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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON SHMINI ATZERES – SIMCHAS TORAH –  
V'ZOS HABRACHA - 5779

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Rabbi Reisman's Chol Hamoed Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres Shiur  
Esplanade Capital <[jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com](mailto:jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com)>  
Fri, Sep 28, 2018 at 1:23 AM

**Rabbi Reisman - Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5779**

As we prepare for Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos, for the upcoming Hoshana Rabbah, Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, what a wonderful lineup of days for Klal Yisrael. Let me begin with a beautiful thought related to the end of V'zos Hab'racha.

**1 - Topic - A beautiful Vort from Rav Moshe in the Darash Moshe on Nevua.**

We find at the end of V'zos Hab'racha as it says in 34:10 ( וְלֹא-קָם נְבִיא עוֹד ) (בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, כְּמִשָּׁה, אֲשֶׁר יָדַעַו יְהוָה, פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים מִשֵּׁי מֹשֶׁה רַבְּבֵינוּ) It is well known that the Nevua that Moshe Rabbeinu was Mekbail was unique. It was a Nevua called (פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים), so to speak face to face, and other Neviim were not Zoche to that level of Nevua.

Rav Moshe in something he wrote which was published in the end of Darash Moshe in the first volume Parshas Naso (page # 114), gives an absolutely incredible insight into Nevua, the different levels of Nevua that are less than Moshe Rabbeinu's Nevua.

The Mor'e Nevuchim says that there are many levels of Nevua and Ruach Hakodesh. Although Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest, (פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים), but there are many other levels of Nevua. Rav Moshe explains based on a Rashi at the end of Naso that all other Neviim heard the Dvar Hashem so to speak Min Hatzad (from the side). As if HKB"H was talking in His Beis Din Shel Maila not directly to the Navi, and the Navi eavesdropped. He had permission to so to speak listen in to the words of Hashem. This is what Rav Moshe brings based really on Rashi. (כבודו של מעלה כן מדבר בינו לבין עצמו ומשה ) (שומע מאליו Hatxad. That before the Nevua of (פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים) a Navi heard things Min Hatxad. That is the (כבודו של מעלה), the Kavod of the heavenly court that when a Navi who is a Basar V'dam hears, he hears K'ilu he is listening Min Hatxad.

Rav Moshe goes on. He says that on a certain level every Jew even Biz'man Hazeh is capable of hearing the word of Hashem Min Hatzad, so to speak from the side. How so? We don't have Nevua today. But still, in our lives

there are moments that we don't recognize the Tzivui Hashem beforehand. But once something has happened to us, we have the ability to recognize that Mai'Hashem Yotza Hadavar. That it is a command from the Borei Olam. Rav Moshe brings an example, his own coming to the United States and really he is not only just talking about himself, he talks about all of those immigrants who came to the United States in the middle of the last century. (אנו שיצאנו מארץ מולדתנו לאמריקה ג"כ מצות ד'). Looking back once someone is here, it becomes Nisgaleh to us that that is HKB"H's command. It is a Nevua of Hashem. It is as if we heard it listening in to the Bais Din Shel Mailah, that this is what HKB"H wants that so many Yidden come to this country. Once we hear, we need to be able to do it like someone who heard the Tzivui Hashem.

Rav Moshe talking about himself says that he thought about it like Avraham Avinu who kept the Ratzon Hashem when he was told (לך-לך מארץך). Rav Moshe too says I was commanded (לך-לך מארץך), to leave the land of my birth. He says there is a difference. (ואנחנו לא ידענו) we didn't realize that it was Hashem's command. (ועשינו כעושי רצון עצמנו). And at the time that we did it we thought we had a choice. But afterwards, once it happened, (ולכן החכם ויר"ש מכוין על כל דבר שעושה שהוא מקיים בזה רצון ד' לא רצון עצמו). Once it happened, an Erliche Yid does it, accepts it, that it is HKB"Hs will. The lesson is that very often in life HKB"H pulls strings and things happen out of our power. We are made to move, we are made to take a certain job, there are certain things that happen to us. HKB"H orchestrates it, we don't know beforehand. But once it happened we should see it as Ratzon Hashem and then we can do it with a different attitude. Like a Navi who heard it from HKB"H. This is Rav Moshe's advice for all of us and who doesn't have a moment of Lech Lecha, a moment of going someplace, K'ilu he chose it and looking back realizes that it is Ratzon Hashem.

But after this beautiful message, Rav Moshe adds an even more beautiful message. He says, (וכ"ש כשנושא אשה) and certainly in marriage, we go to marriage as if we have a choice. That is the veil of HKB"H's Siyata Dish'maya in marriage. But Rav Moshe says that once you are married, a person should understand that he is doing what HKB"H commanded B'nivuas Hashem. Listen to the language that Rav Moshe uses. (שידע), a man or a woman should know, (שלבד שמקיים מצות קידושין שנאמרה בתורה לכל אדם) besides that in marriage he does what HKB"H commanded, the Mitzvah of marriage, (מקיים בזה המצוה שנצטווה הוא בעצמו). He also has the command that came to him like one who comes to a Navi. (רק שלא ידע עד עתה) just until marriage he is not aware of it. (וכשידע ויכין לזה) but once he knows it and his Kavana is to do the Ratzon Hashem, (ודאי יתברך) he will certainly be blessed. (בעד קיום מצוהו בייחוד). You get married because Hashem decreed, you get married because you chose on your own. Once you get married it is HKB"H's decree, it is Ratzon Hashem. It is like a Nevua. What an absolutely beautiful message. This was something written by Rav Moshe and put into the Darash Moshe at the end of Parshas Naso in the first volume.

<http://www.5tjt.com/10-short-life-lessons-from-vzos-habracha/>  
10 Short Life Lessons from Parshas VeZos HaBracha  
September 28, 2018

by Rabbi Yair Hoffman for 5tjt.com

**The Sidra of vezos habracha has ten sections.**

Moshe Blesses the Shvatim and begins with Reuvain. The Sidrah begins with "And this is the blessing." But why did Moshe Rabbeinu choose to bless them at this particular point? The Abarbanel answers that previously he ended with a "shira" that spoke of punishments and reproving. Moshe Rabbeinu does not want them to give up hope. He wishes to imbue them with a sense of endurance and to be able to persevere. He therefore gave them a blessing to inspire them. A leader must also look to imbue his charges with this. Blessing Yehuda – Moshe said, "And this for Yehudah." And he said, "O Hashem, listen to Yehudah's voice and bring him to his people; may his hands do battle for him, and may You be a help against his

enemies.” What voice of Yehudah did Moshe Rabbeinu ask Hashem to listen to? The Ohr HaChaim explains that it is the voice of Yehudah admitting fault. Self-justification distorts reality and Yehudah’s doing so reflected humility. Taking responsibility allows for better decision-making. Yehudah paved the way for all of Klal Yisroel to do this (Sfas Emes). This earned Yehudah the remarkable bracha listed here. Blessing Levi – The pasuk tells us, “And of Levi he said: Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one, whom You did prove at Massah...at the waters of Meribah. How did Hashem test or prove them? Rashi explains that the tribe of Levi did not complain with the other murmurers. We see here a remarkable insight. Neither did Shaivet Levi complain nor did they join with other murmurers. There appears to be a special even stronger yetzer hara to join in with others in murmuring and complaining. Shaivet Levi didn’t do that. They remained davuk bashem. Many meforshim explain that it was because of this quality that they earned the Urim v’Tumim and the title of “ish chasidecha.” Blessing Binyomin – And of Benjamin he said, “Hashem’s beloved one shall dwell securely beside Him; He protects him all day long, and He dwells between his shoulders.” What does “and He dwells between his shoulders” mean? The Midrash Tanchuma Miketz (37) explains that Binyomin received these blessings in the merit of his being accused of stealing the goblet and being struck between the shoulders and bearing with it without complaint – not taking revenge. He let their behavior slide. This is a lesson for all of us to let things slide. Blessing Yoseph – Moshe says regarding Yoseph: And with the sweetness of the land and its fullness.. may it come upon Yoseph’s head and upon the crown of the one separate from his brothers. What is the significance of Yoseph being separate from his brothers? The Abarbanel explains that of all the brothers – Yoseph was the one most removed from gashmius. It is for this reason that he obtained these blessings. We can make two observations here. The first is that even though the brothers were on a very high spiritual plane – there are still very high steps that one can achieve when one is removed from the physical. The second observation is that Yoseph is being rewarded in the very area that he was so removed from! The answer is that we don’t need these incentives but they are there. When we begin the journey toward the spiritual – the assurances of physical success is there so that we will head toward that path. Blessing Zvulun and Yissachar – Moshe Rabbeinu states: Rejoice, Zvulun, in your departure, and Issachar, in your tents” We understand why Zvulun will rejoice as he is travelling on business and will undoubtedly succeed. But why is Issachar rejoicing in his tents? The Ohr HaChaim explains that Issachar is making his sojourn in this world temporary – as if he is in a tent. In other words, he realizes the silliness of the looking at this consumption oriented world as the end all and realizes the temporal nature of it. Rather he values, spiritual accomplishments and the idea of helping others. This is something in which he should truly rejoice. He’s happy because he is not in the rat race. Blessing Gad The Kli Yakar explains that on account of the tribe of Gad’s volunteerism, where they volunteered to be the pioneers at the front of the army, Gad received blessings. This is called tzedakah – a charitable worthy act. Giving to others has enormous benefits. Rabbi Dessler writes that it actually connects the giver to the recipient and creates strong bonds. Blessing Dan and Naftali – And of Dan he said: “Dan is a young lion, streaming from Bashan.” What does “streaming from the Bashan” mean? The Rokayach explains that the heroes of the tribe of Dan would wait in hiding at Har Bashan for marauding regiments to come by and they would stream down from the mountain and leap into battle in order to protect their people and save their lives. This points out both the importance and value of bravery as well as value of saving life. It was these two factors that earned Dan the blessings. When the verse describes Naftali as Sva Ratzon – it means that he was filled with the desire to do Hashem’s will. Perhaps this is why the blessings of the two were combined. Blessing Asher and all of Klal Yisroel – And of Asher he said: “May Asher be blessed more than the other sons. He will be pleasing to his brothers..” What is the need further for Asher to be pleasing to his brothers? The Seforno explains that

notwithstanding that he will be more blessed than his brothers – they will still not be jealous of him – rather he will be beloved. Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching us the grave necessity to watch out for jealousy and to take steps to ensure that it does not happen. If it is true among the holy tribes – it can definitely be true among every one else. This is an important lesson – very few are above it. Moshe Passes Away – “And Moshe went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, [to the] top of the summit facing Yericho. And Hashem showed him all the land: The Gilead until Dan..” Why did Hashem show him the land at this point? The Ramban explains that Moshe loved his people tremendously. When Moshe would see how great the land was – he would be happy. There are a few wonderful lessons in this Ramban. We see the importance of loving others because you will genuine be happy for their good fortune. Also, we see the importance of bringing joy and happiness to people at the end of life. This is what Hashem did and we should emulate Him.

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V’Zot HaBracha (Deuteronomy 33-34)

**Moses' Death, Moses' Life  
by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks 5776**

And so Moses dies, alone on a mountain with God as he had been all those years ago when, as a shepherd in Midian, he caught sight of a bush in flames and heard the call that changed his life and the moral horizons of the world. It is a scene affecting in its simplicity. There are no crowds. There is no weeping. The sense of closeness yet distance is almost overwhelming. He sees the land from afar but has known for some time that he will never reach it. Neither his wife nor his children are there to say goodbye. They disappeared from the narrative long before. His sister Miriam and his brother Aaron, with whom he shared the burdens of leadership for so long, have predeceased him. His disciple Joshua has become his successor. Moses has become the lonely man of faith, except that with God no man, or woman, is lonely even if they are alone.

It is a profoundly sad moment, yet the obituary the Torah gives him - whether Joshua wrote it, or whether he wrote it himself at God's behest with tears in his eyes[1] - is unsurpassed:

Never again did there arise a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to display in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land, and for all the mighty acts and awesome sights that Moses displayed in the sight of all Israel. (Deut. 34:10-12)

Moses rarely figures in the lists people make from time to time of the most influential people in history. He is harder to identify with than Abraham in his devotion, David in his charisma, or Isaiah in his symphonies of hope. The contrast between Abraham's and Moses' death could not be more pointed. Of Abraham, the Torah says, "Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people" (Gen. 25:8). Abraham's death was serene. Though he had been through many trials, he had lived to see the first fulfillment of the promises God had given him. He had a child, and he had acquired at least the first plot of land in Israel. In the long journey of his descendants he had taken the first step. There is a sense of closure.

By contrast, Moses' old age is anything but serene. In the last month of his life he challenged the people with undiminished vigor and unvarnished candor. At the very moment that they were getting ready to cross the Jordan and enter the land, Moses warned them of the challenges ahead. The greatest trial, he said, would not be poverty but affluence, not slavery but freedom, not homelessness in the desert but the comfort of home. Reading these words, one is reminded of Dylan Thomas' poem, "Do not go gentle into that good night." There is as much passion in his words in his hundred and

twentieth year as at any earlier stage of his life. This is not a man ready to retire. Until the very end he continued to challenge both the people and God. What do we learn from the death of Moses?

[1] For each of us, even for the greatest, there is a Jordan we will not cross, a promised land we will not enter, a destination we will not reach. That is what Rabbi Tarfon meant when he said: It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it.[2] What we began, others will continue. What matters is that we undertook the journey. We did not stand still.

[2] "No man knows his burial place" (Deut. 34:6). What a contrast between Moses and the heroes of other civilizations whose burial places become monuments, shrines, places of pilgrimage. It was precisely to avoid this that the Torah insists explicitly that no one knows where Moses is buried. We believe that the greatest mistake is to worship human beings as if they were gods. We admire human beings; we do not worship them. That difference is anything but small.

[3] God alone is perfect. That is what Moses wanted people never to forget. Even the greatest human is not perfect. Moses sinned. We still do not know what his sin was - there are many opinions. But that is why God told him he would not enter the Promised Land. No human is infallible. Perfection belongs to God alone. Only when we honor this essential difference between heaven and earth can God be God and humans, human.

Nor does the Torah hide Moses' sin. "Because you did not sanctify me ..." (Num. 20:12). The Torah does not hide anyone's sin. It is fearlessly honest about the greatest of the great. Bad things happen when we try to hide people's sins. That is why there have been so many recent scandals in the world of religious Jews, some sexual, some financial, some of other kinds. When religious people hide the truth they do so from the highest of motives. They seek to prevent a chillul Hashem. The result, inevitably, is a greater chillul Hashem. Such sanctimoniousness, denying the shortcomings of even the greatest, leads to consequences that are ugly and evil and turn decent people away from religion. The Torah does not hide people's sins. Neither may we.

[4] There is more than one way of living a good life. Even Moses, the greatest of men, could not lead alone. He needed the peacemaking skills of Aaron, the courage of Miriam and the support of the seventy elders. We should never ask: Why am I not as great as X? We each have something, a skill, a passion, a sensitivity, that makes, or could make, us great. The greatest mistake is trying to be someone else instead of being yourself. Do what you are best at, then surround yourself with people who are strong where you are weak.

[5] Never lose the idealism of youth. The Torah says of Moses that at the age of 120, "his eye was undimmed and his natural energy unabated" (Deut. 34:7). I used to think these were two complementary phrases until I realized that the first is the explanation of the second. Moses' "eye was undimmed" means, he never lost the passion for justice that he had as a young man. It is there, as vigorous in Deuteronomy as it was in Exodus. We are as young as our ideals. Give way to cynicism and you rapidly age.

[6] At the burning bush, Moses said to God: "I am not a man of words. I am heavy of speech and tongue." By the time we reach Devarim, the book named "Words," Moses has become the most eloquent of prophets. Some are puzzled by this. They should not be. God chose one who was not a man of words, so that when he spoke, people realized that it was not he who was speaking but God who was speaking through him. What he spoke were not his words but God's words. That is why He chose a couple who could not have children - Abraham and Sarah - to become parents of the first Jewish child. That is why he chose a people not conspicuous for their piety to become God's witnesses to the world. The highest form of greatness is so to open ourselves to God that his blessings flow through us to the world. That is how the priests blessed the people. It was not their blessing. They were the channel of God's blessing. The highest achievement to which we can aspire

is so to open ourselves to others and to God in love that something greater than ourselves flows through us.

[7] Moses defended the people. Did he like them? Did he admire them? Was he liked by them? The Torah leaves us in no doubt as to the answers to those questions. Yet he defended them with all the passion and power at his disposal. Even when they had sinned. Even when they were ungrateful to God. Even when they made a Golden Calf. He risked his life to do so. He said to God: "And now, forgive them, and if not, blot me out of the book you have written" (Ex. 32:32). According to the Talmud God taught Moses this lesson at the very outset of his career. When Moses said about the people, "They will not believe in me," God said, "They are the believers children of believers, and in the end it will be you who does not believe." [3] The leaders worthy of admiration are those who defend the people: even the non-orthodox, even the secular, even those whose orthodoxy is a different shade from theirs. The people worthy of respect are those who give respect. Those who hate will be hated, those who look down on others will be looked down on, and those who condemn will be condemned. That is a basic principle of Judaism: middah kenegged middah. The people who are great are those who help others to become great. Moses taught the Jewish people how to become great.

The greatest tribute the Torah gives Moses is to call him eved Hashem, the servant of God. That is why the Rambam writes that we can all be as great as Moses.[4] Because we can all serve. We are as great as the causes we serve, and when we serve with true humility, a Force greater than ourselves flows through us, bringing the Divine presence into the world.

NOTES: 1. Baba Batra 15a. 2. Avot 2:16. 3. Shabbat 97a. 4. Hilkhot Teshuvah 5:2.

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Torah Shorts: **Afterlife Reunions: Vezot Habracha**

**By Rabbi Ben-Tzion Spitz** - 18 Tishri 5779 – September 27, 2018

Of all the great unknowns of our world, death, life after death and what we call the afterlife remain a mystery clouded by uncertainty, different beliefs, lack of belief and limited scientific evidence. Jewish tradition on the other hand has a number of firmly held beliefs as well as extensive lore about what the afterlife is about, what rules apply and some insights about what the experience entails. Not surprisingly, we glean some of that inside information from tidbits Moses left for us in the Bible. On his last day on Earth, Moses addresses the assembled nation of Israel as they sit on the Plains of Moab, staring across the Jordan River at the Land of Canaan, The Promised Land. Moses quotes God and declares: "This is the land that I promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to say, to your progeny I will bequeath it."

Rabbeinu Bechaye on Deuteronomy 34:4 (Vezot Habrachah) reads from this verse references and hints as to how things are in the afterlife. When Moses quotes God above and adds the seemingly superfluous words of "to say," Rabbeinu Bechaye, quoting the Talmud, states that God was instructing Moses that when he's dead at the end of that day, he should directly tell the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that God fulfilled His promises. This implies that in the afterlife, Moses would be meeting the Patriarchs and be able to talk with them. However, the Talmud continues to explain that the dead are aware of not only what's going on and have interactions in the afterlife, but that they're also aware and even involved in some measure in the occurrences back on Earth in the material dimension. If that's the case, then why does God instruct Moses to inform the Patriarchs about what they already know? The Talmud answers that the Patriarchs do indeed know what's going on and that Moses wasn't informing them of anything they didn't know when he conveyed God's message. However, God wanted Moses to be in the Patriarch's good grace as the agent and as a messenger of the good tidings of the final fulfillment of God's promise of centuries before. It is comforting to know that included in the many aspects of Jewish belief about the afterlife, we'll be able to hangout with our spiritual kin as well as stay up-to-date about what's going on with our people and our loved ones in the mortal world. Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach

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<https://ots.org.il/parsha-to-the-point-vzot-habracha-5779/>

**Parshat V'zot HaBracha** (Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12)

**Rabbi David Stav**

It is interesting to note that Hashem chose to end His Torah, “And there was no other prophet who arose in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, as manifested by all the signs and wonders, which the Lord had sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and all his servants, and to all his land, and all the strong hand, and all the great awe that Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel.” (Devarim / Deuteronomy 34:10-12)

This conclusion focuses on three aspects of Moshe Rabbenu’s greatness. The first concerns prophecy. There had never been, nor will there ever be, a prophet as great as Moshe. This declaration ostensibly serves to warn the nation and prepare it for the challenges it is destined to face later in its history, which include frequent encounters with false prophets who emerged both from within the Jewish people, and from without.

The second aspect of Moshe’s greatness was the magnitude of the events in which he was a part. These verses stress the fact that this was a man who was involved in the performance of the greatest miracles in the history of mankind. Far from being quaint, simple folk tales, these events set in motion dramatic changes in the annals of the nations of the world. Some of these great miracles were witnessed by the entire nation, and the other nations were also involved in what had transpired.

The third aspect is less clear. How can the words “and all the great awe that Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel” be understood? Is God hinting to a regime of terror, God forbid, or to a specific event? And if a specific event is being referred to, what is it? The rabbis grappled with this verse, and Rashi interpreted them as follows:

This expression alludes to the incident where his heart stirred him up to smash the tablets before their eyes, as it is said, “and I shattered them before your eyes” (Deut. 9:17). – And the Holy One Blessed is He gave His approval, as Scripture states, “which you shattered” (Exod. 34:1); “Well done for shattering them!” (Rashi on Devarim 24:12, based on Tractate Shabbat 87a)

In other words, the Torah is reminding us here that Moshe broke the Lohot Habrit, the Tablets of the Covenant, which were given by God after the sin of the golden calf.

This explanation, however, does not sit well with us. Moshe had led the people through the desert for forty years, and the one event he chooses to emphasize as he finishes delivering his message to the Jewish people is the breaking of the Tablets of the Covenant? What is so unique about this event? Why was this event so important that it should conclude the Torah?

The rabbinical interpretation of the verse might be expressing a basic principle used to understand the essence of the Torah and distinguish between Torah study, in contrast to studying any other book. When we finish reading the Torah, we should ask ourselves what our takeaway is from the experience.

Was this just a nice book that occasionally made us reflect, or perhaps even inspired us at times, only to be buried in the recesses of our memories as we went back to our daily routines? Or did this book truly leave a lasting impression on us, one that would change us from within, and even lead to a major change in our actions?

At the very beginning of the relationship between the Nation of Israel and the Torah, at Mount Sinai, when they went hand in hand, a formative event occurred, one that would serve as the basis for the Jewish people’s relationship with the Torah. Yet just forty days after receiving the Torah, after the Jewish people famously exclaimed “we shall do, and we shall listen” and in so doing took on the prohibition against idol worship and prostrating before statues, the very same nation bowed down to a golden calf.

Moshe’s immediate and severe reaction was that if this travesty occurred, the Torah does not exist. The Torah can’t be simply tucked away in our bookshelves. It needs to cause a serious change within us. If we only notice it with passing glances, if it doesn’t truly leave a deep impression on our perceptions, we might as well have never received it to begin with.

from: Rabbi Ozer Alport <oalport@optonline.net>

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subject: Parsha Potpourri - Haazinu/Sukkos/Shemini Atzeres

**Parsha Potpourri Sukkos** – Vol. 13, Issue 49 Compiled by

**Rabbi Ozer Alport**

זכור משוי בתיבת גמא מן המים נמו דלה דלה והשקה צאן מים סגוליד עת צמאו למים על הסלע הך ויצאו מים בצדקו הון חשרת מים (תפילת גשם)

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 include a reference to the fact that at the time that the Jewish nation was thirsty for water, 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 incident that is considered more of a sin than a merit?

In his responsa Shu”t Tzitz Eliezer (17:41), Rav Eliezer Waldenberg writes that the Gerrer Rebbe suggests that this difficulty is a proof to the Rambam’s explanation (Shemoneh Perakim 4) of the nature of Moshe’s sin in this episode. In contrast to Rashi, who explains that Moshe’s error was that he hit the rock instead of speaking to it as he was commanded, the Rambam maintains that Moshe’s sin was that he lost his temper and angrily addressed the people as rebels (Bamidbar 20:10). The Gerrer Rebbe posits that according to Rashi’s opinion that the sin was hitting the rock, it would be inappropriate to mention this incident in our prayers, but according to the Rambam’s explanation that Moshe did nothing wrong in hitting the rock to produce water and only sinned in how he spoke to the people, it would not be as problematic to mention this episode in our prayers for water.

In order to understand our prayers even according to Rashi’s opinion, the Tzitz Eliezer cites the explanation given by the Lev Aryeh (Chullin 7b) for Moshe’s actions. In Parshas Chukas, the Jewish people complained to Moshe about a lack of water, just as they did in Parshas Beshalach (Shemos 17:2-3). In both cases, Hashem commanded Moshe to respond to their protests by extracting water from a rock. However, there is one subtle difference between the two episodes. In Parshas Beshalach, Hashem told Moshe to strike the rock with his staff (Shemos 17:5-6), whereas in Parshas Chukas, Hashem told him to speak to the rock in order to produce the water. What is the reason for this change?

Rashi writes (Bamidbar 20:2) that the Torah juxtaposes the death of Miriam to the complaints of the people about a lack of water to drink as a way of teaching us that the well that provided them with water until now existed in the merit of Miriam, and now that she died, the well disappeared and the people had nothing to drink. The Lev Aryeh explains that as great as Miriam was, she was not on the spiritual level of Moshe. As a result, the initial miracle of bringing forth the water in her merit had to take place in a slightly more natural manner, in which Moshe was instructed to strike the rock with his staff.

Once Miriam died, the well returned in the merit of Moshe (Taanis 9a), and on his lofty level, he was capable of producing the water in an even more miraculous fashion: by merely speaking to the rock, without needing to hit it. However, Moshe was concerned that if he did so, it would on some level reflect badly on Miriam in that she only had the merit for water to come forth by force, while he was able to do it through speech. In Moshe’s humility and righteousness, in order to avoid appearing greater than his sister, he specifically elected to hit the rock, just as he was originally commanded to do in her merit.

The Tzitz Eliezer suggests that this interpretation perfectly explains the request that we make in our prayers. After telling Hashem of our need for rain, we beseech Him that even if we are not worthy of receiving it, He should leniently treat us with mercy and compassion, just as Moshe went above and beyond to hit the rock and protect his sister’s reputation.

במקום שעושים שני ימים טובים, ליל תשיעי מקדשין ואומרם זמן, ולמחר מוציאין שלשה ספרים וקורין באחד וזאת הברכה עד סוף התורה, ובשניה בראשית עד אשר ברא אלקים לעשות, ובשלישית קורא המפטיר. הגה: וקורין יו"ט אחרון שמחת תורה לפי שמהין ועושים בו סעודת משתה לגמרה של תורה (שלחן ערוך אורח חיים 669)

The Shulchan Aruch writes that Jews who live outside of Eretz Yisroel and observe a second day of Yom Tov celebrate Simchas Torah on the additional day of Shemini Atzeres, rather than on Shemini Atzeres itself. Seemingly, it would be more appropriate for Jews in the Diaspora to mark Simchas Torah on the first day of Shemini Atzeres, together with their brethren in Israel, and to publicly read from Parshas Re'eh (Devorim 14:22-16:17) on the following day, similar to our custom on the eighth day of Pesach and second day of Shavuos.

Rav Moshe Aharon Friedman of Yeshivas Mir in Yerushalayim suggests that the reason for our practice is that during Sukkos, we connect to Hashem by dwelling in the sukkah. After doing so for a week, a person may mistakenly conclude that the only way to survive spiritually is to permanently remain in the rarefied atmosphere of his sukkah. Therefore, on Simchas Torah, we ingrain in ourselves that there is an alternative method to achieving the same closeness to Hashem that we enjoyed in the sukkah: clinging to the Torah, which can be done wherever a person finds himself throughout the year.

On Shemini Atzeres, the Shulchan Aruch rules (Orach Chaim 668:1) that a person should eat his meals in the sukkah, albeit without reciting a beracha, in which case Simchas Torah cannot take place at this time. Simchas Torah must specifically be celebrated when we are no longer sitting in the sukkah and have already begun the transition back to the real world, which does not occur until the following day.

Along these lines, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld points out that the first verse in the Torah begins with the letter ב (בראשית) and ends with the letter צ (הארץ), while the final verse in the Torah begins with ו (ולכל) and ends with ל (ישראל). Taken together, these four letters spell the word בצלו, a reference to the verse (Shir Hashirim 2:3) – בצלו חמדתי וישבתי – in its shadow I delighted and sat, an allusion to the sukkah from which we just departed. Thus, the Torah itself hints to us that the same connection to Hashem that we experienced during a week in the sukkah can be found within it year-round.

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### **Sukka on Shmini Atzeres? by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**

Different minhagim come to the forefront this time of year, and growing up spending many a Yom Tov among Jews of all stripes, in various kosher hotels, makes this author uniquely suited to address this annual Sukkos "battle". Not the proper order of nanuim with the Lulav and Esrog, nor the correct order of the Ushpizin. Rather, I'm referring to sitting in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres. Is it an obligation or recommendation? Prohibited or permitted?

Sukka Source

Not a recent question, the Gemara in Sukka (46b - 47a) deals with this very subject: How Shmini Atzeres is viewed in halacha. The Torah states[1] that the day following the weeklong holiday of Sukkos (which we know colloquially as Shmini Atzeres) is a holiday as well, and technically not part of Sukkos. This means that on this day there is no obligation to do any of the Mitzvos exclusive to Sukkos, whether shaking the Lulav or eating in the Sukka.

As long as the Sanhedrin in Eretz Yisrael established the New Month (Rosh Chodesh) based on eyewitnesses, Jews in far away places who did not receive messengers in time would keep two days of Yom Tov instead of one. This was due to the uncertainty of which day Rosh Chodesh truly was, and consequently when the Yomim Tovim actually fell out, all to ensure that they did not unwittingly transgress any Biblical prohibitions[2]. Later, in the times of Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas, when much calendar confusion reigned (due to the subversive efforts of the Cutim), Chazal decreed that in Chutz La'aretz (the Diaspora), "Yom Tov Sheini" is always observed[3].

The outcome of this is that in Eretz Yisrael where there never was a safek yom or "day in doubt", only one day of Yom Tov is celebrated, exactly as it is written in the Torah,

while in Chutz La'aretz each day of Yom Tov has become a "two-day Yom Tov". Which brings us back to our dilemma: What should we do on Shmini Atzeres in Chutz La'aretz? Do we treat it as part of the preceding holiday of Sukkos, or does it maintain its exclusive status as a separate holiday?

As previously mentioned, this issue is debated in the Gemara, which famously concludes that on Shmini Atzeres "Meisiv Yasvinan, Bruchi Lo Mevorchinan". In other words, we eat in the Sukka, but we don't make the regularly mandated bracha of "leishev baSukka". The Rosh[4] explains that since Sukkos and Shmini Atzeres are separate and different holidays and have different sets of Mitzvos, we can't do all of them as it would be 'tarti desatri', an outright contradiction. Rather, we do what we can lechumra, meaning eating in the Sukka, but not making the blessing. We also do not wave the Arba Minim on Shmini Atzeres[5]. This dual ruling is duly codified in halacha by the Rambam, Tur and Shulchan Aruch[6].

Minhag Mysteries

Yet, something seems to be lacking in the application of this halacha. For if this is the proper conclusion, why are there divergent customs? And there most definitely are divergent customs here! There are those who sleep in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres; those who don't even step foot in the Sukka; those who only make Kiddush in the Sukka but eat the majority of their meals inside, and those who only eat in the Sukka but don't sleep there[7]. Which is correct?

To Sleep or Not to Sleep?

It is known that the Vilna Gaon[8] was very makpid on not only eating but even sleeping in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres. The Chayei Adam relates that the Gr"a once made the whole yeshiva sleep in the Sukka on a freezing Shmini Atzeres night, just to show the rest of the city the importance of following this halacha. Several authorities[9] rule like the Gr"a, saying that one must sleep in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres, as they maintain that the last day of Sukkos is the most important. However, many authorities do not agree with this reasoning and maintain that although one must eat in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres, nevertheless, one does not (and some say nor should not) sleep in the Sukkah[10]. The Chasam Sofer famously did not sleep in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres[11]. This is also the conclusion of the Mishna Berura[12], who states that the "Minhag HaOlam" is not to sleep in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres.

Not to Eat

However, there were many great authorities who ardently defended the minhag of not eating in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres, including the Sfas Emes, the Aruch Hashulchan, the Kozeglover Gaon, and the Minchas Elazar[13]. Many of them are based on the Korban Nesanel[14] who writes that since eating in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres is only mesafek - therefore in places where it is cold and windy, one does not have to do so. Others understand that the Gemara meant that one may eat in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres without the bracha of "leishev baSukka", but not that one is obligated to. Either way, different minhagim of not exclusively eating in the Sukka on Shmini Atzeres have earned staunch support.

Israel Issues

I know, readers in Israel are saying that's all very nice, but this doesn't affect them; they only keep one day! No safek yom here! But actually it just might concern them. For what is a "Chutznik" or two-day Yom Tov keeper who happens to be in Israel for Sukkos (quite commonly yeshiva bochorim) to do? Since they are only temporarily in Eretz Yisrael, they must (according to the majority halachic consensus) keep the second day of Yom Tov in Israel as well[15]. Must they still sit in a Sukka on Shmini Atzeres or do as the Romans...err, Israelis do?

Contemporary halachic decisors are divided as to the proper halacha, with no clear cut ruling. The Tukachinsky Luach, Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach, the Minchas Yitzchak, and the Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa[16] rule that a "Chutznik" should not eat in a Sukkah in Israel on Shmini Atzeres, as one should not be stringent on a safek yom that does not apply where they currently are, especially as the whole rule of keeping two days in Eretz Yisrael is a matter of dispute. Additionally, sitting in a Sukkah publicly when the locals do not might be of halachic concern.

Others, including Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, Rav Shmuel HaLevi Vosner and the Debreciner Rav[17], rule that someone who always keeps Yom Tov Sheini must continue to keep it to its full extent - even in Eretz Yisrael. A third opinion, that of Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, Rav Ovadia Yosef, and the Betzeil HaChochma[18] is that the Chutznik should eat in a Sukka, unless he is dependant on locals for his meals. This means that a bochor eating at relatives who are eating their Yom Tov seudah inside may eat with them, as he is not obligated to cause them hardship. As with any other halachic question, one should ask his own Rabbinic authority which opinion he should personally follow.

Whatever your minhag on Shmini Atzeres, enjoy the protection of the zecher l'ananei hakavod, and feel the embrace of Hakodosh Baruch Hu all Yom Tov long!