6b)

“Rabbah b. R. Huna said, ‘Every man who possesses learning without the fear of Heaven is like a treasurer who is entrusted with the inner keys, but not with the outer…..’” (Shabbos 31a-b)

“Woe unto the enemies of the scholars, who occupy themselves with the Torah, but have no fear of Heaven!” (Yoma 72b)

“Rav Chanina said, ‘Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven…..’” (Megillah 25a)

“Rav Chiya Abba stated in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, ‘A man who deprives his student of (the privilege of) attending on him acts as if he had deprived him of (an act of) kindness…..’ Rav Nachman Bar Yitzchak said, ‘He also deprives him of the fear of Heaven…..’”

Now, poses the Kotzker, instead of using the literary style of ‘Yiras Shamayim,’ why did our Rabbanim of blessed memory simply not utilize a more direct terminology such as ‘Yiras HaShem,’ or, fear of HaShem? Is not the fear of Heaven in essence, another way of referring to HaKadosh Baruch Hu? In fact, as we shall soon be privileged to see, there is a very astute reason for the relationship of fear and Heaven.

The Torah begins with the first day of creation:

“In the beginning G-d created the Heavens and the earth.” (B’raishis 1:1)

On this Passuk the Midrash B’raishis Rabbah 4-7 has the following to say:

“Rav Yitzchak said, (Shamayim [Heaven] means] laden with water. Compare this to milk in a bowl. Before a drop of rennet falls into it, it quivers. But, as soon as a drop of rennet falls into it, it (cheese) immediately curdles and stands still. Similarly, “The pillars of Heaven quiver.” (Iyov 26:11) Then the solidifying substance was infused into them, whereupon, “And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.” (B’raishis I:8).’ That agrees with Rav's dictum, (G-d’s) handiwork was liquid and on the second day it congealed.’”

The Kotzker then moves on to the Gemarah in Chagiga 12a, which discusses how the Heavens solidified:

“Rav Zutra Bar Tuvya said that Rav said, ‘By ten things was the world created. By wisdom, and by understanding, and by reason, and by strength, and by rebuke, and by might, by righteousness and by judgment, by loving-kindness and by compassion……’”

Concerning the aspect of rebuke, the Gemarah continues:

“…..By rebuke, for it is written, ‘The pillars of Heaven quiver, but they became astonished at His rebuke.’”

That is, instructs the Kotzker, as soon as the Heavens, which were initially unsolidified quivering water, heard the rebuke of HaKadosh Baruch Hu on the second day of “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters” (B’raishis 1:6), they became shocked and awed, and froze (solidified) in terror. This is akin to a master who suddenly and without warning sternly rebukes his servant, who will inevitably ‘freeze up’ in shock.

And, continues the Kotzker, so terrified of this rebuke of HaKadosh Baruch Hu were the Heavens, that to this very day they have loyally remained in their solidified state.

And so, the Kotzker concludes, the concept of fear is a very apt characteristic for the Heavens, which gives us our expression of ‘Yiras Shamayim.’ Just as the Heavens immediately reacted to the word of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and continue to do so without interruption, so too should we adopt a sense of urgency to fulfill the words of the Torah HaK’dosha without fail and without interruption.

May we soon see the G’ulah Sh’laimah in its complete resplendence- speedily, and in our times. Wishing our readers a גמר חתימה טובה.

In addition to being a M’chaneich, Rabbi Greebel is the part time Rav of Congregation Children of Israel of Youngstown, Ohio, and delivers a Gemarah Shiur via Skype. He can be contacted at weeklysidra@yahoo.com or at belmar.rabbi@yahoo.com

**Ha’azinu**

***Rabbi Lawrence Teitelman***

*Mara D'atra, Young Israel of New Hyde Park*

At the end of Sefer Devarim, between Moshe Rabbeinu’s final words of reproach (the Tokhecha) and blessing

(Ve-zot ha-Berakha) we read the “Shira of Haazinu,” the Song of Haazinu (Hear). Though perhaps not accorded as much fame in our liturgy as its sister “Song of the Sea” (Shirat Ha-Yam, aka, Az Yashir) [Shemot] the Shira of Haazinu clearly earns the greater Scriptural recognition. Just prior to that latter song we are told, Ve-ata kitvu lakhem et ha-shira ha-zot velamedah et Bnai Yisrael simah be-fihem − “Take this song, write it down, teach it to Bnai Yisrael and place it in their mouths.”

Whether we adopt Rashi’s interpretation that this imperative relates specifically to the Shirat Haazinu or Rambam’s position that it refers to the more general obligation to write a Sefer Torah that contains within it the Shirat Haazinu, the Torah accords special status to Shirat Haazinu as something worthy of the permanent record and recollection. Prominently positioned at the beginning of this Shirat Haazinu and, in turn, included in our daily liturgy as part of the introduction to the Amida prayer of Mincha (and Mussaf), the following verse is rather familiar to the observant Jew: Ki Shem HaShem Ekra Havu Godel Lelokenu − “For I will proclaim the name of the L-rd; ascribe ye greatness unto our G-d.”

The classical Torah commentators mostly interpret this sentence in its relationship to the Shira of Haazinu. Some understand it as Moshe calling the message of The Song to the attention of Bnai Yisrael and inviting them to express their own sense of appreciation of the glory of HaShem. Others say that it is the aforementioned heavens and earth (haazinu ha-shamayim … ve-tishma ha-aretz) that are being summoned to join. A third opinion combines elements of the preceding ones with both the animate and inanimate as co-participants. According to all these options, however, the reference is still the more immediate context of this Shira, Moshe’s final message to the Jewish people.

Chazal, on the other hand, saw in this verse a broader mandate, one that transcends the specific juncture at which the Shirat Haazinu was uttered. The Gemara in Berakhot cites this expression as the source for the obligation for three or more individuals eating together to be mezamen, to bentch as a group with the appropriate preamble

(nevarekh she-akhalnu mi-shelo). The Sifri quotes our verse as the basis for our responding Barukh HaShem ha-Mevorakh le-Olam Vaed when we hear Barkhu recited in shul, and similarly answering when Kaddish is said, although the exact format of the response during Kaddish varies somewhat from what is common practice. The Rosh, in his responsa, derives support from this verse for the popular custom of saying Barukh Hu u-Barukh Shemo when one hears the mention of the name of HaShem. More generally, the Gemara in Yoma posits as a blanket rule that whenever one invokes the name of HaShem, all present should respond by proclaiming the greatness of HaShem, with another implementation being the response of Barukh Shem Kevod Malkhuto le-Olam Vaed after hearing the Kohen HaGadol say the Shem Ha-Meyuchad, the ineffable name of HaShem. Though the application varies, a common theme emerges: when one calls out in the name of HaShem (Ki Shem HaShem Ekra), all in attendance are expected to respond in kind (Havu Godel Lelokenu).

But there is another pair of statements by Chazel that do not fit this pattern. The Bavli in Masekhet Berakhot infers from this verse − Ki Shem HaShem Ekra Havu Godel Lelokenu − that one must say Birkat ha-Torah before the study of Torah, while the Yerushalmi – also in Berakhot, albeit in a different chapter – learns from the same pasuk that Birkat ha-Torah is required also after the study of Torah (by analogy to food which requires a blessing both before and after). While Talmud Torah is often enriched by learning in a public forum (the shiur in the Beit Ha-Midrash) there is certainly no requirement that Torah be studied exclusively in the framework of a mezuman, minyan, or other larger assembly of Jews. Indeed, we are taught in Pirkei Avot that HaShem listens to the Torah study of even a single individual. How then does this verse, whose original context was the public song of Moshe before Bnai Yisrael and subsequently applied by Chazal to other situations of a leader motivating his constituents in interactive responsive prayer, apply to Talmud Torah and dictate its attendant blessings?

Apparently, Talmud Torah, even in its private form (the individual student sitting in front of his sefer) is part of a much larger picture. Though we often refer to the process of making room in our schedules for Torah study as keviut itim la-Torah – fixing times for Torah, in reality we are establishing ourselves as part of a timeless transmission, an eternal program. By studying Torah today – wherever that may take place and with whatever traditional text – we are in essence responding to that original invitation to Torah extended by Moshe at Sinai.

At Sinai – and for the 40 years that followed – Moshe taught the Torah to the Jewish people. At the end of that period, he asked that it all be recorded for posterity. Moshe did his part of Ki Shem HaShem Ekra – of proclaiming the name of the L-rd. For the generations that follow, it is through the perpetuation of that Torah study and teaching – that we do our part of Havu Godel Lelokenu − ascribing greatness unto HaShem. Shabbat Shalom.

**Difference Between Parents and Grandparents**

***Rabbi Aharon Ziegler***

*Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis*

“SHA’AL AVICHA V’YAGED’CHA, Z’KEINECHA V’YOMRU LACH” (32:7), “Ask your father and he will relate to you, and your elders (grandparents) and they will tell you”. Note the difference in terminology, “V’yagedcha”-for father, parents, but “V’yomru” for elders or grandparents.

The difference between “haggada” and “amira” is the following. Haggada denotes imparting information through the realm of authority, as Va’yedaber HaShem-HaShem spoke. Amira, as Va’yomer HaShem,-HaShem said, is a softer expression and refers to relaying information through explanation and understanding. As we find by the Revelation at Mt. Sinai, “KO TOMAR L’BET YAAKOV (the women) V’TAGEID LIVNEI YISRAEL (the men).[So shall you say to the House of Yaakov and relate to the Children of Israel] (Shemot 19:3), meaning, speak firmly to the men, but speak softly to the women.

According to Rabbi Zwieg, the rationale in our parsha is that the father (or parents) has the responsibility of ensuring that the child does not deviate from the path, which he/she is required to follow. Since the father is accountable for the actions of his child there is a degree of firmness and inflexibility in the message, which he delivers. The father is not burdened with the task of ensuring that they understand why HaShem requires them to abide by His instructions, only that they obey them. The parents emphasize the “The Naaseh, grandparents on the other hand, concentrate on the “Nishma. Although grandparents accepts upon themselves the task of educating the grandchild, they are not accountable for the child’s refusing to accept the message. They therefore, have the flexibility of delivering the message in a manner, which appeals to the child’s understanding, and is not pressured into forcing the child to accept it at all costs.

Each of these methods, on its own, cannot succeed. However, if they exist side-by-side, they compliment one another to deliver the complete educational package. Allowing a child the flexibility to use his intellectual capacities in the service of HaShem, while at the same time enforcing the idea that not everything must, or can be, understood in order to be observed, is the unique Torah method of education, which guarantees, that Torah education will endure eternally.

May we all have the z’chut, in the coming year, of teaching Torah to our children, our grandchildren, and even our great-grandchildren. Shabbat Shalom and wishes for a G’mar Tov and a Chag Samei’ach.

**Aish.Com - Rabbi Kalman Packouz**

**Shabbat Shalom**

**Ha'azinu 5777**

GOOD MORNING! Judaism has something for everyone. If you like to drink, we have Purim. If you like asceticism or self-denial we have Yom Kippur. If you like to play with fire, we have Lag B'omer (celebrated with bonfires!) If you like to dance, we have Simchat Torah, and ... if you like the great outdoors, we have Sukkot!

Sukkot starts Sunday evening, October 16th. Sukkot means "booths." During the 40 years of wandering in the desert we lived in Sukkot. We are commanded in the Torah regarding this holiday, "You shall dwell in booths for seven days ... so that your generations will know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in booths when I took them out of Egypt, I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 23:42-43). We are commanded to make our Sukkah our main dwelling place -- to eat, sleep, learn Torah and spend our time there. If one would suffer from being in a Sukkah -- i.e., from rain or snow -- or heat and humidity -- he is freed from the obligation to dwell there. We make, however, every effort to at least eat in the Sukkah -- especially the first night.

The love and enthusiasm you put into building a Sukkah and decorating it makes a big impact on your children. A friend told me that his father was a klutz (not handy) with tools and their Sukkah would oftentimes fall down. But, what he remembers is his father's love for the mitzvah of building the Sukkah and happiness in building it each time. We cannot decree that our children have our love for our heritage. However, by showing them our delight and energy in the mitzvot, they build their own love for Torah and the holiday. A teacher once said, "Parents only owe their children 3 things: example, example, example."

We are also commanded to wave the arbah minim, the Four Species, during the week-long holiday. There are many deep and mystical meanings to be found regarding waving the Four Species. Waving them in all four directions of the compass as well as up and down is symbolic that the Almighty controls the whole world, the winds and all forces -- everything everywhere. A second lesson from holding the Four Species together -- all Jews are bound together as one people, be they saints or sinners, knowledgeable or ignorant (see Dvar Torah!).

The Torah tells us, "...On the fifteenth of the seventh month (counting from the Hebrew month of Nissan when the Jews left Egypt) shall be the holiday of Sukkot, seven days (of celebration) for the Almighty. The first day shall be a holy convocation; all manners of work (creative acts as defined by the Torah) you shall not do; it is an eternal decree in all of your dwelling places for all generations" (Leviticus 23:34-35).

Sukkot is called zman simchateinu, the time of our joy. Joy is distinct from happiness. Happiness is taking pleasure in what you have. Joy is the pleasure of anticipating a future good. If we trust in God and know that everything the Almighty does for us and will do for us is for our good, then we will know great joy in our lives!

Deuteronomy 16:13-15 tells us "The festival of Sukkot shall be to you for seven days when you gather from your threshing floors and your wine cellar. You shall rejoice in your festival ... for the Almighty will bless you in all of your produce and in all of the work of your hand and you shall be completely joyous." It is fitting that Sukkot is a harvest festival. People who work the earth are amongst the most religious of people trusting in the Almighty (followed perhaps by fundraisers ... ). They take a perfectly good seed that could be eaten and they stick it in the ground not knowing whether there will be rain or drought or floods or pestilence. They put forth hard work not knowing the outcome. They trust in the Almighty for their food and their very existence.

The mitzvah of dwelling in the Sukkah teaches us trust in God. We tend to think that our possessions, our money, our homes, our intelligence will protect us. During Sukkot we are exposed to the elements in a temporary hut. Living in a Sukkah puts life into perspective. Our possessions are transient -- and our corporeal beings are even more transient than our possessions. Life is vulnerable. Our history has borne out how transient are our homes and communities. No matter how well-established, wealthy and "secure" we have become in a host country, in the end it too has been a temporary dwelling. Our trust must be in God.

As King David wrote in Psalms 20:8 "There are those who trust in chariots and those who trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the Almighty." Only the Almighty is the Creator of the world, the Master of history, our personal and caring God Who can be relied upon to help us.

During the Festival of Sukkot when we had our Temple in Jerusalem, 70 offerings were brought-- one for each nation of the world -- so that the Almighty would provide rain for their crops. The Talmud tells us that if the nations of the world understood the value of what the Jewish people provided them, they would have sent their armies to defend our Temple in Jerusalem to keep it from being destroyed!

Sukkot is one of the Shelosh Regalim, Three Festivals (the other two are Pesach and Shavuot), where the Torah commands everyone living in Israel to leave their homes to come to Jerusalem to celebrate at the Temple. For the last 2,000 years since the destruction of the Temple, we've been unable to fulfill this mitzvah. May we soon be able to fulfill this mitzvah once again in its entirety! For more, go to: aish.com/sukkot .

**Torah Portion Of The Week: Ha'azinu**

The Torah portion is a song, a poem taught to the Jewish people by Moshe. It recounts the trials and tribulations of the Jewish people during the 40 years in the desert. Jewish consciousness, until the present generation, was to teach every Jewish child to memorize Ha'azinu. In this manner we internalized the lessons of our history, especially the futility of rebelling against the Almighty.

The portion ends with Moshe being told to ascend Mount Nevo to see the Promised Land before he dies and is "gathered to his people". By the way, this is one of the allusions to an afterlife in the Torah. Moshe died alone and no one knows where he is buried. Therefore, "gathered to his people" has a higher meaning!

**Dvar Torah**

What is The Meaning of the Arbah Minim?

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 God 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!

**Quote of the Week**

Joy is the holy fire

that keeps our purpose warm

and our intelligence aglow

-- Helen Keller

*In Loving Memory of Papa Jack Schwadron, Yakov ben Laibel & Devorah The Family*

*With Deep Appreciation to Mr. Richard Polak, Los Angeles*

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**Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand**

**Likutei Peshatim**

**dxez zgny zekeq \ epif`d**

**Volume 31 Number 50 October 15, 2016**

**h"i `rivn `aa :ineid sc e"ryz ixyz b"i**

**“Ism”s That Aren’t**

***“And they will say: ‘Where are their gods, the rock in whom they sought refuge? ...Let them stand and help you, let them be a shelter for you.’ ” Devarim 32:37-38***

The song of Ha’azinu contains an allusion to all that will happen to Israel until the coming of Mashiach. The parasha indicates that before the redemption, the Jews will err, going after various forms of idol worship. What is meant by idol worship? Surely we do not bow down to stones or the sun as they did in days long ago.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin) explains that any matter which appears to man as a controlling factor independent of Hashem’s will, and which is perceived to be able to do good or evil, is included in the definition of idolatry. Using this definition, for example, **Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman** used to say that the “enlightenment of Berlin”, liberalism, socialism and communism fall under this definition of “idolatry”, as their followers hoped for their salvation. Tragically, they only brought failure and misery. Many Jews sacrificed blood and money hoping that these movements would provide happiness for their Jewish followers, but in reality the Jews were betrayed by all of them. We must remember the message of Ha’azinu. Only by placing our faith, hope, and energy in Hashem and His Torah can we really achieve happiness. We must also be on guard not to make the same mistakes as our ancestors. In America and Israel, it is very easy to put our full faith in the democratic process and to believe that democracy will protect the Jews and bring us salvation. We must remember the message of Ha’azinu and the lessons of our past, that only faith in Hashem, and fulfilling the Torah, will protect the Jews and bring the Mashiach.

**Simchas Beis Hasho’eiva**

**Rav Shimon Shalom, the Rebbe of Amshinov, l"vf**, found refuge in Shanghai, together with a large group of talmidei chachomim and yeshiva students during World War II. During the Simchas Beis Hasho’eiva they conducted in this remote corner of the world, he explained a statement from the Mishna (Sukkah 5:4) which states that the pious and worthy people would dance with torches of light in their hands. He explained that this means that these virtuous people wanted the light, the spiritual illumination, to come through their own efforts—their hands—and not as a gift from above. As we see from the Yerushalmi (Sukkah 5:1), the festivities were called the Simchas Beis Hasho’eiva because the deserving would attain ruach hakodesh through the joy in the mitzvah. The praiseworthy people mentioned in the Mishnah wanted to earn their portion of ruach hakodesh through their own efforts.

We find that this was true of many great tzaddikim who didn’t want free gifts from heaven. They chose instead to toil for those distinctions, since this is what gives the Creator the most pleasure. The **Vilna Gaon, l"vf**, once explained to **Rav Chaim of Volozhin, l"vf**, that he had refused to receive the angelic guidance of maggidim (as experienced by the **Beis Yosef, l"vf**), since they were only a reward for the good one has done in this world and cannot actually spur one to rise to a higher level in Torah or avodah.

During the last year of his life, the **Ksav Sofer, l"vf**, was granted a remarkable clarity of insight which allowed him to grasp any Torah concept deeply with hardly any effort at all. Yet the Ksav Sofer did not enjoy this gift. He would say instead, “It is not good that Hashem has removed all the toil from my learning. Everything is so easy. This is not a good sign.”

The **Chazon Ish, l"vf**, once said: “If an angel would reveal the entire Torah to a person in his sleep, he would wake up unchanged. We only grow through effort!”

**mybd cixene gexd aiyn**

Why do we begin asking for rain at Musaf of Shemini Atzeres and not earlier, at Maariv the night before? Usually, any insertion for the Amidah which is appropriate for a particular day is already begun with the tefillah of Maariv.

In Parashas Bereshis, the Torah describes the episode of Creation. Although the grasses and trees were created on the third day, the sprouts and buds were only set to flourish, but they did not emerge until the sixth day. What was the reason for this delay? The verse (see 2:5, and Rashi) clearly explains that Hashem did not care to have the vegetation grow because no one was around to appreciate it. It was only when man was later created on the sixth day and Adam asked for the rain to fall and for the plants to grow that Hashem allowed the greenery to blossom and cover the planet.

The **Belzer Rebbe, Rabbi Yissacher Dov** **Rokeach**, explains that the world was lacking a being who could express a sense of appreciation. The system we call prayer is actually the manner by which we activate a cycle of our telling Hashem that we need Him and appreciate Him, and as a result, Hashem set in place a process whereby He answers us. Prayer is not a desperate attempt we have to beg Hashem to give us things we want or need, but it is rather a preconceived process whereby we do our part in asking, and Hashem, Who is described as a **dlitY rnFW**, promises that He will respond.

The Midrash tells us that the hour during which Adam prayed to Hashem for rain was the seventh hour of the day.

When we conduct the prayer for rain, we are not only davening that the coming rainy season be blessed with adequate rainfall, but we are also actually reenacting the original appeal of Adam to Hashem on the day he was created. We present ourselves as His creations, and we proudly announce that we recognize His great kindness in providing rain, which sustains all life. We conduct this prayer during the seventh hour of the day, corresponding to the hour when Musaf can be said. This is why we synchronize this prayer to be said at this hour, and not earlier.

**Celebrating Sukkos -Historical Highlight**

***“And the entire congregation that had returned from the captivity made sukkos, and dwelled in the sukkos, for since the days of Yeishua the son of Nun until that day, Bnei Yisrael had not done so, and there was very great joy.” Nechemia 8:17***

**Rav Shlomo Kluger, l"vf,** asks why the verse emphasizes that the people “had returned from the captivity”. Wouldn’t it have been enough to say "**zFMq ldwd lk EUrie**" - “and the entire congregation made sukkos”? Also, why does the pasuk use two expressions, "**EUrie**" - “and they made” - and "**EaW§ie**" - “and they dwelled”?

Rav Kluger answers that there are two reasons why we have the mitzvah of sukkah. One reason is that Hashem took us out from Egypt in Clouds of Glory/sukkos. Another explanation is that if we are obligated to go into exile for any sin that we did, we should fulfill it by sitting in the sukkah. We see this in the "**oFvx idi**" as we enter the sukkah and say “May this be reckoned for me as if I wandered afar.”

The difference between the two reasons is that if we are sitting in the sukkah to remember that Hashem took us out from Egypt in Clouds of Glory/sukkos, this is a reason to rejoice. However, if the sukkah is representative of exile, then we should not be happy. There is also a difference, based on the historical era. If Klal Yisrael is in Eretz Yisrael, then the sukkah simulates going into exile. If, however, Klal Yisrael finds itself in the diaspora, then the reason for sitting in the sukkah is to remember the **cFaMd ippr** - the Clouds of Glory, indicating Hashem’s protection even when we are not in our land. During the days of Moshe Rabbeinu, Klal Yisrael was still wandering in the desert. Since they were not yet in Eretz Yisrael, the sukkah was representative of the **cFaMd ippr**. However, in the days of Yehoshua bin Nun, they already had come into Eretz Yisrael. The sukkah, therefore, was in place of going into exile.

In the times of Ezra and Nechemia, when Klal Yisrael was in exile, the sukkah again represented the Clouds of Glory. But all the time that Klal Yisrael was in exile, we don’t know if the sukkah symbolized the Clouds of Glory since Klal Yisrael might have enjoyed the place where they were dwelling, and the sukkah would symbolize exile. However, since Klal Yisrael returned from exile, it shows that they didn’t find the exile a positive experience.

We can now understand our passage in Nechemia which says “the entire congregation that had returned from the captivity”. This implies that since they returned from exile, they didn’t enjoy the exile. Upon their return, the mitzvah of sukkah did not serve to remember the exile, so it must have been for the remembrance of the Clouds of Glory. This is what is meant when the navi here says **‰zFMqa EaWieŠ -** “and they dwelled in the sukkos” - they sat in the sukkah with pleasantness. For we find that the word "**daiWi**” is in reference to pleasure. Therefore, the verse concludes with **‰c`n dlFcb dgnU idYe”,** since the going into the sukkah was commemorative of the Clouds of Glory.

**The Symbolism Of The Sukkah**

***“So that your generations will know that I caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell in sukkos when I took them from the land of Egypt; I am God, your Lord.” Vayikra 23:43***

The Gemara (Sukkah 11b) quotes two opinions as to the definition of sukkos in the pasuk. Rabbi Akiva says that the sukkos refer to the Clouds of Glory, whereas Rabbi Eliezer understands sukkos literally, that the Jews literally sat in sukkos while they travelled through the desert. Both **Rashi** and **Onkelos** only quote Rabbi Akiva’s opinion that the sukkos that are being commemorated on the holiday of Sukkos are the Clouds of Glory. **Ramban** explains that Rabbi Akiva’s position fits the simple p’shat in the verse. It is more likely that the Holiday of Sukkos should bring into mind the more miraculous Clouds of Glory than the simple sukkos the Jews sat in while they travelled through the desert.

**Rabbi Isaac Sher** explains that the Clouds of Glory represent the open and clearly miraculous fashion in which Hashem protects the Jewish people. An honest observer of the history of man would be compelled to recognize the Divine Hand present throughout history which has saved the Jewish people as a whole from the many nations who wished to destroy us. However, Rabbi Eliezer is telling us that there is an equally great miracle, although less recognizable. Hashem miraculously guides each and every household and Hashem’s Divine Hand is equally present in the daily life of every individual Jewish family. The sukkos of the desert would not have been strong enough to protect the Jewish people from the brutal elements of the desert. They also required Divine assistance, even if not so clearly recognizable as the Clouds of Glory. Thus, the lesson of the Torah, as explained by Chazal, is for us to look at our sukkos and instill in ourselves the belief that Hashem protects and guides the affairs of Klal Yisrael as a whole, and each and every Jew as an individual. The sukkah should remind us that there is Divine Providence in the world, both for Klal Yisrael and for every individual Jewish household.

**Halachic Corner**

The Mishnah (Sukkah 2:2) says that if the **Kkq** is thick like a house, even if stars cannot be seen [from inside the sukkah], it is valid. The language of the Mishnah implies that ideally one should be able to see the stars from within the sukkah**; caricA** the sukkah is valid even if the stars cannot be seen. Based on the Yerushalmi, Rabbeinu Asher ben Yechiel explains that the requirement **dligYkl** to be able to see stars through the **Kkq** means that sunlight is able to enter the sukkah even though one cannot see stars at night. Rav Yaakov of Moellin, cited by Rav Moshe Isserles, maintains that a sukkah is valid even if the schach is so thick that stars cannot be seen from within the sukkah at night. This is because during the day some sunshine will enter from one of the cracks or holes in the **Kkq**. Rabbeinu Tam rules that if rain cannot enter the sukkah as a result of the thickness of the **Kkq** the sukkah is invalid, but anything short of that amount is acceptable. Mishnah Berurah writes in the name of later authorities that ideally one should be able to see the stars at night from within the sukkah. This means that as long as the stars can be seen, even if from only one location in the sukkah, the sukkah is valid **dligYkl**. Furthermore, one who follows the lenient ruling of Maharil is on solid halachic ground, especially if it is done out of concern that a thin layer of schach would blow away. If, however, the schach prevents even heavy rain from entering the sukkah it should be considered invalid because of the decree that it is too similar to a house (**ziA zxfb).**

**Questions for Thought and Study**

1. What is the difference between the word "**Epif`d**" (literally “give ear” but practically “listen”) and the word "**rnW**" (“listen”)? *See Ibn Ezra 32:1*

**2.** To what is the Torah alluding when it says that honey comes from a stone - "**rlqn Wac**"? *See Malbim 32:13*

**3.** Who is the “base nation” **("lap iFb")** that Hashem says will anger Bnei Yisrael? Why specifically is this nation given this name? *See Ramban 32:21*

**4.** How were the **ax axr** - the evil “mixed multitude” of Bnei Yisrael in the desert - only part of the miracle of what we celebrate on Sukkos? *See Ta’amei Minhagim v"yz*

**5.** Which should be picked up first, the esrog or the lulav? Why? *See footnote to Ta’amei Minhagim a"vyz*

**6.** How does the Hoshana service allude to our request for forgiveness for all the service that was done from the beginning of Elul through Simchas Torah? *See Bnei Yissoschar*

**Answers:**

**1.** The word **“Epif`d”** refers to the ear, indicating “to listen closely”. The word "**rnW**" refers to either listening up close or from afar.

**2.** The Malbim says that date palms specifically grow in places where the ground is hard with rocks. This is so that the dates can be pounded to make honey. (Chizkuni says that this is honey from bees.)

**3.** This is the nation of Eisav. He is called **"lap"** (base) because he does not consider his “brotherhood” with Bnei Yisrael as he destroys them (at the time of the second Beis HaMikdash).

**4.** The **ax axr** was not part of the joy of Sukkos, as the **cFaMd ippr** (“Clouds of Glory”) did not rest over the **ax axr,** only over the true Bnei Yisrael. They did, however, benefit from the well of Miriam, which provided water for everyone. We celebrate all the miracles of the desert on Sukkos. That is why we eat and drink in the sukkah.

**5.** One should pick up the esrog (with the pittom facing down) with the left hand first. This is because the esrog is listed first in the Torah. The lulav goes in the right hand, as it contains more mitzvos (with the hadassim and arovos).

**6.** The word **"`p"** (“please”) is numerically equal to 51. This alludes to the days from the beginning of Elul through Simchas Torah.

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**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

**Covenant & Conversation**

**The Spirituality of Song (Ha’azinu 5776)**

*10 October 2016*

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 God. 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 God’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 God; 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 presence of God 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 God 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. God is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of God’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.

**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.

**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.

**Sukkot For Our Time *(extract from Koren Sacks Sukkot mahzor)***

*13 October 2016*

Of all the festivals, Sukkot is surely the one that speaks most powerfully to our time. Kohelet could almost have been written in the twenty first century. Here is the ultimate success, the man who has it all – the houses, the cars, the clothes, the adoring women, the envy of all men – who has pursued everything this world can offer from pleasure to possessions to power to wisdom and yet who, surveying the totality of his life, can only say, in effect, “Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless.”

Kohelet’s failure to find meaning is directly related to his obsession with the “I” and the “Me”: “I built for myself. I gathered for myself. I acquired for myself.” The more he pursues his desires, the emptier his life becomes. There is no more powerful critique of the consumer society, whose idol is the self, whose icon is the “selfie” and whose moral code is “Whatever works for you.” This is the society that achieved unprecedented affluence, giving people more choices than they have ever known, and yet at same time saw an unprecedented rise in alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, stress related syndromes, depression, attempted suicide and actual suicide. A society of tourists, not pilgrims, is not one that will yield the sense of a life worth living. Of all things people have chosen to worship, the self is the least fulfilling. A culture of narcissism quickly gives way to loneliness and despair.

Kohelet was also, of course, a cosmopolitan: a man at home everywhere and therefore nowhere. This is the man who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines but in the end could only say, “More bitter than death is the woman.” It should be clear to anyone who reads this in the context of the life of Solomon, that Kohelet is not really talking about women but about himself.

In the end Kohelet finds meaning in simple things. Sweet is the sleep of a labouring man. Enjoy life with the woman you love. Eat, drink and enjoy the sun. That ultimately is the meaning of Sukkot as a whole. It is a festival of simple things. It is, Jewishly, the time we come closer to nature than any other, sitting in a hut with only leaves for a roof, and taking in our hands the unprocessed fruits and foliage of the palm branch, the citron, twigs of myrtle and leaves of willow. It is a time when we briefly liberate ourselves from the sophisticated pleasures of the city and the processed artefacts of a technological age and recapture some of the innocence we had when we were young, when the world still had the radiance of wonder.

The power of Sukkot is that it takes us back to the most elemental roots of our being. You don’t need to live in a palace to be surrounded by clouds of glory. You don’t need to be rich to buy yourself the same leaves and fruit that a billionaire uses in worshipping God. Living in the sukkah and inviting guests to your meal, you discover – such is the premise of Ushpizin, the mystical guests – that the people who have come to visit you are none other than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives. What makes a hut more beautiful than a home is that when it comes to Sukkot there is no difference between the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor. We are all strangers on earth, temporary residents in God’s almost eternal universe. And whether or not we are capable of pleasure, whether or not we have found happiness, nonetheless we can all feel joy.

Sukkot is the time we ask the most profound question of what makes a life worth living. Having prayed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to be written in the Book of Life, Kohelet forces us to remember how brief life actually is, and how vulnerable. “Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” What matters is not how long we live, but how intensely we feel that life is a gift we repay by giving to others. Joy, the overwhelming theme of the festival, is what we feel when we know that it is a privilege simply to be alive, inhaling the intoxicating beauty of this moment amidst the profusion of nature, the teeming diversity of life and the sense of communion with those many others with whom we share a history and a hope.

Most majestically of all, Sukkot is the festival of insecurity. It is the candid acknowledgment that there is no life without risk, yet we can face the future without fear when we know we are not alone. God is with us, in the rain that brings blessings to the earth, in the love that brought the universe and us into being, and in the resilience of spirit that allowed a small and vulnerable people to outlive the greatest empires the world has ever known. Sukkot reminds us that God’s glory was present in the small, portable Tabernacle Moses and the Israelites built in the desert even more emphatically than in Solomon’s Temple with all its grandeur. A Temple can be destroyed. But a sukkah, broken, can be rebuilt tomorrow. Security is not something we can achieve physically but it is something we can acquire mentally, psychologically, spiritually. All it needs is the courage and willingness to sit under the shadow of God’s sheltering wings.

*About Rabbi Sacks: Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. Copyright © 2013 The Office of Rabbi Sacks, All rights reserved. The Office of Rabbi Sacks is supported by The Covenant & Conversation Trust The Office of Rabbi Sacks PO Box 72007 London, NW6 6RW United Kingdom*

**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

**Ohr Somayach – Torah Weekly**

**Overview**

Almost all of Ha'azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world, and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation - that G-d "pulls the strings" of world events so that Bnei Yisrael can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. G-d's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become self-satisfied and over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods, and indulge in all kinds of depravity. G-d will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, G-d will remind them that they are no more that a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental - that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between G-d and His people, and, eventually, in the final redemption, this closeness will be restored. G-d will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were His enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. G-d then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

**Insights**

**A Silver Lining**

***“...with a vile nation I shall anger them.” (32:21)***

Rashi comments: These are the unbelievers (the vile nation). And similarly it says, “The vile one says in his heart, ‘There is no G-d’.”

The People of the Torah have suffered much through the millennia at the hands of those who deny G-d. But every cloud, as they say, has a silver lining.

“...I will scatter them; I will cause their memory to cease from man” (32:26)

Because of our sins, G-d wanted to decree complete destruction on the Jewish People. What held His Hand, so to speak, was that the unbelievers would not see this as Divine retribution but rather as result of their own strength and power.

Thus it was really a great kindness that G-d delivered us into the hands of unbelievers, for it was this that prevented the destruction of Yisrael.

*Sources: Rabbi Simcha Zissel Zaleznik in Iturei Torah*

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**Rabbi Berel Wein**

**Succot**

The festival of Succot marks the culmination, so to speak, of the holy month of Tishrei. Though all of the festivals of the Jewish year retain a solemnity regarding their observance, the festival of Succot is marked as being a time of joy and celebration. The natural beauty of the holiday, as it is accompanied by the climate and agricultural bounty of the Land of Israel, enhances the celebration of the festival itself. The fact that the special commandments that distinguish this holiday from all others are of a natural and agricultural type reinforces within us the understanding of the viewpoint of the Torah towards the wonders of the natural world in which we live.

Even in the snow and cold of autumn in Eastern Europe (or in my childhood in Chicago) the holiday spoke to the Jewish people of the natural beauty of the Land of Israel and of the glories of God's world. While the pagan world worshiped nature itself, Judaism taught its adherents to worship the Creator of nature and its enabler. Plus, it was the view of nature and its awesome powers and enormous beauty that marked the dividing line between Judaism and the pagan world.

The other differences in behavior and outlook, values and our observances, stem from this original divergence as how we view the natural world that we inhabit. The festival of Succot serves to remind us as to this basic fault line in human thought and civilization.

Aside from the natural beauty of the world that the holiday emphasizes there is also a strong message of freedom that Succot represents. Succot symbolizes simple pleasures in life, without unnecessary luxuries and burdensome appurtenances. We are able to live, enjoy and experience life even under a flimsy roof and seemingly temporary quarters.

The Torah does not demand from us discomfort. If for various reasons it is uncomfortable and even painful to sit in the succah then we are freed from that obligation. However the Torah does demand from us a proper perspective as to the necessities of life. The succah is a temporary dwelling but the truth of the matter is that even our mansion-like home is also only a temporary dwelling for mortal human beings.

We are all travelers so to speak in this world and sometimes the demands of travel give us simple and temporary accommodations. The Torah wishes for our home to also be comfortable but one should never view it as being permanent. In spite of this serious thought, we are bidden to be happy and to rejoice in the present and in the blessings of life, family, the Land of Israel and our relationship to the Creator of all natural beauty and human satisfaction.

The only happiness that is lasting and meaningful, an inner happiness not caused by outside stimuli or fleeting factors. The festival of Succot comes to help us experience this inner happiness and to negate within us any extraneous reliance on outside factors to create the happiness that we so long for and desire.

Succot also comes to teach us that somehow we could take a minimalistic view of life. Not everything is perfect and not everything is beautiful and there are many circumstances in life when we are forced to settle for less than we had hoped for. So, a succah is kosher even if it has barely more than two walls. We try to purchase and own the most beautiful blemish-free etrog possible. But any etrog, as long as it meets the minimum standards of halacha is also acceptable.

I remember as a child growing up in Chicago during World War II that there were only three etrogim in the synagogue on Succot to service the more than seven-hundred-fifty worshipers present. It took well over an hour and a half for everyone to mount the bimah and recite the blessing over the etrog. Needless to say, towards the end of the line the etrog was somewhat blemished after being handled by so many people over such a length of time. Nevertheless, the last person in line recited the blessing with fervor and commitment equal to those who had long before preceded him.

It is desirable to have a perfect etrog on which to make the blessing. But, it is not always possible and the reality of the matter is that we should always make do with what we have and not be prevented from serving God and man properly by the lack of perfection within others or ourselves.

Shabbat shalom, Chag sameach, Berel Wein

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**Rabbi Berel Wein**

**Weekly Parsha**

**Haazinu**

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.

Shabbat shalom, Chag sameach, Rabbi Berel Wein

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**Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb-OU**

**Person in the Parsha**

**Ha’azinu: Repression of the Sublime**

It was advertised as one symposium at a major psychology conference. It was to be a discussion about memory and forgetfulness. But it turned out to be one of the most intense and instructive days that I have ever witnessed.

The first speaker began by insisting that the fact that we remember things is obvious. What requires explanation, he argued, is why we forget. We are hardwired to recall every event that occurs in our lives. The mechanisms of forgetfulness are a mystery and call for a program of scientific research.

The second speaker took a position diametrically opposed to the first. He believed that it is only natural that we forget. It is one of nature’s wonders, he maintained, that we remember anything at all.

The third speaker took a middle of the road position. For him, the major challenge to the science of the psychology of memory was not why we remember. Or why we forget. Rather, it was why we remember certain things and forget others. And why we distort even those matters which we do remember, so that our memories are grossly inaccurate and unreliable.

It is the position of this third speaker that has kept my interest over the many years since that conference. And it was just recently, as we commemorated the tragic events of September 11, 2001, that my interest in this subject was revived.

Very many of my acquaintances were on or near the scene of the collapsed World Trade Center Towers on that fateful day. To this day, some have clear recollections of every moment of their experiences. Others claim that they only remember certain vivid episodes, fleeting ones, and can only draw a blank when it comes to the majority of the time they were exposed to the tragic scene.

Some have memories which are as accurate and as clear as the “flashbulb memories” that psychologists have studied as far back as World War II. For others, the memories have been partially, and sometimes substantially, repressed and can no longer be recalled. Their powerful and poignant emotional reactions have wrought havoc with the ability to accurately remember the events of that day.

Remembering and forgetting are major themes in our Jewish religious tradition. We are commanded, for example, to remember the Sabbath, to remember the lessons to be drawn from the life of Miriam, and not to forget the enmity of Amalek. In this week’s Torah portion, Parshat Ha’azinu, there are at least two verses which relate to these themes. One reads, “Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation.” (Deuteronomy 32:7) and the other states, “You ignored the Rock who gave birth to you, and forgot God who brought you forth.” (Ibid. 32:18)

I have always been intrigued by the notion of forgetting God. Earlier in the book of Deuteronomy, we were admonished to be careful, lest “our hearts become haughty, and we forget the Lord our God.” (Deuteronomy 8:14) I can understand agnostic disbelief, and I can empathize with those who have lost their faith, but I have always found it puzzling to contemplate forgetting God. Either one believes, or one does not believe, but how are we to understand forgetting Him?

Many years ago, I came across the writings of a psychologist named Robert Desoille, and it was in those writings that I’ve discovered a concept that helped me come to grips with the notion of forgetting God.

Desoille coined the phrase “the repression of the sublime.” He argued that we have long been familiar with the idea that we repress urges and memories that are uncomfortable or unpleasant. We repress memories of tragedy, we repress impulses which are shameful, or forbidden. It can even be argued that this power of repression is a beneficial one to individuals and society. If individuals would not be able to forget tragedy and loss, they could potentially be forever emotionally paralyzed and unable to move on with their lives. A society whose members act on every hostile impulse, rather than repressing them would be a society which could not endure for very long.

It was Desoille’s insight that just as we repress negative memories, we also repress positive aspirations. We are afraid to excel. There is a pernicious aspect to us that fears superiority and avoids the full expression of our potential. This is especially true in the area of religion and spirituality, where we dare not express the full force of our faith and, in the process, limit our altruistic tendencies. Perhaps it is the dread of coming too close to the divine. Perhaps it is a false humility that prevents us from asserting our inner spirit. Or perhaps it is simply that we do not wish to appear “holier than thou” to our fellows.

However one understands the reasons for this phenomenon, for me, the concept of “repression of the sublime” explains the notion of forgetting God. It is as if we have faith in Him, but do not have faith in ourselves to express our faith in him in our relationships and life circumstances. We repress our sublime potential.

There are many impediments to thorough personal change and self-improvement. Desoille demands that we consider an impediment that never before occurred to us: we are afraid to actualize the inner spiritual potential that we all possess. We are naturally complacent, satisfied with a limited expression of our religious urges. We repress the sublime within us.

As we now have concluded the High Holidays and their truly sublime liturgy, we have allowed our spiritual emotions full range. We have dared to express the religious feelings that welled up within us during the moments of inspiration that we all have surely experienced during this sacred season.

Now is the season during which our faith demands that we loosen the bonds of the repression which limits us, take the risks of more fully expressing our religious convictions, and thereby no longer be guilty of “forgetting the God who brought us forth.”

May we be successful in our efforts to free the sublime within us, to act courageously upon our religious convictions, and thereby merit the blessings of the Almighty for a happy and sweet new year.

**Rabbi Pinchas Winston**

**Perceptions**

**Now or Never**

***Listen, O heavens, and I will speak! And let the earth hear the words of my mouth! (Devarim 32:1)***

The Talmud says that after history as we know it is said-and-done, the gentile nations of the past will complain to God that they were short-shrifted (Avodah Zarah 3a). They will argue that they lost their chance to go to the World-to-Come because they were not given Torah and mitzvos. Had they received Torah like the Jewish people, they will say, they too would have upheld it and earned their own portions in the World-to-Come.

Right.

“Why did you not clamor for Torah while you were still in the previous world?” God could ask them.

“We would have,” they might say, “had we known what it was leading to.”

“Why did you not check and find out while you still could? Why didn’t you investigate Torah and see why Jews believed in it?”

“Well, ah . . .” they will be forced to say.

In any case, the Talmud continues, God will humor them nonetheless. He will tell them:

“Fools! Only one who prepared from before Shabbos will have what to eat on Shabbos!” (Avodah Zarah 3a)

In other words, God will tell them, just as a Jew had to prepare before Shabbos in order to have cooked food on Shabbos, likewise you had to have to perform mitzvos in the previous world to enjoy their benefit now.

“Nevertheless, I will give to you an easy mitzvah called ‘Succah.’ Go perform it!” (Avodah Zarah 3a)

This statement causes bells to go off in the Talmud. Mitzvos in the World-to-Come? Not possible, as Rebi Yehoshua explains. The Torah, at the end of Parashas VaEschanan, says that mitzvos can only only be performed in this world, not in the World-to-Come. Was God merely playing a joke on them?

The Talmud says no. God doesn’t play jokes on His creations.

In any case, the Talmud continues:

Immediately, all the gentiles build succos on their roofs. God however makes the sun beat on them like it does in the heat of summer. [When the heat becomes too intense] the gentiles kick their succos and leave. (Avodah Zarah 3a)

If God does not play tricks on His creations, then why did He make it impossible to fulfill the mitzvah He gave them as a test? As the Talmud points out, even a Jew is allowed to leave the succah in such extreme and uncomfortable conditions. What did God prove?

The Talmud answers:

[A Jew] would leave, but they would not kick the succah [in frustration]. (Avodah Zarah 3a)

The difference between a Jew and a gentile, the Talmud says, is not the mitzvah per se, but each relates to it. What does kicking something in anger reveal? That the person feels betrayed, taken advantage of, cheated. If a Jew is forced out of the succah for reasons beyond his control, he does not feel slighted by God, but reprimanded. He does not see himself as the abused, but as the abuser.

The verse says:

Fortunate is the man whom You, God, chastise, and from Your Torah You teach him. (Tehillim 94:12)

God did not play a trick on the gentiles. He set them straight about Torah and mitzvos. He told them it wasn’t the mitzvah itself that counted most, but how the person doing the mitzvah relates to it. This is what Moshe Rabbeinu tried to teach the Jewish people prior to his death when he said:

Now, Israel, what does God, your God, ask of you? Only to fear God, your God . . . (Devarim 10:12)

Isn’t fear of God only ONE of 613 mitzvos? What about the other 612 mitzvos?

That was the whole point, Moshe Rabbeinu was teaching. Once a person masters fear of God, the rest of the mitzvos for him become far more “natural.” For the person who truly fears God, performing mitzvos becomes second nature, as they will actually become in the Messianic Era when there really will be no yetzer hara anymore (Succah 52a).

A major part of reaching the ultimate level of fear of God is Divine chastisement. We do not know ourselves as well as God does, and only He can set us on the straight path and keep us there. If we don’t heed His “advice,” how can we possibly achieve personal spiritual perfection?

Kicking the succah on the way out proved to the gentiles that even if they had mitzvos to perform in this world, they would never have achieved the fear of God they are meant to promote. They would not have developed the proper relationship to them, and therefore the mitzvos would not have accomplished what they were meant to develop in the person performing them.

It is one’s relationship to mitzvos that really counts the most, as the Talmud may also be alluding to on a different level. This however is only perceivable after first explaining a concept the Maharal revealed. It is a mind-blowing idea to say the least, and it helps to answer the question the Talmud raises about mitzvos in the World-to-Come.

The halachah of Eruv Tavshillin was created by the rabbis to allow a person to prepare for Shabbos on Yom Tov. In general, one is not allowed to prepare for another day on Yom Tov, only for the day itself. However, sometimes Yom Tom is on Friday, and preparing for Shabbos on Thursday is not always the ideal thing.

Therefore, by preparing an Eruv Tavshillin on Thursday when it is still permissible to cook for Shabbos, a person has essentially begun cooking for Shabbos before Yom Tov. The Eruv is a legal device designed to extend the Shabbos preparation process into Yom Tov so that the cooking can be completed on Friday.

Eruv Tavshillin is an interesting halachah to discuss, but not here. What is important is the idea it teaches, and how it pertains to this discussion, including the mitzvah of Succah. For, just as the walls of the succah enclose that which is within in, likewise does the Eruv Tavshillin enclose Yom Tov within it. One’s relationship to mitzvos in this world, it will turn out, will act similarly with respect to the Messianic Era as well.

The halachah says that an Eruv Tavshillin allows cooking for Shabbos at a time when it is not otherwise permissible because of what was performed before Yom Tov. Similarly, the Maharal explains that a person who correctly performed mitzvos beyond the Messianic Era when there was a yetzer hara will be able to perform them in the Messianic Era when there won’t be one. Since he performed mitzvos when he had to fight the yetzer hara, he will be allowed to perform mitzvos even when there is no yetzer hara to fight.

To what end? All the reward for performing mitzvos is from overcoming the yetzer hara who tried to interfere with doing them. No yetzer hara, no resistance. No resistance, no reward, right?

Wrong, says the Maharal. Part of the reward for properly performing mitzvos while we have a yetzer hara is the opportunity to perform them when we will no longer have one—as if we still do. Just as mastering fear of God makes the other 612 mitzvos easier to perform, but does not reduce the reward for doing them, likewise properly performing mitzvos in this world gives us the reward of Messianic mitzvos without any loss of benefit.

This is the deeper meaning of, “The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah” (Pirkei Avos 4:2). The reward of a mitzvah performed in this yetzer hara-oriented world is the opportunity to perform a mitzvah in the yetzer hara-less world, and continue to receive reward for it. The interest accrued from the proper use of free will in this world pays dividends long after free will becomes a concept of the past.

According to the Talmud, this is true not just of the Messianic Era, but even into Olam HaBa—the World-to-Come. This is what God will tell the gentiles at that time when they complain about their lack of mitzvos in this world. “Mitzvos still exist,” He will tell them, “but only for the person who performed them in the previous world and developed the proper relationship to them. Only the person who prepared on ‘Erev Shabbos’ can eat on ‘Shabbos.’ Your complaint,” He will prove to them, “is far too little, and far too late.”

Knowing this, one is now ready to better appreciate this week’s parsha, and the holiday of Succos that follows.

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**Jewish History Crash Course**

Crash Course in Jewish History Part 14 - Yehoshua and the Conquest of the Promised Land

*by Rabbi Ken Spiro*

The Book of Yehoshua begins:

*And it was after the death of Moshe, the servant of the L-rd, that the L-rd said to Yehoshua the son of Nun, Moshe’s minister, saying, "Moshe my servant has died and now arise and cross the River Jordan. You and all this nation go to the land which I give the Children of Israel. Every place on which the soles of your feet will tread I have given to you, as I have spoken to Moshe. No man shall stand up before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moshe, so shall I be with you. I will not weaken my grasp on you nor will I abandon you. Just be strong and very courageous to observe and do in accordance with all the Torah that Moshe my servant has commanded you. Therefore, do not stray right or left in order that you will succeed in wherever you go."*

The Book of Yehoshua describes the conquest and settlement of the Land of Israel during a very significant period of Jewish history.

At this time the so-called Promised Land is bounded by the Egyptian empire to the south and the Assyrian empire to the north. But it is not ruled by either of them. In fact, there is no one power ruling this section of land, rather it is settled by seven Canaanite tribes who inhabit 31 fortified city-states scattered all over the map, each ruled by its own "king."

(Jericho is one of these city-states, so is Ai, so is Jerusalem, where Canaanite tribesmen called Jebusites dwell.)

Before they enter the land, the Jewish people send an envoy to the Canaanites with the message, "HaShem, the Creator of the Universe has promised this land to our forefathers. We are now here to claim our inheritance, and we ask you to leave peacefully."

Needless to say most of the Canaanites don't. (Only one tribe does the right thing and gets out.)

Meanwhile, Yehoshua has clear instructions from HaShem that if the Canaanites don't get out, the Jews must wipe them out, because if they remain in the land they are going to corrupt the Jews. It is made clear that the Canaanites are extremely immoral and idolatrous people and the Jews cannot live with them as neighbors.

This is like saying today that living in a bad neighborhood messes up your kids. You have to always be careful about outside influences.

So what happens?

**The Battle Of Jericho**

The people go into the land and they fight a series of battles. The first is the battle of Jericho, the entrance to the heartland of Canaan.

Some archeologists have suggested that the easy conquest of this heavily-fortified city was made possible by a well-timed earthquake. But isn't it remarkable that precisely when the Jewish people need the city to fall, there is an earthquake and it does? Of course, they call it a miracle.

The waters of the Jordan part and they cross on dry land, then the Jordan refills with water. Next they march around the city walls, which crumble before their eyes. They conquer the city, taking no booty as commanded by HaShem.

Hard to believe?

Writes archeologist-physicist Charles Pellegrino in *Return to Sodom and Gomorrah*:

... we are told (in Yehoshua 4:18) that the waters of the Jordan quickly returned to their normal level. This is consistent with the recent history of the Jordan's natural dams. Within forty-eight hours (and typically within as few as sixteen hours), the waters piling up behind an earthquake-made barrier overflow the mount, tearing great holes in it as they spill forth. (p. 267)

Pellegrino details (pp. 257-268) the excavation of what is believed to be the ancient city of Jericho. He notes many findings that support the story as it is told in the Book of Yehoshua, including the fact that the storehouses of grain -- a very valuable booty -- had been found intact.

It must be clear by now that this is not the typical war of conquest such as we read about in human history of bloody warfare, of raping and pillaging. HaShem has said, "Nothing like that here. And if you follow My instructions all will go well."

**One For All And All For One**

The Jews move on to the next city-state, a place called Ai.

But here things don't go so smoothly. In fact, they meet with a terrible defeat with many of their number killed. Traumatized by the experience, they plead to know why HaShem had abandoned them and quickly learn the terrible truth -- that one person, Achan, had stolen some items back in Jericho.

One person out of 3 million didn't listen to HaShem and everyone suffers!

The fascinating thing here is that the Torah seems to be saying that obedience to HaShem's commands is paramount and that as far as the Jews are concerned -- it is all for one and one for all.

As an outgrowth of that lesson, Judaism teaches that there is such a thing as collective responsibility as well as individual responsibility -- no person is an island, each exists as part of the whole and is responsible for the actions of others as well as his or her own.

In today's world, the motto seems to be "Mind your own business." If we operated on the same level as they did back then, half the world's problems would disappear.

**Life In The Land**

Despite many difficulties on the way, the Israelites do finally lay claim to the Promised Land but their life there is far from calm, particularly after Yehoshua dies. The Torah relates that they had only themselves to blame:

*And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the eyes of the L-rd ... and the anger of the L-rd was kindled against Israel and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers ... and he gave them over into the hands of their enemies." (Shoftim 2:8-14)*

From a simple reading of the text, one might assume that the entire Jewish people abandoned the Torah and started worshipping idols. But this, in fact, was not true. As with the incident of the golden calf (see Part 12) only a small percentage of the people sinned, yet the entire nation is held accountable.

The highly self-critical nature of this passage is typical of others which make the Torah a unique document -- a holy book of a people, but also relating the sinful history of this people. It has been said that if the Torah was not written by the Jews, it must have been written by anti-Semites. As Gabriel Sivan observes in *The Bible and Civilization*:

Biblical heroes and heroines ... are depicted as they are, with their virtues and their human failings ... This ethically uncompromising aspect of the scriptural narrative particularly impressed the Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill: "The Bible is an anti-Semitic book. Israel is the villain not the hero in his own story." Alone among epics, it is out for truth, not high heroics. (p. 10)

There is no question that the criticism of the Jews in the Torah is hyper-criticism, but there are two reasons why the slightest offense by a small group of people is condemned so strongly:

1. As noted above, every Jew is responsible for every other Jew, and what one does reflects on all.
2. It's such an obvious point in the moral history of the world that as soon as you tolerate something, it becomes bearable, and before long it will become common.

Therefore, here HaShem is driving home an important point to the Jews: You're on a very high spiritual level. If you tolerate even small indiscretions by a few, eventually these few are going to pollute the nation.

Indeed, this is eventually what does happen, but before it does the Jews enjoy a honeymoon period in the land known as the Time of Judges.

*Next: The Time Of Judges*

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**Aish.Com - Rabbi Noach Weinberg ZT”L**

**48 Ways to Wisdom**

## Way #49 Organize Your Mind

First things first. Why do we have #49 of the 48 Ways?

Because upon completing the 48 Ways, there is an additional crucial step: Organization. Wisdom needs to be accessed and applied. Unless we organize it properly, what good is it?

Imagine an office where paperwork flows each day. The only way everything will be accessible is with a good filing system. You search for an urgent document... Frustration builds as you grasp for information you know is there, but cannot find. It's buried in a pile!

So too, the human brain is an extremely sophisticated office into which new information is constantly flowing. You've learned so many important lessons about living -- friendship, spirituality, business, coping with disappointments, patience, handling money, etc. It becomes a mass of unmanageable details. Where will you file it? How will you access that information in the future?

*Ha'mech'aven es shmu'aso* literally means "think over what you heard." Create a mental filing cabinet. When you hear a new piece of wisdom, automatically place it in the correct file, making it available for future use. Because the more organized you are, the more power you'll have for living.

**Find The Flow**

The key to organizing wisdom is to develop a framework that doesn't turn your mind into a red-tape bureaucracy.

Always look for the logical flow. For example, when you pick up a book, first read through the table of contents to develop an overall sense of structure. Then, take a few minutes to imagine what will be discussed in each chapter. As you begin reading, this will help you to see how each aspect differs from the next -- and how all the material connects together.

Rather than have an idea explained to you, it's better to try to project the idea yourself, to seek out its implications and corollaries on your own. This way you are focusing, taking part in the process, and analyzing the information as you go. This imprints ideas in your mind much better than simply having it explained to you. And you'll have a much easier time reaching a conclusion about whether or not the material has credibility.

In Jewish learning, we give each section of the Torah and Talmud a name that defines its essence, and then write summary statements for each section. For example, the 48 Ways are defined essences, a sort of table of contents for attaining wisdom.

Pay attention, see the connection. It makes the information infinitely more manageable and helps you recall it and apply it down the road. Try this method in whatever you learn. It's worth the half-hour investment now.

**The Logical System**

Imagine someone who can't balance his checkbook. His desk is piled high with withdrawal and deposit slips, account statements and credit card slips. It's impossible to manage this chaos. So he might as well give up...

So too, with wisdom for living. Every day you learn a lot about life, and unless you organize it, the isolated pieces of wisdom will discourage you and depress you. It kills your optimism and desire to grow and change. You figure: "I've forgotten other ideas in the past, I'll probably forget this, too."

You can't afford to go on like this.

In Judaism, a classic system of organization is to memorize all 613 mitzvos. Maimonides' "Mishneh Torah," for example, organizes the 613 mitzvos into 83 sections, collated into 14 volumes.

What's the value of memorizing this list? This gives you 613 "file folders" in which to place any new piece of wisdom. For example, if you gain an insight into the harmony of nature, you can file it under the Mitzvah "to know that HaShem is one." Or if you find a new way to help homeless people, you can file it under the Mitzvah of Tzedakah.

With this method, you'll understand Judaism altogether differently. You'll see the genius of how one piece connects to another. And that tool will benefit you forever.

There are other methods, too. Some people have thousands of flashcards organized alphabetically by topic. When coming across another piece of information, they write it on a card. Using computer software, this system is easy to implement, and you can even set up a hyper-linked network of personal information.

The main thing is to pick a system that works for you -- and build your wisdom database around it.

**Accessible Wisdom**

If information is worth gathering, it's worth keeping and using. You are constantly picking up new ideas, so anyway you are spending time and money to acquire it. Now does it require much more time or money to remember it? If you paid $50 for something, you'd use it. Isn't wisdom is more valuable than money?

Before beginning any important project, open a new file folder to store information. Whether it's communicating with people, managing money, or raising children, be diligent in organizing your info. When you come across a good article, don't just stuff it into a drawer somewhere.

For example, if you're starting a family, assemble a litany of handy tools for how to raise children. Do you want them to be healthy -- physically, emotionally, and spiritually? Learning on the job is usually too late!

It's not enough to have a bunch of facts and figures stored neatly away in your office. Equally important is to open a parallel "mental file." You also must be able to apply the information even without immediate access to the printed material.

One key method is to always extract the principle behind an idea. This is a lot easier to memorize than a bunch of details. The Sages compare it to carrying around paper money, versus large sacks of coins. This method also gives you a better basis to extrapolate and apply new ideas in the future.

**Memory Devices**

Simple "awareness" of an idea is not enough. To really "own" the idea, you have to know it by heart. Memorization is tremendously powerful. The idea is "in your pocket," immediately accessible at your mental fingertips.

There are two ways to memorize an idea:

(1) Repeat it over and over, memorizing by rote, or

(2) Unravel its logical flow.

Which is the better method? Number Two. Suppose you want to memorize all the bones in the human body. Method #1 is to memorize the name of every bone in alphabetical order. Method #2, the logical way, is to start from the head and move down to the toes. As you go through the body, each bone triggers a hint for the next.

The mind likes mnemonic devices. Try to extract the essence of an idea, and record it in a catch-phrase that can be easily memorized. This way, rather than struggling to recall it from scratch, you'll be able to rebuild the entire idea from your catch-phrase.

Here are some effective memory techniques:

* Assign a one- or two-word description to each idea.
* Take the first letter of each concept, and make a fun acronym out of the letters.
* Create an imaginary scene or story, in which the key concepts all appear together. (The more outrageous the scene, the easier it is to recall.)
* Put the ideas into a song. We remember a series of words because of the tune.

There is a big mental block to memorizing anything, but once you get going, it becomes fun and easy. To get started, try learning one chapter of Pirkei Avos by heart, and review it as you walk down the street. Write down the code-words on a small piece of paper, and keep it with you at all times. This will give you a constant point of reference.

**File, Evaluate And Eliminate**

If knowledge is power, then forgetting is the ultimate weakness.

We have two little gadgets up there. One is the "remember" button and the other is "forget." Did you ever get a telephone number and say, "Sure, I'll remember it," and one minute later it's slipped out of your mind? It happens. You pressed "forget" instead of "remember." But when the millionaire says, "This is my phone number," and it has 25 digits -- no problem! You pressed "remember," and you pressed it hard!

When you hear a valuable piece of wisdom, decide: "This is important, I want to remember it, I'm going to keep it." You have that power. Press the button.

If you can't process new information on the spot, then at the end of each day, review the main things you learned. For example, if you read a good article, articulate the main points, and whatever you find valuable -- file it!

Furthermore, set aside time for review of what you learned. It's easy to forget things when you're not dealing with them on a daily basis. Reviewing not only helps you remember, but will reveal an interconnectedness of ideas that you didn't see when learning the concept the first time.

To avoid "information overload," periodically clean out your mental filing system. A lot of information is needlessly cluttering your mind. Develop a system of review and re-evaluate what you've been carrying around up there. See which issues are valid, and which ones no longer concern you. To discard what you don't need, simply press "delete," just as on a computer.

This doesn't just apply to information. If you find yourself involved in some negative activity -- e.g. only because of peer pressure -- then make a decision to eliminate that activity. You've got to have a healthy life, a healthy head, and a healthy attitude toward living. Don't let the rotten apples disturb your digestion.

**Plans And Priorities**

A crucial part of organizing your mind is to establish priorities. To demonstrate the need to organize your mind, ask questions and see how fast you get answers. For example, ask yourself what lessons you've learned about the three main categories of life:

1. **Issues between me and myself.** What is the purpose of life? What are my goals and dreams? How did I arrive at them? What are my talents? What are my virtues? What do I ultimately want out of life?
2. **Issues between me and others.** What do I know about the relationships with friends, parents, colleagues, and society?
3. **Issues between me and HaShem.** What do I know about truth, kindness, and for what purpose this world was created? What are my G-d-given rights, and what are my obligations?

Now, prioritize these ideas into a set of life plans. You should have a daily plan, weekly plan, monthly plan, yearly plan, 5-year plan, and 15-year plan. How are you going to advance your priorities?

What do you want on your tombstone? Asking this question is very powerful. And very painful.

Keep your priorities straight. Every human being is willing to die to do the right thing. It's true. Could you possibly kill 1,000 innocent children to save your life? You would sooner give up your life than do such a thing.

If we are all willing to die for the right thing, then doesn't that tell us something about our priorities? Yes! When you wake up in the morning, remind yourself: "I want to do the right thing, I want to be a good person." Of course, you may forget about it during the day. But at least you know this is very important. And sooner or later you might even do something about it.

Ask yourself: "What is the right thing? What is a good person? I really should take a little time to figure out what it is!"

In Judaism, we stay focused on priorities by reciting the Shema twice each day, and by putting a Mezuzah on our doorposts. The Shema -- *"Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One"* -- is the greatest pleasure, the quintessential essence of life.

Make sure to keep your priorities on the front burner. There's no sense in making plans if you don't carry them out.

**Why Is "Organizing Your Mind" An Ingredient In Wisdom?**

* Organizing wisdom is the most important step in gaining control of your life.
* When something interesting comes your way, file it in your mind so you can access it when you need it.
* If you understand what you learn, it will remain yours. If it's superficial, it will disappear.
* Unless you make a conscious decision to remember, you are going to forget.
* If a piece of information is worth gathering, it's worth organizing.
* What do you want to achieve in five years, 10 years, 50 years?
* "Out of sight, out of mind." Review your priorities, and bring them to the fore.
* As long as your head is mixed up, you'll feel the pain of chaos up there.
* Pressing the delete button gives you control over your life.
* Know the right time to take out the right knowledge.
* Master the art of "Wisdom Management:" Organize it, control it, direct it.

Author Biography: Rabbi Noach Weinberg was the dean and founder of Aish HaTorah International. Over the last 40 years, his visionary educational programs have brought hundreds of thousands of Jews closer to their heritage. Copyright © 2003 Aish.com - "The 48 Ways to Wisdom" is culled from the Talmud (Pirkei Avos 6:6), which states that "the crown of Torah is acquired by 48 Ways." Each of these is a special tool to help us sharpen our personal skills and get the most out of life.

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*The following columns on last week’s parsha were received after publication*

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**Rabbi Shlomo Caplan**

**Mishulchan Shlomo**

**Yom Kippur – Teshuva For Our Generation**

Rav Yisrael Salanter (1810-1883) writes that he remembers when the mere mention of the arrival of the month of Elul would cause people to tremble. This trembling inspired the onset of an earnest process of Teshuva. On the other hand, Rav Avraham Pam (1913–2001) observes that the arrival of Elul arouses painful feelings of sadness and morose in many people. They know that Hashem is calling on them to do Teshuva, but they feel there isn’t too much that they are truly capable of accomplishing. Delving into the Rambam’s description of Teshuva also doesn’t help to inspire them to rise to the occasion: “How does one confess? Behold, Hashem, I have sinned…before You and I have done such and such; I regret it and I will never repeat it again” (Hilchos Teshuva 1,1). Quite a tall order – almost impossible! Even if they make some progress during this period, past experience has convinced them that this advancement won’t last very long. Where does one who takes the call of this season seriously turn for hope and encouragement?

Rav Pam finds a wonderful approach to this dilemma in the Mishna at the end of Maseches Yoma (85b) which quotes Rebbi Akiva:

*“Fortunate are you Yisrael… Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven, as it says (Yechezkel 36,25), “I shall sprinkle pure waters upon you, and you will be cleansed.” It [also] says (Yirmiyahu 17,13), “The ‘mikvah’ of Yisrael is Hashem.” Just as a mikvah purifies those who are impure, so too Hashem purifies Yisrael.*

Rav Tzvi Hirsch Spector (the Rav of Kovna) explains the two metaphors. The mikvah can only purify a person if he immerses himself entirely in the mikvah. If even one hair is out of the water, the immersion is invalid. This refers to a complete and perfect Teshuva where all sins are rectified – a total make over. Something far beyond the reach of almost everyone alive in our times.

However, in the case of the purifying waters of the Parah Aduma, only one drop need touch any part of the body. Rebbi Akiva is teaching us that even if we are lacking the mikvah form of purification, there is still very much to be gained by even absorbing one drop of water. Even a tiny resolution of Teshuva can make a very major impact. Think of it, says Rav Pam, one drop of Teshuva not only allows us to reach the hand of Hashem which He extends to us, but it can also create the momentum to go even higher.

Rav Pam also cites a Medrash (Vayikra Rabba 29,6) which interprets the *pasuk*, *“Tiku bachodesh shofar”* (Tehillim 81,4) which literally means, “Blow the shofar at the moon’s renewal.” The Medrash notes homiletically that the word *chodesh* means to renew and the word shofar means to improve (*leshaper*). One level of Teshuva is to renew – a total makeover. The other is to improve on the Mitzvos that we are already doing. Every person has his Mitzvah in which he excels and which he enjoys doing. We should try to improve these Mitzvos even more, and thereby they generate the motivation and energy to grow in other areas. “One mitzvah pulls with it another Mitzvah” (Avos 4,2). Indeed, the Netziv asserts that the *pasuk*, “And follow the path of your heart” (Koheles 11,9) implies that any Mitzvah that a person is drawn to is the right Mitzvah for his personality.

For our generation, this provides a realistic and more secure path to Teshuva. Rav Pam has taught us that it is the little things that not only count, but actually work.

**Rabbi Doniel Staum**

**Stam Torah**

**Yom Kippur 5777 - “On The Mark”**

The Dubner Maggid[1] was legendary for his uncanny ability to answer virtually any question with an engaging and apropos parable The Vilna Gaon[2] once asked the Maggid the secret of his skill to imagine innovative parables on the spur of the moment. True to his legacy, the Maggid replied by relating a parable:

There was once a prince who desired to master the skill of archery. He spent hours each day studying the acumen of the greatest archers in the kingdom. With time the prince himself became renowned for his precision and exactitude as an expert archer.

One day the prince was traveling through the forest when he noticed an arrow which cut right through a bull’s-eye on a nearby tree. At first the prince thought nothing of it, but then he noticed numerous bull’s-eyes throughout the area. The prince could not get over it. What marksmanship this archer must have! The prince insisted that his men seek out who was responsible for the incredible display of talent.

After some time, they returned to the prince with an unkempt child. The prince was astounded, “Was it really you who hit every bull’s-eye in this forest? Please tell me your secret. I have never seen anyone with your talent and ability.” The child began to laugh, “Your graciousness, I will show you the great secret of my talent.” With that he pulled out an arrow and shot it haphazardly at a nearby tree. After the arrow landed clumsily, the child took out some chalk from his pocket and drew circles around the arrow, until it appeared like a perfect bull’s-eye.

The Maggid concluded, “You see I too first imagine my parables. It is only later that I seek a question which can be answered with the help of the parable!”

The Shulchan Aruch states that even one who is not particular to only eat Pas Yisroel[3] during the year, should be particular to do so during the Ten Days of Penitence.

What is the meaning behind this law? Are we trying to fool G-d during this intense time of judgment and scrutiny? Why should one engage in seemingly hypocritical acts during these days, when he is well aware that he has absolutely no intention of maintaining these stringencies after Yom Kippur is over?

In the pizmun[4] recited on the morning prior to Yom Kippur we beseech G-d, “O gracious One, favor Your people who believe in Your Name, assign for me an advocate (angel) who will conceal my inadvertent sin; who will suppress my guilt with his left hand, and elevate my merit with his right… On the morrow, may this sign be.”

Why do we ask that our sins be concealed; would it not be more logical to request that our sins be obliterated completely, as the prophets stated[5]?

After having sought refuge from his brother Eisav’s wrath for over two decades, Yaakov Avinu began his journey back home. When he finally encountered Eisav, the Torah[6] relates, “Eisav ran to greet him, and he embraced him, and he fell upon his neck, and he kissed him and he cried.”

Rashi, quoting the Sifrei, offers two very diverse explanations of Eisav’s ironic behavior. One opinion is that Eisav’s emotional display was an insincere external front. However, the other opinion is that at that moment Eisav was overwhelmed with compassion for Yaakov and indeed Eisav embraced Yaakov wholeheartedly.

The Shelah explains that both opinions are true:

Chazal[7] note that the word Satan (שטן) has a numerical value of 364. This alludes to the fact that Satan has the ability to prosecute us in heaven during 364 days of the year. However, there is one day a year when he is not granted permission to speak negatively about the Jewish people, and that is on Yom Kippur.

The Pirkei d’Rebbe Eliezer[8] states, “When Satan sees that he is not allowed to prosecute on Yom Kippur, he comes before G-d in order to be a good advocate, and speak in defense of Klal Yisroel. He says, “Master of the World, You have one nation analogous to the ministering angels in heaven. Just as the ministering angels do not eat or drink, so too the Jewish people do not eat or drink on Yom Kippur; just as the ministering angels are barefoot, so are the Jewish people barefoot on Yom Kippur… Just as the ministering angels are pure of sin, so are the Jewish people pure of sin on Yom Kippur”.”

This is an absolutely astounding thought. It is inconceivable that Satan – the angel devoted to prosecuting against us in heaven constantly – should suddenly become a passionate advocate on our behalf, simply because he is denied his usual role. How can the prosecutor become our supporter in our greatest moment of need?

There is a known adage in the world of education that the worst thing a “spirited child” can do for himself is to have a perfectly behaved day in school. For inevitably his parents and teachers will use that day against him, constantly pointing out that, “See you could do it if you really put your mind to it. Remember that other day when you had a perfect day? That means the rest of the time you’re just not trying enough!”

The reality is that “even a stopped clock is right twice a day”, i.e. even a child who has a very difficult time in school will have a good day on occasion. But for such a child, the good day is the anomaly, not his usual rambunctious behavior.[9]

The Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi BenZion Halberstam shlita, explains[10] that in truth Satan has no intention of being an advocate for us. In fact, au contraire, he remains true to his mission. However, on Yom Kippur his prosecution is stated with devious deceit.

Satan stands before G-d and preaches about the holiness and purity of the Jewish people on Yom Kippur. He emphasizes their sincerity and devotion on this most sublime of days. The implication is that if the Jews can reach such a level on Yom Kippur, they could be living on such a level throughout the rest of the year. The fact that they do not proves their unworthiness and insincerity throughout the rest of the year.

This is essentially what occurred during the fateful encounter between Yaakov and Eisav[11]. Eisav ran towards Yaakov and kissed him wholeheartedly because his compassion was truly aroused at that moment. That feeling was actually rooted in Eisav’s apathy and disdain for Yaakov, and that encounter symbolically foreshowed what occurs every year. On Yom Kippur Satan embraces us with seeming love and devotion. Truthfully however, that love really masks his efforts to destroy Yaakov completely in a most vile and deceitful manner.

It is for this reason that we ask that our sins be concealed but not totally eradicated. We want to impede the cunning prosecution of the evil inclination on Yom Kippur. Let him not be able to say that we have no sin. Rather, that we have transcended our sins and raised ourselves close to G-d, despite our mishaps and failings. Indeed we hope that G-d will pardon and forgive our sins completely, but Satan should not be able to use that against us.

During the days preceding Yom Kippur and on Yom Kippur itself we behave above our usual level of observance and adherence.

It is analogous to a woman who comes down the steps one morning, completely disheveled, and still half-asleep. As she walks past the mirror she is appalled by her appearance. “What has happened to me?” she wonders. But then in the corner of her eye she sees her wedding picture hanging next to the mirror. There she stands alongside her new husband, beautifully made up, and looking her best. She realizes that the woman in the picture is her, and that she is truly that beautiful - if she only took the time and had the patience to make herself look like that again.

It is true that we do not live on the same level as we do during the Ten days of Penitence. But throughout the year, in our lowest moments, when we feel distant and frustrated with ourselves and our spiritual state, we suddenly remember the levels we reached during the sublime Days of Repentance. We remember that we truly are great people, if we only have the fortitude and confidence to raise ourselves back to those levels.

In that sense Yom Kippur is the bull’s-eye, around which we must paint our year. At times we may feel that we have strayed, even to the perimeter of those surrounding circles. But as long as Yom Kippur remains the center point, we are still somewhere ‘on the mark’.

“And he kissed him and he cried”

“On the morrow, may this sign be”

Rabbi Dani Staum, LMSW

Rabbi, Kehillat New Hempstead

Rebbe/Guidance Counselor – ASHAR

Principal – Ohr Naftoli- New Windsor

[1] Rabbi Yaakov Kranz 1740-1804; Dubno was a village in Lithuania

[2] Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer, 1720-1797

[3] Bread baked by a Jewish baker; although Pas Akum – bread baked by a non-Jew for private use may never be eaten by a Jew, Pas-Paltar – commercially baked bread by a non-Jew (e.g. Freihoffers, Thomas, etc.) is permitted. During the Tens Days of Penitence the custom is to refrain from eating Pas-Paltar as well.

[4] Liturgical prayer containing a refrain, and recited responsively between chazzan and congregation

[5] e.g. Yeshaya 43:25 “I, only I, am he who wipes away your willful sins for My sake, and I shall not recall your sins.”

44:22 “I will have wiped away your willful sins like a thick mist, and your transgressions like a cloud; return to Me, for I will have redeemed you!

[6] Bereishis 33:4

[7] Yoma 20a, and Vayikra Rabba 21:4

[8] Perek 45

[9] This obviously does not apply to most children (thankfully). This was only said regarding the child who is simply ‘not wired’ for the classroom.

[10] Erev Yom Kippur 5766

[11] Satan is the angel of Eisav

**Rabbi’s Musings (& Amusings)**

*Erev Yom Kippur*

*9 Tishrei 5777/ October 11, 2016*

It seems that, aside for the wave of penitent emotions, the High Holy Days also arouse a certain level of nostalgia.

I mentioned last week that during my formative years, my family lived on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. We davened in the legendary Polisher Shteible, where not only my father and grandfather davened, but where even my great-grandfather davened during the years he was living in New York.

The atmosphere of the Shteible is impossible to describe to one who has never experienced it. Antique seforim lined the shelves, and aged wooden tables and benches sat atop the dusty tiled floor. The distinct smell of herring, kichel, and "bromphen" was ever palpable. I remember the two elderly kohanim who duchaned - both sang different tunes, equally off key.

Everyone who davened in the Shtieble was a personality in his own right, with his own idiosyncrasies - each worthy of his own Musings.

One particular memory that I often think of at this time of year was from the middle of mussaf on Rosh Hashnah and Yom Kippur. The gabbai, R’ Ezra, would open a cubby and remove a stack of old copies of the New York Times. Then he would hastily distribute one page to every person in shul. I was quite surprised and confused - a page of old newspaper in the middle of davening?

But soon enough it became clear what the newspapers were for. The gemara states that when one kneels and prostrates before G-d during the mussaf of Rosh Hashnah and Yom Kippur, he is not allowed to do so on the ground itself, as that was the practice of idolaters. Rather he must place something between himself and the floor. The Shteible used old newspapers to serve that purpose.

Rav Shimshon Pinkus zt"l related that he had the same experience in his shul during his youth. They too would hand out newspapers during mussaf on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. He also related that one year, after everyone stood up following their prostration, there was one fellow who remained down, with his face remaining pressed to the ground. At first they feared that he had passed out. But upon closer analyzation, they realized that he was reading the newspaper beneath him.

Rav Pinkus commented that there may not be anything wrong with reading a newspaper article, but not at that moment! At that lofty awesome moment when we demonstrate our complete submission before G-d in a manner unparalleled during the rest of the year, it's not a time to be focusing on anything other than one's complete commitment and devotion to G-d.

Rav Pinkus added that Shabbos each week, as well as every Yom Tov throughout the year, are times of spiritual connection with G-d, on an unparalleled level. We have to ensure that our behavior during those holy days is befitting their sanctity. Things which may be perfectly acceptable, and even necessary, on regular weekdays, may not be fitting during those elite times.

As the great day of Yom Kippur is upon us, and we seek ways to elevate our service to Hashem, perhaps we can give thought to a matter that is a particular challenge for all of us:

There is much good that we do with our cell phones, and they help us in so many ways. But how often do we take them out to look at them during davening in shul, during family meal times, or at any time when we are conversing with another person. It has become so commonplace that we hardly even realize that we do it.

During moments of spiritual, or even personal connection, let's not be the guy who is proverbially "busy reading the paper".

May we all have a G'mar Chasima Tova - a year of growth, blessing, health, shidduchim, parnasa, nachas, etc. But above all, may we all have the wisdom and insight to appreciate those gifts we are granted by giving them our full attention, and by not allowing ourselves to be distracted by the phony cyber-world.

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**Bais Hamussar**

**Yom Kippur**

**דעת עצמינו 14 - יום כיפור**

**Dvar Torah # 547 Da'as Atzmeinu 14**

*This Dvar Torah is dedicated in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Yitzchok and Tzivia Klein.*

*May they and their entire family be zoche to a gmar chasima tova and a year filled with bracha v'hatzlacha, simcha and nachas!*

In the final section of Daas Atzmeinu, Rav Wolbe focuses on the importance of acquiring the proper tools to decipher one's actions in order to reveal the middah which lies behind his behavior. He writes that often our middos are deeply hidden and unless we acquire a method of unearthing them, they will remain unknown to us. Additionally, there are numerous thoughts, impressions and even complex plans that take place in our subconscious. These all contribute to our fears, temper and behavior in general, without us being cognizant of the true reason behind our mood swings. So what is there to do? How can we penetrate the recesses of our mind and discover the root of our actions?

We must be cognizant of an internal phenomenon which Rav Wolbe refers to as a "projector." A projector takes a picture and projects it on a wall; hence the coining of it as a psychological term describing a person taking their feelings or impressions and ascribing them to someone else. Practically it manifests itself when a person appraises a situation derogatorily, while in reality it is his own internal negative middos that are distorting his ability to properly interpret the situation. Rav Wolbe presents three examples of this phenomenon.

The pasuk states, "For [the Torah] is not an empty thing for you" (Devarim 32:47). Chazal (Yerushalmi Pei'ah 1:1) explain, "If it [seems to you that it] is empty - the emptiness is to be found in you." One who learns Torah and encounters an idea that seems pointless or unfounded, must realize that this "emptiness" is rooted in a personal flaw. The projector portrayed the person's own imperfection as an imperfection in the Torah.

When the spies returned with a derogatory report of the Promised Land, Bnei Yisrael responded negatively. In sefer Devarim Moshe reviewed their reaction: "You slandered in your tents and said, 'Because of Hashem's hatred of us did He take us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Emorim'" (Devarim 1:27). Rashi explains that Hashem loved Bnei Yisrael and in reality it was Bnei Yisrael that harbored hatred toward Him! As the saying goes, "What you think about your friend, he thinks about you." The projector portrayed their ever so slight subconscious hatred toward Hashem backwards, as if it was Hashem Who hated them.

The final example is what Chazal tell us (Kiddushin 70a) that one who repeatedly finds fault in others, is suspect that he himself contains that fault. If he refers to others as slaves, it might very well be that he himself is a slave. Certainly this fellow is not conscious of his lineage, because if he were he would try his very best not to bring it up lest others find out. Nevertheless, subconsciously the flaw was not forgotten and it rears its head by portraying everyone around him as if they contain that very flaw!

Indeed often people have a tendency to find faults in others. One must pay attention to any negative terminology that is on the tip of his tongue and determine whether the fault is actually to be found internally rather than externally.

Which of the following feelings is worse? The feeling that the world around you is hostile, faulty and empty, or the realization that in reality these faults are nestled inside you and there is no basis to say that they exist in those around you?! Certainly the former is worse, because how can one live in a world that is completely negative and hostile? In contrast, if the negative perception is his own misinterpretation, the ability to rectify the negativity is in his hands.

Once one acknowledges this reality, he has roused himself from the nightmare of living in a scary world, and at the same time he has made a profound revelation about his personality. While it's easy to blame others for one's shortcomings, only a Bar Daas has the courage to admit that it is he himself that is to blame. One only stands to gain from recognizing the source of his deficiency, because it gives him the ability to prevent the mistake from recurring. The immediate accomplishment of getting to know oneself is that he will cease blaming others and realize that it his own shortcomings that cause him to detect these imperfections in those around him.

These profound internal proceedings are not easily detected. To penetrate to the root of our character one needs a unique instrument. This device is mussar b'hispalus. When one studies mussar in a rousing manner, he penetrates to the core of his being; putting him on the way to getting to the root of his behavior. Often we try to rectify our spiritual maladies on Yom Kippur by placing "bandaids" on specific shortcomings. It would be worthwhile to accept upon ourselves even a small regimen of daily mussar study. Learning mussar enables us to discover the underlying fault and allows us to treat the root of the malady. This in turn leads not only to true and lasting change, but also to tremendous satisfaction in our avodas Hashem!

*Gemar Chasima Tova!*