

B'S'D'  
INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON SUCCOS - 5761

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From: Josh Rapps[SMTP:jr@sco.com] Subject: SHIUR HARAV SOLOVEICHIK ZT"L [on Hashana Rabba]

Please include in your tefilos a prayer and Mi Shebayrach for Aryeh Laybish Efrayim Tzvi Halevi Ben Toyba for a Refuah Shlayma. In the Zchus of your Tefilos and Limud Hatorah that may be generated by this Dvar Torah may he and all Cholay Yisrael, R"L, be granted a Refuah Shlayma and Arichas Yomim Vshanim with good health and may we all merit a Ksiva Vchasima Tova.

Shiur Rav Soloveichik ZT"L on Yomim Noraim and Hoshana Rabba (Shiur was presented in the early 1950s)

The characteristic of Hoshana Rabba as a night of judgement that concludes the judgement period of the Yomim Noraim, is not mentioned in the Talmud. Hoshana Rabba in the Mikdash was unique relative to the first 6 days of Sukkos. For example, on Hoshana Rabba they would circle the altar 7 times while the previous days they would circle the altar once. There would be an abundance of Aravos on Hoshana Rabba. They would take the Arava on Shabbos if it fell on Hoshana Rabba, though the Talmud doesn't tell us why. The Ramban on Shlach on the verse "Sar Tzilam Mayalayhem" uses the term Blayl Hachosem, referring to Hoshana Rabba as the night of Chasima, sealing the fate. It is interesting to note that the text of Nesana Tokef found in Machzorim from earlier generations states "on Rosh Hashonah they will be judged (Yidonun) on Yom Kippur they will be inscribed (Yikasevun) on Hoshana Rabba they will be sealed (Yachaseimun)".

The Zohar elucidates for us the meaning of Hoshana Rabba. The Zohar binds Hoshana Rabba with Rosh Hashonah. Rosh Hashonah is the epitome of Din. The central patriarchal figure on Rosh Hashonah is Isaac and the central motif of Rosh Hashonah is Akaidas Yitzchak. In Kabbala, Yitzchak represents the Midas Gevuara. The Zohar translates the term "Akaidas Yitzchak" as binding the Din represented by Isaac, with Midas Hachessed represented by Abraham from one side and the Midas Tiferes or Emes, representing Jacob, from the other. The Kabbalistic interpretation of "Vayakod Avraham Es Yitzchak Bno" (And Abraham bound Isaac his son) is that Abraham bound Isaac with the Midas Hachessed to the altar upon which Isaac was to offer himself as a Korban. According to the Zohar, Tekias Shofar on Rosh Hashonah represents the binding (restraining) of Din. Yom Kippur on the other hand represents complete Chesed. According to the Zohar, the concept of the night of Hoshana Rabba representing a night of Din is based on the verse Vayashav Yitzchak Vayachpor Es Beeros Hamayim, Isaac returned and re-dug the wells that his father's servants had dug years before. On the night of Hoshana Rabba, Isaac revives the Midas Hagevurah and Din and casts off the shackles of the Midas Hachessed that bound him on Yom Kippur and he starts to again dig the wells, to judge Bnay Yisrael. Just like Shofar breaks the Midas Hadin on Rosh Hashonah, the Arava breaks the Midas Hadin on Hoshana Rabba.

Arvei Nachal, which grow wild near streams, symbolize ever expanding and growing Chesed, as opposed to the Midas Hadin that connotes Tzimtzum, contraction. Hoshana Rabba is called Hamtakas Hadin, the sweetening of the Din, because it ameliorates the power of Din. (The Rav noted the Ari Hakodosh required that we take 5 individual Aravot to comprise the Hoshana so that the 5 Chasadim of the Arava should sweeten the 5 aspects of Din.)

Usually, Hamtakas Hadin is associated with Sukkos and with the taking of the 4 species. However the association is much deeper. Judaism refers to Hashem as HaLan Bseser Btzetel (see the Piyut on Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur of "Vchal Maaminim"), residing mysteriously, Kvayachol, in the shade. Likewise we find that Hashem appears to man encased, Kvayachol, in a cloud, for example when Moshe received the 13 attributes of mercy in Parshas Ki Tisa. The descriptions we have from the prophets indicate that even when Hashem reveals Himself to man, He remains hidden behind a thick and mysterious cloud. Man sees only the cloud, but he is incapable of seeing Hashem through it. Even Moshe Rabbeinu could not

achieve his request to see clearly the revelation of Hashem. Hashem answered Moshe that the continued existence of man is irreconcilable with viewing Hashem, infinity. The different levels of prophecy, as descriptions of the revelation of Hashem as viewed by the most minor prophet through the greatest, Moshe Rabbeinu, are manifestations of this principle. The greatness of the prophet is determined by the depths to which he was able to penetrate the cloud that cloaks Hashem and how much of His infinite light he was able to see and comprehend. We echo this theme in Shir Hakavod: Byad Nviecha Bsod Avadecha Dmisa Hadar Kvod Hodecha (You gave the prophets hints, examples of Your glory), Himshilucha Brov Chezyonos. Prophets see Hashem only through Dimyonos, their perceptions, perceptions that are clouded by the mystery and veil that surrounds Hashem. According to the Baalei HaKabbalah, Hashem reveals Himself to man as shrouded in a Levush, an outer garment, Kvayachol, Melech Mislavesh B'Asarah Malbushim, as expressed in the Piyut on Rosh Hashonah (in Shacharis). While the greater the prophet the deeper he pierces the Levush, ultimately no prophet sees totally through the Levush.

Judaism went further and said that Hashem does not only reveal Himself to the prophets, but to all creation through the wonders of Maasay Breishis, through nature. Hashamayim Msaprim Kvod Kel U'maasay Yadav Maggid Harakiya. The reflection of Hashem can be seen everywhere, through the sunrise and sunset, the movement of the celestial bodies and the chirping of a bird. Revelation through nature is described in the Birchos Krias Shema as Hashem creates the light and the darkness, He renews daily all of creation. Just like His revelation to the prophets was obscured through a cloud, His revelation through nature is also obscured via an impregnable cloud. Hashem does not reveal Himself for all to clearly recognize, otherwise we would not have to pray on Rosh Hashonah that Hashem should make His greatness visible and rule over the entire world (M'loch Al Kol Haolam Kulo B'chvodcach), as the glory of Hashem would be rather obvious. When man sees the consistency of nature he foolishly believes that it is self-perpetuating. His perception is limited to what he sees at the surface, he does not appreciate that it is the hidden hand of Hashem that maintains and renews all. The same cloud that shrouds Hashem when he communicates with a prophet obscures His relationship with the rest of intellectually limited mankind. Man only sees the surface, a cloud. Only the sharp, perceptive eye can pierce the surface and recognize Hashem as all encompassing and surrounding.

In Jewish History there were many prophets, yet Moshe was the greatest of all. Moshe's greatness was his ability to pierce the cloud to a greater depth than all other prophets. The greatness of Abraham, the first of the patriarchs, was his ability to see what no one else could, to perceive Hashem in all of nature. Abraham planted an Ayshel (tree) and the Torah tells us that he called Bshem Hashem Kel Olam. Abraham showed that through nature, through the growth cycle of a tree, an Ayshel, man can see and the greatness of Hashem. The Midrash says that whatever Abraham did for the 3 angels that visited him after his circumcision, Hashem repaid to his children. The Midrash says that Abraham was the first to sit in a Sukkah. When Abraham sat them under the shade of the tree, essentially providing them a Sukkah, his children were repaid with the Mitzvah of Sukkos.

People make the mistake of describing Sukkah as the result of the prohibition against eating in one's regular house. That is incorrect, for one who sits outside under the sky has left his house yet does not fulfill the Mitzvah of Sukkah. The main part of a Sukkah is the Schach, the covering. The shade from the Schach must be greater than the sunlight in order for the Sukkah to be valid. When the Jew sits in the Sukkah he should contemplate what is above him. At first glance, he is sitting under the Schach, however that is not the case. On top of the Schach is a great sky. Not all can see the sky through the Schach. For the Sukkah to be valid at a minimum, Lchatchila, one must be able to see the sun and the stars through the Schach. Even though the Schach may be too thick to see the night sky through it, Rabbeinu Tam says that the Schach is acceptable as long as the rain can penetrate the Schach and enter the Sukkah. The "catch" to the Mitzvah of Sukkah is to sit in a small booth and yet to feel that you are not limited by it. On top of the booth, Hashem Himself is to be found. But not all can peer through the Schach. One must focus and concentrate to see what lies beyond the surface of the Schach, especially when the Schach is so thick only rain can pass through it.

In essence, man's entire life is one small Sukkah. The individual, indeed mankind as a whole, sits in a small insignificant booth. Yet he thinks his little booth is the whole world, there is nothing beyond his own little universe. Man's principal interests usually are concentrated around his family. He has no intellectual connection to the rest of the world. What does he know about the world outside his natural boundary? What does modern man know about the secrets of nature and the mystery of life? Hisbonanta Ad Rachvei Eretz Hayadata Kula, do you believe that by acquiring knowledge you have learned all there is to know (Job 38:18)? We have a false perception about the heights that modern

science has reached. In reality, the greater the scientist, the more honest he will be in stating how little we truly know about the secrets of life and nature. No matter how much we progress we will never discover the secret of creation. Even the great telescopes that peer into the distant corners of the universe offer us no greater insights into the greatness of Hashem than a small booth, a Sukkah. In the final analysis, man sits cramped in a tiny Sukkah. Man would do well to understand that outside his small, familiar Sukkah is a great infinite world, a world that he knows nothing about and will never comprehend.

Man's problem, from the time of Abraham, is that his personal Schach obscures his vision. It prevents him from seeing the world, from seeing Hashem. He believes that everything is defined by the physical sciences and nothing else exists. He believes that the world is a self-propelled machine. Modern man is stubborn and haughty. Each person believes that he has discovered the world's deepest secrets and fancies himself all knowing and all capable. He sits in his own tiny booth with such thick personal Schach that even the rain can't penetrate it. Such a closed Sukkah starts to become tight and claustrophobic. It becomes even more restricted when one's neighbor starts to encroach on his Sukkah. Ultimately they begin to quarrel and go to war against each other.

Abraham was the first to build a true Sukkah and look through the Schach and see the wonders of Hashem. When the 3 angels approached him he saw them as Arabs who bow to the dust on their feet, as people with limited vision who can only bow to what they can feel and see before their eyes. He told them to sit under the tree and to try to appreciate where everything comes from, from Hashem. "Cast off your idolatrous shortsighted notions and wash your feet, recognize the greatness of Hashem". Abraham planted an Ayshel and from that place he was able to call forth the greatness of Hashem, the Creator of the world. Hashem always appears to man through a Levush, it is the task of man to see Hashem through the Schach just like Abraham called forth recognition of Hashem through the Ayshel.

But Sukkah has an additional symbol. Hashem is revealed also through history, especially through Jewish History. If you would ask what is the scope of Jewish History, the answer would be that it stretches well beyond the history of Jews in America. Jews have not established much in the new world (with the exception of the last 50-75 years). Rather it is the perspective of the millennial history of 4500 years dating back to Abraham. We can see it through a diagram, a picture of a Sukkah where the Schach is sometimes so thick that it is impossible to see through it to the heavens. At times like that it is difficult to see Hashem and the Hashgacha that drives the world. Sometimes our enemies tell us that we live in a tattered Sukkah and we are assaulted by the rain and the wind. Did we not go through the black period of recent history where the Sukkah teetered near collapse? Did we not recently go through a period where it took the greatness and vision of a Moshe and an Abraham to see the Hashgacha through the dark clouds of Majednak and Auschwitz?

But if you would ask where does the strength of Knesses Yisrael lie? It is in the ability to pass the test of poverty. Shlomo asked that he not be tested through great poverty or through great wealth. Suffering, like poverty, makes it extremely difficult to serve Hashem. How well do the nations of the world score on the tests of poverty and wealth? They are usually able to pass the test of wealth. A land that becomes wealthy expands its social and cultural pursuits. For example, America has been able to pass the test of wealth very well and has been an example of philanthropy to the rest of the world. But when it comes to the test of poverty the non-jewish world can't pass it. When the nations of the world are poor and hunger stricken they display an animalistic tendency. For example Germany was one of the most cultured nations prior to World War I. After World War I, when they encountered difficult economic times, they blamed the Jews and others and ultimately were responsible for the murder and death of millions. Esau reacted in a similar way when faced with the tests of poverty and wealth. When Esau says that he is satisfied, that he has sufficient wealth, he says to Jacob let us travel together. But when Esau is hungry, then we must watch out. He screams out "I will open my mouth and pour the soup in". Esau can't pass the test of poverty.

On the other hand, the Jews have always found it easier to pass the test of poverty but (often) failed the test of riches. Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai statements about the corruption of the Jew by wealth are applicable today as well. Often, when a Jew acquires wealth, he also acquires a sense of haughtiness to accompany it, Vayishman Yeshurun Vayivat. A Jew can't reconcile Mishmanay Haaretz and Mital Hashamayim. He can't have both. Look at the situation in Eretz Yisrael. The fact that we have it is a miracle from heaven but there are political parties there that also find it impossible to reconcile the attributes of Chol and Kodesh. Take for example the acceptance of Halachic laws of marriage in Eretz Yisrael, laws that are the most advanced and forward looking in the world. The members of the Labor Party found fault with it and could not reconcile to accept it. [Ed. Note:

witness the growing secular revolution supported by the government today, 5760-5761.]

The hallmark of the Jew throughout Jewish History has been his ability to survive the test of poverty. A Jew has never spilled a drop of blood in time of hunger. The opposite is true, when a Jew is hungry he realizes that other Jews are hungry as well and he strives to help them while he is helping himself. The Rav told the story of Reb Chaim Meisels, the Rov of Lodz, who met with a wealthy business leader (Posnansky from Lodz) to request assistance in providing the poor people of the town with fuel to heat their homes and make it through the frigid winter. He came to Posnansky's home and asked the butler if Posnansky could meet him outside in the hall. The butler said that Posnansky wanted to meet with him in his office. Reb Chaim insisted that they meet in the hallway. So he came out to speak with him and spent half an hour talking with him. It was winter and Posnansky was getting quite cold standing outside. Posnansky said that he would like to continue the conversation but requested that they enter the office where it was warm. Reb Chaim now told him the purpose behind his visit, that he came to ask for funds to provide kindling wood for the poor people of Lodz. Had he sat with him in the warm office, Posnansky would never have felt what it was like to be cold and would not be as willing to contribute to the cause. When a Jew is cold he begins to sympathize with others.

Jews have always been able to identify Hashem in the Sukkah in the midst of a pouring rain or when the sun was beating down and making conditions in the Sukkah unbearable. The Gemara says that in the Messianic period, Hashem will test the intentions of the nations of the world through their willingness to keep the Mitzvah of Sukkah. The Gemara (Avodah Zara 3a) says that Hashem will make it unbearably warm for them and they will exit the Sukkah, claiming dispensation as Mitztaer, one who is uncomfortable in the Sukkah is not obligated to sit in it. The Gemara says that the nations of the world will kick the Sukkah as the leave. When other nations become uncomfortable they are transformed into violent beings capable of destroying the world. When the Jew is forced to leave the Sukkah because of uncomfortable conditions, he feels the pain of others in similar distress and is willing to help. Perhaps he even sees Hashem more clearly through the Schach of his distress.

Chachmei Drush interpret beautifully the verse that on the third day Abraham saw the place from afar and he instructed the lads to remain at that location while he and Isaac ventured on. Chazal say that he saw a cloud encircling the mountain. He asked Isaac what he saw and Isaac said that he saw a beautiful mountain with a cloud encircling it. He asked Ishmael and Eliezer what they saw and they answered that they saw only a desert and its nondescript hills and unyielding stones. Abraham then instructed them to remain behind. Abraham together with Isaac were prepared to embrace Hashem in the midst of the most difficult personal circumstances. He was prepared to enter into the darkest of clouds. In general the loss of a child is an extreme tragedy. But with the loss of Isaac, Abraham stood to lose much more. He stood to lose all that he had worked for over the years, all of his dreams and aspirations for the future would dissipate with the death of Isaac. He did not understand why Hashem must reveal himself to him in this way. "Why must He take Isaac from me"? Despite all the questions that must have troubled his mind, Abraham still perceived Har Moriah as a beautiful mountain. Through it all, he was still able to see the Shechinah on the mountain. Abraham recognized the beauty of the mountain, for it was the place that Hashem selected to reveal Himself to Abraham.

Eliezer and Ishamel did not understand this. They asked Abraham: "Where are you going? Why are you willing to sacrifice your son on this mountain. Your house will remain barren and empty. You are a fool if you think that you will find Hashem on that mountain. What will come out of it?" This in microcosm is Jewish History. Our history is symbolized in a Sukkah that is covered by a cloud. At times that cloud is not pleasant. Many times it causes us discomfort, sadness and shame. But despite everything, the Jew always sees the beautiful mountain top, Har Naeh Umshubach.. The Jew realizes that Hashem is to be found in the midst of all the despair, the Vayered Hashem Be'anan is to be met with Vayikra Bshem Hashem. Perhaps the Jew's greatest merit is derived from his ability to see and talk to Hashem everyday, Asher Yay'amer Hayom. In the midst of the cloud that conceals Hashem, the Vayered Hashem Be'anan, Knesses Yisrael can still see Hashem on the Har Hashem Yayraeh, whether it holds an altar for Isaac or the Beis HaMikdash.

It was more difficult for Abraham to see Hashem through the cloud of the Akeidah and maintain his strength of will and belief than to see Hashem through the Ayshel. The Rav related a story he read about the survivors of one of the concentration camps [all the camps were sadistic and barbaric but this particular camp was distinguished for its extreme sadism], a camp where a group of Yeshiva students and a Rosh Yeshiva from one of the Navardik Yeshivos were

confined. The concentration camp inmates were driven out early in the morning barefoot in the cold to work, work whose sole purpose was to simply tire and break the spirit of the people. When they returned from work, the hungry and exhausted inmates were examined by the camp doctor. Those that could work another day were sent back to the barracks, while the others were sent to the gas chambers. One can imagine the spirit of the people who were sent back to the barracks and were given another day of life. The Yeshiva students would sit with their Rosh Yeshiva on the ground and recite Tehillim. There was a doctor from Riga who would cry when they recited Tehillim. This doctor would give away half his life to have the faith and spirit to be able to recite Tehillim under such conditions.

This is the cloud that shrouded the mountain. Except in this case it was the cloud that shrouded the concentration camp. But if one can recite Tehillim under these circumstances it shows the greatness of the Jewish People. The same idea applies to the recitation of Kaddish. A person who has lost one of his closest relatives, has lost an integral part of the fabric of his life, he wonders how can he continue without that person. Despite the sense of acute loss he feels at this moment, after the burial has been completed, the mourner stands and recites Kaddish, that the name of the almighty shall be sanctified and hallowed. In the midst of the cloud of his suffering and personal loss, the Jew seeks and finds Hashem. At the time of greatest discomfort the Jew does not kick the wall of the Sukkah, rather he seeks to draw closer to Hashem and find Him in the enveloping darkness.

Simchas Sukkos consists of 2 Mitzvos of Simcha. The first Simcha was based on Vsamachta Bchagecha, you shall rejoice in your festivals. The second Mitzvas Simcha was the obligation to be merry before Hashem for seven days. The Jew fulfills the first Mitzvah of Simcha through physical comforts, through meat, wine, fruits, jewelry (as appropriate for the women). At this time, the Jew is happy that he has a full grain silo, a full wine cellar, sufficient provisions to make it through the coming winter. Vsamachta Bchagecha, "Rejoice in your holiday, after all it was a successful year, I have all that I need". This type of Simcha is readily appreciated by other nations as well. For example the holiday of thanksgiving was based on this principle, of giving thanks for the abundance that we enjoy. But in truth, the Jewish People did not enjoy this prosperity on their land for many years, they celebrated in this way less than a thousand years scattered between exile and the destruction of both Temples.

However it was the second Simcha of 7 days that was most unique. This was the Simchas Beis Hashoayva. This Simcha was not celebrated with wine but with water. Ushavtem Mayim Basason Mmaynai Hasasason. Simchas Beis Hashoayva was celebrated specifically at night. The Simcha came to an abrupt halt at daybreak. Interestingly this Simcha could only take place at night when the people would exclaim "We are to Hashem and our eyes are to Hashem" and the Levites would recite Shir Hamaalos. What sparked the people to burst forth in such joy? It wasn't the food or the meat but rather the fact that it was Lifnay Hashem Elokecha, rejoice before Hashem. A Jew will spontaneously burst out in rejoicing when he feels that he is in the presence of Hashem no matter how difficult his personal situation might be. At that point the Jew feels that he is sitting in Tzila Dmhemnusa, in the shade of Hashem, protected from the elements.

Sukkah symbolizes the Jew himself. If you would ask what is the distinguishing characteristic of the Jew, it would be the paradoxical and unique ability to mimic Hashem and reveal himself to the rest of the world through an obscuring outer Levush, outer garment. Do the nations of the world know the Jew? The answer is no. The Jew is also encircled with a cloud that others can't see through. Compare our familiarity with Gedolay Yisrael in relation to the great leaders and thinkers of the world. We know the entire biography of the great leaders of the world. We know about their children, their married lives, their youth, their old age their deaths. Their entire lives are open books before us, nothing is held back. In contrast, we know nothing about Gedolei Yisroel. While we know something about the life of Reb Akiva we don't know the answers to such fundamental questions as was he a supporter of Bar Kochba? We know even less about Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai. The same applies to the other Tanaim and Amoraim. What personal details do we know about the Vilna Gaon? Reb Chaim Volozhin? Gedolei Yisroel never wrote autobiographies. They wrote responsa and Chidushei Torah but nothing of a personal nature. Gedolei Yisroel mimicked Hashem in this regard, encircling themselves in a cloud and disclosing minimal personal details.

Do we know the great extent of the charity practiced by Gedolei Yisroel? Reb Chaim Brisker had an imposing physical presence. Yet this imposing presence had boundless love in his heart for his fellow Jew and performed countless acts of Chesed. The hallmark of their Chesed was Tzina, secrecy. Di what is necessary but do not advertize it. Mimic the ways of Hashem, as it says Vayered Hashem Beanan. Reb Chaim Tsanzer was known as a Kanai, a zealot. Yet the same Reb

Chaim Tsanzer found a poor woman in the marketplace in tears on Erev Yom Kippur close to the time for Kol Nidrei. He asked her why hadn't she gone home to eat and prepare for the fast. She answered that she had not succeeded in attracting any customers to purchase her baked goods and had no money to purchase food for her family in preparation for the holiday. So this famed zealot, Reb Chaim Tsanzer stood in the marketplace, hours before Kol Nidrei, and called out "who would like to purchase warm baked goods for Erev Yom Kippur?" Understandably, the goods sold like "hot cakes" and Reb Chaim did not leave until all the cakes were sold. Would any of the enlightened critics of Reb Chaim ever dreamt to help a destitute woman under such conditions? Yet the great Reb Chaim Tsanzer, the target of their scorn, did so without a word.

Elijah the Prophet is also described in similar terms. He is described as a hairy man girded in a mantle of leather (Kings 2 1:8). Leather is a very hard material. He was perceived as a hard man, for example, Ahab referred to him as Ocher Yisrael. Elijah would cover himself with his unrelenting coat. Yet this same Elijah was filled with love and compassion for his fellow Jew. Ahab was incapable of penetrating the stiff garments that clothed Elijah, just like later generations could not understand Reb Chaim Brisker and Reb Chaim Tsanzer. Ahab and those like him only looked at the surface. This surface was purposely hidden, like Vayered Hashem Beanan.

Why is the traditional (European) Jew hated by the nations of the world? [the Rav said that he did not understand the modern, American Jew at all.] Because he was shrouded in a dark and forbidding exterior. The traditional Jew was poorly dressed, often dirty from his hard labor, was not fluent in any one language, was not sophisticated at all, on cursory analysis he looked odd. But if one would peer through the external shroud, he would be amazed to find the inner beauty of the Jewish heart, of kindness, of love, of Shabbos, of Yom Tov, the beauty of Jewish existence. The traditional Jew also mimicked Hashem, he too was covered in an obscuring cloud.

It is common in modern times to refer to Jews of today as proud people while the traditional Jew of yesteryear is considered meek and eager to please and impress. Stories abound of Jews attempting to curry favor with the local ghetto governor ("Poritz"). >From an external perspective, the modern Jew displays more pride than the traditional Jew. But internally, the modern Jew is the greatest seeker of ingratiation, willing to sell his heritage, the Torah, even his own parents in order to curry favor in the non-Jewish world. Why has the modern synagogue been ruined and transformed into an entertainment club? Because the modern Jew lacks an inner pride. The traditional Jew of yesteryear, no matter how many times he kissed the hand of the Poritz, internally realized that the Poritz was part of the Am Hachamor. It was up to the traditional Jew to go further and climb the mountain of Hashem and realize a relationship and destiny that the Poritz could never dream of. Rav Eliezer Ashkenazi, who lived during the period of terrible pogroms, compared the episode of Jacob sending a gift to Esau (where Jacob instructed his servants to respond to Esau's questions that they belonged to Jacob and they were carrying a present sent to my master, Esau) to the traditional Jew kissing the hand of the Poritz. If Esau (the Poritz) finds you and asks about financial issues, then you can do whatever you need to ingratiate yourself with Esau (the Poritz) to curry favor. You can refer to it as Mincha Shlucha Ladonie Esav, this is a present sent to my master Esau. However when the topic is spiritual sanctity and survival, Jewish education, Shabbos etc. then you are instructed to stand proud and proclaim that you belong to Jacob and will resist the Poritz. This was the attitude of the traditional Jew. We don't understand them because we only look at their surface appearance, we are blocked by the cloud. We don't pierce the cloud to appreciate their internal pure souls.

In the secret of Sukkah that teaches us to look through the shroud, through the outer garments to the heavens, we find the secret of Teshuva as well. How can the Jew who has sinned return to Hashem, after all he has defiled himself? The answer is that the external Jew has sinned, the Levush. The inner Jew remains untainted by sin. The process of Teshuva forces man to shed the outer layers of sin and reveal the true inner Jew that is hidden within. All Jews are capable of doing Teshuva, no matter how deeply entrenched in sin they may be. Because deep inside each Jew there is always something that can be redeemed and brought back.

This is the secret of Arava. (Vayikra Rabbah chapter 30) There are 4 species. The Esrog and Lulav and Hadas are species that have specific accomplishments. The Esrog has the taste of Torah and the aroma of Mitzvos. Lulav, which comes from a palm tree, has taste but no fragrance, symbolic of those who have Torah but no good deeds. The Hadas has fragrance but not taste, symbolic of those who have good deeds but no Torah. The Arava on the other hand has neither taste nor fragrance, Torah or good deeds. The Arava represents the masses. Why is he deficient in both areas? Because a Jew that has neither Torah or good deeds is a

product of circumstances. He has not had the opportunity to shine forth like the other species. But internally, deep down in his soul, the Arava, the masses, have the same abilities as the other 3. The Sair L'Azazel was similar in every way to the Sair L'Hashem. The only difference between them was one of circumstances, as the Hashgacha decreed that its destiny was to be thrown off a barren mountain top. But both had the same abilities. The masses can always be brought back.

Arava on Sukkos has 2 mitzvos while the Esrog only has one. The entire ceremony of Hoshana Rabba was centered around the Arava. The central point of Sukkos was to bring ALL Jews into the Beis Hamikdash. Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur were dominated by the Kohen Gadol and the aristocracy of Jewish life. But Judaism wanted to make sure that Jewish life would be open to all. All Jews stood at Mount Sinai and received a part in the Torah. You can't build a nation with the aristocracy alone. The Torah says that Sukkos was the time when "All of Israel would come to see the glory of Hashem". Sukkos is an inclusive holiday. The aristocracy, the Esrog, the Lulav and the Hadas were all represented on Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. The only one who was missing was the Arava, the masses. The entire holiday of Sukkos is dedicated to bring the Arava, the masses into the Beis Hamikdash. We believe that the Arava has the same inner qualities and capabilities as the other species. It is only lacking the opportunity to shine forth. The masses do not understand the full meaning behind Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros that we recite on Rosh Hashonah. They do not fully appreciate the Avodah and the importance of Teshuva. How can we condemn those that never learned, those that did not have the opportunity to grow up in a rabbinic house? They have the same capabilities that must be nurtured and cultivated. They must be brought back. How can we bring them back? We must concentrate on the youth and reach them through Jewish education.

On the first 7 days of Sukkos we circle the Sefer Torah at the Bimah with our Lulavim. On Simchas Torah we dance with the Sefer Torah around the empty Bimah. Hashem is standing, Kviyachol, at the Bimah, and we dance around Him together with the Sifrei Torah. This is symbolic of the Midrash that promises that in the days of the ultimate redemption, Hashem will make a Machol, dance for the righteous, with Hashem in the center. We have to bring the youth, the young Aravos, into the Mikdash and dance around Hashem to prepare for that day, [may it come soon and in our days].

The Mishnah (Sukkah 4:5) describes how they would fulfill the Mitzvah of Arava. There was a place that was lower than Jerusalem called Motza, in other words a place that was lower in piety, in knowledge, in intelligence, in ethics, lower in every conceivable way. All those that spent their days in the gilded halls of the Mikdash would leave the confines of the Mikdash and go down to this oft-forgotten place. After all, if Malchus Hashem only manifested itself in the walls of the Mikdash, it would be a no Malchus at all. Hashem is infinite and can be found everywhere. So all of the aristocracy would have to go down and select young Aravos and bring them into the Mikdash and erect them around the altar. Judaism in America is missing the concept of altar. A Jew must learn that he must bring a sacrifice on his personal altar. A sacrifice does not necessarily require an Akeidas Yitzchak, or to go through the gas chambers of the concentration camps. A Jew must bring a simple sacrifice that manifests at times through foregoing things that he desires greatly and doing things that he normally resists. For example, a Jew enters a social society or club. The norm is to sit in the club without a hat. The Jew is embarrassed to wear a Kippah in this environment. Such Jew does not know what it means to offer a sacrifice on his personal altar. The Kippah alone may not be that significant, but it can make the difference between a Yisrael Kasher and Yisrael Mumar. The laxity begins with not wearing the Kippah and explodes into outright apostasy because the Jew was embarrassed to bring a simple sacrifice, to wear the Kippah while sitting among his club members because of his fear of embarrassment. Or if a Jew is attending a meeting and it is getting late in the evening and the Jew is embarrassed to leave the meeting to pray Mincha. He rationalizes that he will pray 2 Shmones Esrays for Maariv. All because he is embarrassed to daven and show others that he prays. He could have made a strong statement by sacrificing his momentary embarrassment. The Jew does not want to forego something. The same situation applies to the Jew that refuses to close his business on Shabbos or who refuses to send his child to Yeshiva because his neighbor will call him old fashioned and obsolete. The Rav said that Jewish children should parade in the streets with the Lulav and the Arava, they should not be embarrassed to do so. By displaying a willingness to forego simple Kavod one pierces the Schach, and like our patriarch Abraham, is able to call out the name of Hashem in glory.

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Parasha Talk Succos Excerpt from

A GIFT FOR YOM TOV, BY RABBI YISROEL MILLER

The succah is one of the few mitzvos where the Torah tells us to think about the reason for the mitzvah while performing it: "Lema'an yeidu doroseichem, that all your generations should know that I, Hashem, caused the Children of Israel to dwell in succos." Since we are commanded to think about this, it is beneficial to know what these ancient succos were, what manner of succah did the Creator make for us.

One opinion in the Gemara is succos mamash, that when we left Egypt 3300 years ago Hashem provided us with building materials to construct succos for shelter. One problem with that interpretation is that the Torah often mentions our fathers living in the Wilderness in tents, not succos. But there is also a second opinion, more generally accepted, that our succah today is to commemorate the ananei kavod, the clouds of the Divine Presence which protected us for 40 years.

The Torah says that Hashem placed a pillar of cloud to lead us through the desert, and the Sages add that this could surrounded us from all sides to shield us from inclement weather and wild animals, a total protection plan in a climate-controlled environment. The word "succah" literally means a cover, and our succah recalls that miraculous cloud cover that accompanied us for 40 years.

However, this interpretation also has its problems. If we are commemorating Heavenly protection, it would seem that the halachah should require us to build a succah that protects, one which is waterproof and insectproof. But the halachah is exactly the opposite, that a succah must be fragile and it must let in the rain, diras aria, a temporary dwelling. A second problem: The Divine cloud cover protected us from all sides. But the halachah is that a succah requires only three walls, not four, and the essence of the succah, the covering of s'chach, is placed only on top. So the lesson the succah comes to teach must be something more than Divine protection; clearly the accent is on something else.

Ideally, the succah should serve as a reminder that Hashem protects us, that He is all-powerful, and we sit back in relaxed tranquility, knowing we are completely safe in His Hands. If you are that holy a person to be so inspired by the succah, you are a member of a very select group of tzaddikim (one almost wonders if such a person even has need of a succah in the first place). What about the rest of us? What about simple Jews with personal concerns and anxieties, Jews who possess emunah (faith) but whose emunah is not so powerful that it transcends all the worries of daily living?

For us, the halachah says: Focus on the s'chach, which recalls only one part of the Divine cloud, the part above; the Torah says this part of the cloud served as an indicator that it was time to travel.

The people of Israel were encamped in the Wilderness, for days or weeks (sometimes months or years) at a stretch. Suddenly, the cloud overhead began to move and time to go! We asked ourselves, "Where are we going?" "We don't know." "How long is the trip?" "Don't know." "Will the next camp be an overnight stop, or an extended stay?" "No way to tell."

It was not easy. The insecurity of not being able to make plans, the felling that you could never settle down, Rambam writes, was almost a kind of mental torture. But one thing we knew: We were traveling al pi Hashem, Hashem is guiding us. Most of us are not relaxed. We feel unsettled and nervous. But Hashem knows the way, and in the end, He will get us where we need to go.

There is a level of powerful faith called bitachon, complete serenity. But for those of us who do not possess that power, we sit in the succah, a fragile shelter, and we look at the s'chach; a few drops of rain,

a couple of mosquitoes. And we say to ourselves: "I have my worries. I don't have the tzaddik's peace of mind. But just as my ancestors knew, when the cloud began to move, that it would be rough, but Hashem would get them through; in my case, too, the succah reminds me that frail as the structure of my life may be, whatever the bumps in the road, it may be rough, but in the end Hashem will get me through."

"To Say it will all turn out great? I'm not at that high a spiritual level. But to say it will all turn out right, the way He wants it? That much the succah can teach, even me."

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From: RABBI YISROEL CINER [SMTP:ciner@torah.org]  
Parsha-Insights - Sukkos

The Talmud [Avodah Zarah 9A] teaches that the world as we know it will exist for six thousand years. The time designated for the Moshiach {Messiah} is somewhere after the year 4,000 but before the year 6,000. Each thousand corresponds to a day of the week. Upon the completion of the six thousand years, the world will enter a totally different stage of existence, corresponding to the Sabbath. As we stand in the year 5,761, less than a quarter of a 'day' remains. Just as the tempo on Friday increases as the Sabbath draws close, reaching a feverish pitch on the last quarter of the day, the events that have presently engulfed Israel represent the frenzied preparations needed for the world to ready itself for its ultimate state.

In order to obtain a clearer perspective on the recent events we must first gain a better understanding of the purpose of galus {exile} in general. Rav Dessler, in his classic Michtav Me'Eliyahu, explains in the following way.

The essence of galus is that the Shchinah {Hashem's holy presence} is in exile--that holiness and spirituality seem to be subordinated. When we are exiled to a place where the truth is trampled upon, serving Hashem seems to be unimportant and inconsequential. Those who insist on such 'archaic practices' are the objects of derision. The mission of Klal Yisroel is to remain strong in our belief and implementation of that belief and not be influenced and deterred by the contrary environment surrounding us.

Those who stand firm in their commitment to Torah, recognizing it as the sole purpose of creation and ticket to eternity, while viewing the 'success' of society as superficial and transient, have 'passed' the test of galus, have been elevated through it and in turn elevate the entire world.

The need for exile dates back to the very beginning of man's odyssey. Adom Harishon {the first man}, before he sinned, was on the level of the Garden of Eden. He clearly saw spirituality as the only true reality and physicality as nothing more than a cloak attempting to obscure it. By sinning, he and the entire world were thrust into a state of concealment where physicality appears as reality. The odyssey of mankind, that became the lot of Klal Yisroel, is to first bring the world back to the state of Adom Harishon prior to his sin and then catapult it even higher to its ultimate perfection.

The deadline for this process is 6,000 years--the vehicle used is galus.

Each galus presented its own unique difficulties and challenges. However, the common thread is the opportunity and responsibility to see through the smoke screen of nature and the physical and to recognize the truth/reality.

The tikun {correction} first began on an individual basis with the Forefathers and then was transformed into a national task upon the seventy souls who descended to Mitzrayim {Egypt}.

Mitzrayim, our first galus, was an environment of intense spiritual involvement with the forces of impurity. Sorcery, demonism and contacting the dead were their means of subjugating nature to their whims and desires. Our not changing our names, language and mode of dress showed our rejection of that society and its norms.

The odyssey continued with receiving the Torah followed by the sin of the Golden Calf. The building of the First Beis Hamikdash {Temple} and its destruction and subsequent Galus Bavel {Babylonia}. The building of the Second Beis Hamikdash, Galus Yavan {Greece}, its destruction and our present galus of Edom.

The sin which led to that destruction was baseless hatred with haughtiness at its root. YouEre not competing with me and youEre not trying to hurt me. Nevertheless, your very existence eats me up. This haughtiness leads to chutzpah--no embarrassment at all. Who are you to tell me whatEs right or wrong? Alternative lifestylesB

Whereas the galus of Mitzrayim at least had a connection to spirituality, the galus of Edom is all crass, sensual physicality. Technology allows seemingly complete mastery over nature, increasing the haughtiness with the sense of absolute control.

The final stage of this galus finds us returning to our land, yet the galus of the Shchinah {HashemEs holy presence} is still being perpetrated, but this time by our own people. It's difficult to quote such a thing but the Vilna Gaon wrote that at the time before Moshiach, the control of Israel will be in the hands of descendants from the mixed multitude that joined up with us as we left Mitzrayim. Their motto will be "The strength of my hand has brought me this" and the name of Hashem will be conspicuously absent from their litany.

This will be the final testing stage before Moshiach. Those who fight against the Torah will haughtily lay claim to all successes. They will attempt to disseminate heresy and contempt for the spiritual. We returned to the land. We fought for it. We control it. Who's Hashem? The test, Rav Dessler concludes, will be to see through the farce of "our strength" and focus our energies on seeing the clarity of Hashem's Hand through serving Him.

The odyssey continues. The rulers, with smug complacency, plan a secular revolution, attempting to tear down the remaining religious fibers which weave their way through society. The complacency is shattered.

The only way to bring peace is to be at peace with our mission in life. With that, the clarity of the Garden of Eden will again shine and the entire world will recognize His light.

As this Friday night's prayers state: Blessed are you Hashem, Who spreads the Succah of peace over us, over the entire nation of Israel and over Yerushalayim.

Wishing you a peaceful and joyous Sukkos, Yisroel Ciner  
Parsha-Insights, Copyright 1 2000 by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner and Project Genesis, Inc. Rabbi Yisroel Ciner is a Rebbe [teacher] at Neveh Zion, <http://www.neveh.org/>, located outside of Yerushalayim. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway learn@torah.org 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 510-1053

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From: listmaster@jencom.com Subject: Outlooks & Insights by RABBI ZEV LEFF

Parshas Vezos Haberachah

The Blessing of Self-Knowledge

. . . Each according to his own blessing (Bereishis 49 28).

Chazal tell us that Yaakov Avinu wished to reveal the keitz, the time of the final redemption, to his sons, but it was concealed from him. So instead he blessed them.

If Yaakov had intended to reveal the keitz, how was he able to immediately begin with blessings, without any previous preparation? Secondly, did Yaakov in fact bless all his children? The Torah seems to say that each one got his unique blessing. Each according to his own blessing (Bereishis 49:28) pyet Reuven, Shimon and Levi were castigated and many of the others were merely likened to various animals.

The Midrash says that the letters ches and tes do not appear in the names of the various tribes. No cheit i.e. no sin or deficiency. This is to be

found in their names. That is why Yaakov thought to reveal the end of days to them. But he also saw that the letters kuf and tziddie forming the word ketz also do not appear in their names. And therefore, he changed his mind. Does this imply, God forbid, that the final redemption is not inherent in Klal Yisrael?

Another Midrash gives the following analogy. A confidant of the king was dying and called his children to his bedside to reveal the royal secrets that the king had confided to him. Before he began, however, he saw that the king was also standing at his bedside. He immediately substituted an exhortation to his children to be careful to honor the king properly instead of his intended message. Similarly, Yaakov wished to reveal the secrets of Mashiach, but saw the Shechinah at his bedside and out of embarrassment substituted the blessings.

This Midrash, as well as the previous one, seems to imply that the keitz was not forgotten by Yaakov Avinu, but suppressed out of embarrassment. A further difficulty with the second Midrash is the analogy to the king's confidant. How do Yaakov's blessings compare to an exhortation to obey the king and honor him?

The Midrash relates that in the merit of "the names of the sons of Israel" the entire hosts of heaven and earth exist. What is in a name? The holy books tell us that the name of a person or object expresses its essence. Thus Adam exhibited his genius by naming all the created beings, and thereby identifying each one's essence.

Before the construction of the Tabernacle, Hashem told Moshe to inform Klal Yisrael: "Contemplate the fact that I have called [him by the name of Betzalel." Hashem stressed that by conferring a name on Betzalel, He had imbued him with all his phenomenal skills. We learn from Betzalel that each and every one of us, without exception, is blessed with various unique talents and abilities. All these gifts are bestowed on us from Above and given with the express intention that they be utilized for the furtherance of Torah and Klal Yisrael, just as Betzalel's talents were obviously conferred upon him to enable him to build the Mishkan.

The Midrash relates that every person has various names: the one Hashem gives him, that which his parents give him, the name he is called by his friends, and above all the one that he earns for himself. Everyone is endowed with a variety of talents and skills. Some are directly endowed by Heaven. Some are the result of heredity and environment. But the most significant are those that come by virtue of developing and actualizing one's potential. In this vein, the Midrash says that the angel called out, "Avraham, Avraham!" at the culmination of the Akedah "Avraham above, Avraham below." At that point, Avraham's Heavenly name, which reflected his true potential, was realized and matched by his actual stature here on earth.

The Gemara (Yoma 20b) says that prior to death, the neshamah gives a scream that is heard from one end of the world to the other. Reb Chaim of Volozhin explains that before one passes from this world, Hashem shows him a picture of what he could have been had he developed all his potential and contrasts it to what he actually achieved. When the neshamah sees the chasm between these two images, it screams.

Why is that scream described as going "from one end of the world to the other end" and not "from the beginning of the world to the end?" Perhaps we can explain this with the following preface. There is a dispute between Rav and Shmuel in Megillah as to whether Hodu and Kush were at opposite ends of the world or right next to each other. The Vilna Gaon explains that both are true, for any two points on a globe that are next to each other when traveling eastward are at opposite ends of the world when traveling westward. Hence if a point on the globe is only seen as a point it is insignificant, but if it is seen as the beginning of a far-off end, it encompasses an entire world.

Talents, abilities and capabilities are points of potential. But if they remain an end in themselves, they are insignificant points. The neshamah cries for the failure of these points to grow and traverse entire worlds.

The development and perfection of this world depends on the realization of each Jew's individual potential. It is in this perspective that the world was created for the names of the Jewish people. The Midrash tells us that the final redemption is alluded to in the names of the tribes for they contain the potential for bringing the world to its final redemption.

Mashiach can come at two possible times: at the preordained deadline or prior to that deadline if we merit it. Yaakov observed the perfection inherent in the names of his children. There was no cheat, no deficiency in their potential abilities. Hence there was no need for Mashiach to tarry until the keitz, the preordained deadline. Yaakov saw that if they perfected their potential, Mashiach would come before the keitz. Thus the letters enda tzikkie and kuf did not appear in their names.

In light of this let us re-examine the Midrash of the king's confidant. The confidant reflected that if he told his children the king's mysteries, they would know this information only secondhand. But if he could inspire them to be careful in honoring the king, they would merit to become confidants of the king themselves and hear his secrets firsthand.

Similarly, Yaakov wished to reveal the keitz to his children. But after realizing the potential inherent in them, he chose to impart to them that which would obviate the keitz and bring the redemption closer.

The greatest blessing one can bestow is to enlighten another and acquaint him with himself. The Mishnah (Avos 318) says "Man is precious, having been created in God's image, and even more so for having been informed that he was created in God's image." Self-knowledge of one's abilities and talents, as well as one's shortcoming and limitations, is the greatest blessing; it is the means enabling one to realize his Divine mission in this world.

Yaakov realized that the ultimate geulah depended on the development of his sons' potential, the potential inherent in their names. Rather than reveal the deadline for redemption, he opted to bless them with self-knowledge that could help them bring the redemption at a much earlier date. In this vein, knowledge of the capabilities they possessed was itself a blessing.

As we close the Torah, may we strengthen ourselves to develop the unique potential inherent in our names for the furtherance and enhancement of Torah and Klal Yisrael, and thereby bring the geulah sheleimah speedily in our days.

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[http://www.torahweb.org/torah/1999/moadim/rneu\\_sim.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/1999/moadim/rneu_sim.html)

[From last year]

RABBI YAAKOV NEUBURGER

SIMCHAS TORAH: IN ANTICIPATION

The excitement generated by the successful completion of studying the entire Torah Shebichsav - as individuals preparing the text with targum and meforshim and as a community listening to the leining and participating in public study - has its roots in several sources. The Ramban in his commentary to Parshas Mishpatim (24:11) relates our annual dancing and perhaps any siyum to the recorded celebration of our leaders upon receiving the Torah at Sinai. He writes, "... and they [the nobility] ate and drank - they celebrated and made a Yom Tov for one is obligated to celebrate the receiving of Torah." The Ramban parallels these occasions to the feast that Shlomo Hamelech feted in Yerushalayim after being granted unsurpassed intellectual gifts (Divrei Hayamim 2, 21:12) and to Dovid Hamelech's great feast marking the preparations to establish the first Beis Hamikdosh (Divrei Hayamim 1, 29:21).

At first blush these events and seeming precedents for our Simchas Torah are not similar at all. The festivities of Matan Torah and of Dovid and Shlomo HaMelech celebrated the anticipation of horizons of spirituality and knowledge that had just been unlocked and laid out for them. They correctly perceived that they had been catapulted beyond the boundaries that hemmed in the most talented people of all times, and

what a passionate simcha they must have experienced. Isn't the annual completion of V'zos Habrocho quite different? Are we not expressing our happiness and gratitude for the privilege of accomplishing the understanding of part of Hashem's instruction?

Perhaps the Ramban wants us to understand that every siyum, be it of a mesechta or the entire Torah Shebichsav, is celebrating not the accomplishment but rather the anticipation of applying all of one's knowledge to future studies and situations. Indeed that is why at every siyum we focus on the "Hadran", praying and promising that we will return to the mesechta at hand and that the mesechta has become an active and alive part of our consciousness. Thus the simcha has its roots in kabolas Hatorah and the joy of Shlomo Hamelech upon his receiving the gates of all knowledge.

In similar fashion we can appreciate the explanation offered by the Avudraham for our rush to start Breishis as soon as we have completed Sefer Devarim. He refers us to a challenge that the Satan throws in an attempt to deride Klal Yisrael. He claims that now that we have completed the study of the entire Torah we will be putting it away and presumably go on to other masterpieces, lehavdil. Upon hearing the beginning of Bereishis immediately after chazak chazak, Hashem's confidence in us and our knowledge of the absolute singularity of Torah and its place in our lives, is vindicated. Perhaps the medrash is also pointing out that Klal Yisrael sees the successful completion of one cycle not as an end but rather as a new rung in the ladder on which to penetrate the texts ever so more deeply on the next way around. Our simcha on this Yom Tov celebrates our well founded expectation that we will always find new insights in the Torah and the blessing that we have as Torah and life continuously illuminate each other.

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<http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2000/10/05/Columns/ml>  
Jerusalem Post Thursday, October 5 2000 10:14 6 Tishri 5761  
SHABBAT SHALOM: A majestic poverty  
BY RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

How are we to understand the description of Succot as the festival of our rejoicing?

Does joy define Succot to the same extent that freedom defines Pessah? Indeed, the very opposite seems to be the case. At first glance, the major commandment of the festival - to dwell in a succa for seven days - seems a far cry from rejoicing. True, some will consider any opportunity to leave the confines of an apartment a celebration, thinking of the crude succa as something like a hut in the wilderness.

But this would be a mistaken notion. Location doesn't matter; the commandment is equally relevant whether we build our succa in the Sinai desert, or in the courtyard of our apartment with the sounds of a soccer game drifting in from a neighbor's television. All we know is that we're required to live in a temporary dwelling, the Halacha clarifying what makes a structure temporary.

Apparently the important element here is precisely the flimsy nature of our festival "dwelling place." Invariably, the walls rattle in the wind, the vegetation used for the roof will reveal both sunlight and starlight, and a heavy rain will leave the interior soaked. How does such a rude shelter bring us to a state of rejoicing when our regular home cannot?

Don't get me wrong. I'm all for the comfort of well-appointed homes. The Talmud teaches: "Three things enlarge a person's spirit: a beautiful dwelling, a beautiful wife, and beautiful furnishings." (B.T. Brachot 57b)

Clearly, our Sages recognized the self-esteem that comes from a life surrounded by beauty. Nonetheless, the Sages chose the adverb *marchivin* (to enlarge perspective) rather than *mesamhin* (bringing joy).

Physical comfort may add a significant color to one's life - but not necessarily true joyousness.

But how does leaving one's spacious abode for a small hut - where

one is supposed to sleep for seven nights - express joy?

One approach may be that of Maimonides in his Laws of Repentance (Ch.2, Hal. 4), where he describes the different stages of penitence. The great sage concludes the process with the necessity of one's being *golah mimkomo*, (exiled from one's own home).

If we add this notion of voluntary exile to the Jewish calendar, we find that since Succot falls only four days after Yom Kippur, our "exile" may well be the final stage in our own redemptive process. And if penitence leads to a rejoicing of the soul, herein may lie the special joy of the succa hut.

Secondly, our sages may be teaching us a crucial lesson concerning the nature of joy. Most people measure joy in terms of the objects they have acquired. Judaism believes that true joy can only be expressed by who we are, not by our possessions but rather by our accomplishments, not by the size of our bank accounts but rather by the quality of our relationships. The succa teaches that the quantity and quality of one's joy has little to do with the size and decorations of one's dwelling place. Indeed, the Talmud teaches: "When love between two individuals is strong, they can sleep on the edge of a plow; when their love is not strong, a bed of 60 cubits is not large enough." (B.T. Sanhedrin 7a)

A third explanation for Succot joy may become clear from a story told about Rav Aryeh Levin, the great *zaddik* of Jerusalem. One year, Rabbi Levin went out to buy a citron (*etrog*, one of the four species necessary for Succot prayer). Everyone in the marketplace became excited at the opportunity to see how such a religious sage fulfilled the commandment of choosing the *etrog*. After all, the Bible identifies this fruit with the phrase *pri etz hadar*, (a fruit of a tree which is beautiful) - the major source of the necessity to "beautify" the commandments. Many Jews even "shop" for their *etrog* with a magnifying glass, so as not to overlook the best citron available.

To the onlookers' shocked surprise, the venerated Rabbi spent a mere two minutes - and not even that - before he made his choice. Confused, one of the people present followed him to try to understand the reason for his haste. He must have been on the way to a very important mission if he spent so little time searching out the most beautiful fruit.

Soon enough, the Rabbi reached his destination: a nursing home. The confused "follower" begged permission to ask the great sage a question. He could understand Rabbi Levin making his "instantaneous" choice if he had an emergency call; however, whoever he was visiting in the nursing home "was not going anywhere!" Why couldn't the visit have been put off for 20 minutes, and greater care allowed for a more effective choice of an *etrog*?

Rabbi Levin's face radiated love as he smilingly answered the question. He explained that the Torah uses the word *hidur* (to beautify) only in regard to two commandments - the *pri etz hadar* of the *etrog* (Lev. 23:40), and *v'hadarta pnei zaken* or "see beauty in the face of the elderly" (Deut.19:32). Rabbi Levin concluded that he would rather "beautify" the elderly than "beautify" the commandment of one of the four species of fruit.

And indeed throughout the Torah, whenever we find the command to rejoice, it is accompanied by a need to display concern for those who are less fortunate: "And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son, and your daughter and your man-servant, and your maid-servant, and the Levite and the stranger, and the orphan and the widow that are within your gates." (Deut. 16:14)

Maimonides even rules that a person who has a large repast on the festival but only invites his own family - disregarding the stranger, the poor, the widow and the orphan - is expressing the joy of the paunch (*keres*) but not the Divinely mandated joy of the festival!

True joy lies in bringing joy to those less fortunate than we are. Herein may lie the secret of the joy of the succa. When a comfortable householder leaves his home for a fragile hut, subject to all the discomforts of wind, rain and sun, he can suddenly identify with the

poor and the homeless. Such an experience must lead to heightened sensitivity for the have-nots, and lead to more invitations and sharing.

This commitment to give from whatever we have to those who have less, this fundamental identification with the less fortunate, is the essence of Jewish joy.

Shabbat Shalom and Hag Sameah!

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From: yitorah@lists.virtualjerusalem.com

Subject: NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah - Succot - 2nd Day

RABBI BINYAMIN YITZCHOK JUNGREIS

Young Israel of Redwood, NY

16 Tishrei 5761 October 15, 2000 Daf Yomi: Nedarim 88

The Significance of the Sukka

How do we observe the mitzva of Sukka? One would have thought that the main observance of the Sukka would be to pray within it, to study Torah within it, or to perform religious rituals within it, but this is not the case (although these are all nevertheless highly commendable activities to do within the Sukka!). The primary observance of Sukka is derived from the Torah (VaYikra 23:42), which commands us "Basucco teishvu shivas yamim" - "For 7 days you shall 'sit' in Succot". The Gemara (Sukka 28b) explains that "Teishv k'ein taduru" - When the Torah instructs us to "sit" in the Sukka, it means that we should "dwell" in the Sukka; whatever common activities we do as part of our normal day-to-day domestic lives we should do in the Sukka; eating, drinking, sleeping, socializing, relaxing, etc. should all be done in the Sukka. The principal reason that we are commanded to build this very holy structure is for these very mundane purposes! - why is this so?

Think back to Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur we all stood literally like angels before HaShem. It was a day when our existence was completely devoted to Him, with almost no mundane activity whatsoever. Even the Satan had no power over us. However, that type of spiritual level is unsustainable all year round. We are not angels, but rather human beings, and we need to devote time and effort to the physical requirements of ourselves, our families, and society at large. How do we bridge this seemingly irreconcilable gap between Yom Kippur and the other 364 days of the year? How can the single-minded dedication and spirituality of Yom Kippur be carried over?

This is accomplished via the Sukka. We perform the same mundane activities that we do within our homes, except that we do it within the Sukka. What is the difference between the Sukka and our homes? The primary unique structural feature of the Sukka is the roof. The walls of the Sukka can be made in almost any sort of normal manner and material, but not the roof. It cannot be completely closed like a normal roof, but rather it must be covered with schach that is partially open. The world normally seems like a closed roof - HaShem's presence above us is undetectable, and it is easy for us to go about our daily lives and activities without giving Him too much notice. However, the openings of the schach signify that we must always be conscious of HaShem's presence above us. If we are always conscious of HaShem's presence, then everything that we do, even our normal mundane activities, can be done "LeShem Shamayim" - for the sake of Heaven. Even if we are eating, drinking, relaxing, sleeping, or socializing, we are doing so in order to take care of our bodies and minds so that we will function properly and happily and have the wherewithal to carry out HaShem's Divine Will. If all our activities throughout the year are done within the context of the Sukka - with an awareness of HaShem's presence - then every moment of our lives can be imbued with dedication to HaShem and His purpose. The Sukka teaches us that every day and every activity can be completely spiritual and holy, just like Yom Kippur.

In addition to the schach, the other unique feature of the Sukka is that it must be a temporary structure (at least potentially - e.g. the height of the Sukka cannot be so tall that nobody would ever build a temporary

structure of that height). As the Gemara states (Sukka 2a), the Torah is telling us, in effect, "htrg ,rhsc cau gce ,rhsh tm ohnhv ,gca kf" - "For all 7 days leave from your permanent dwelling and sit in a temporary dwelling". If we are aware that our existence in this world is only temporary, then we will feel compelled to do everything for the sake of Heaven. Why should we focus and commit our efforts on this temporary existence, which ends with death and decay after 120 years, when we can instead dedicate our efforts towards the attainment of Eternal Life? This is another key lesson of the Sukka (and also one of the central lessons of Kohellet) - we must be constantly enveloped by an awareness of life's temporary nature, in order that we will be compelled to direct all of our activities towards Heaven.

Finally, this explains why Sukka is the only mitzva where awareness as to the purpose of the mitzva is an essential criterion for fulfillment. As the Torah writes (VaYikra 23:43), "For 7 days you shall sit in Succot. in order that all of your generations should know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in Succot when I took them out of Egypt". The knowledge part is vital - if we perform the mitzva of Sukka without knowledge or awareness, then all we are doing is the same eating, drinking, relaxing, sleeping, and socializing that we always do, so we might as well have stayed home. In fact, this is unfortunately how many people lead their entire lives - eating, drinking, relaxing, sleeping, and socializing without any knowledge or awareness as to a higher purpose above. The Sukka therefore teaches us to acquire an awareness of higher purpose so that all of our deeds are intended for the sake of Heaven.

A Project of the National Council of Young Israel  
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<http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2000/10/12/Columns/>

Thursday Oct. 12, 2000

Jerusalem Post

WEIN ON-LINE: COMES THE REVOLUTION

BY BEREL WEIN

(October 12) One of my beloved teachers in the yeshiva that I attended in my youth always said to us: "Boys, be careful what you say and what you pray for. The Lord is listening, and He may give you what you said you wanted. And that may yet turn out to be not quite as fortunate as you thought."

I thought of this wisdom as the terrible events of the past days unfolded here in Israel. Blood and killing, innocent people dead together with the guilty, the entire country traumatized. I then recalled that a month ago, some of the political leaders of our country, led by our prime minister, announced their plans for a "revolution" in Israeli society. They meant a "secular revolution," but God overheard them and sent them and us another kind.

And Israel will not be the same after this revolution. The "secular revolution" was meant to make our state more "democratic" and less Jewish. This has been the goal of our leftist elite for decades. For various reasons, always unforeseen, these plans have been foiled until now. Whenever this great blow for freedom was to be struck, something intervened and the hangman's hand was stayed. But now the great moment had finally arrived. All the religious parties were out of the government, the recalcitrant Knesset was in recess, the peace process was nearing completion, and, with the support of the Arab members of Knesset, a narrow secular government would be formed. El Al was to fly on Shabbat, the new malls were to be open for Saturday shopping, more pork would be imported, civil marriages would be encouraged and the word "Yehudi" would be stricken from our identification card.

Naturally, everything would be done democratically and the new rules would apply across the board - l'koooolanooo. When I first heard and read the proposed details of this revolution, I doubted its sincerity. After all, I reasoned, what airline would go out of its way to purposely



alienate 25% of its customers? And then when the airline itself admitted that what revenue it would gain by flying on Shabbat would be more than offset by its potential loss of customers, I was even more perplexed. Is "democracy" so dear that we are willing to make such sacrifices in its name? I was very impressed by the scope of the planned revolution. And making the State of Israel less Jewish would certainly improve its image in the world and end our feeling of somehow being "different." There was no doubt that what we needed was a good, strong, courageous, democratic revolution.

WELL, we got the revolution. Forest fires and firebombs, live fire from the Palestinian police that we had armed; stones and rocks from Israeli Arabs, lives snuffed out needlessly on both sides: the evident collapse of the seven-year-old peace process that has cost us so dearly; and a slowly dawning realization that this struggle is not about territory or settlements but rather about the simple existence of the Jewish state. In a certain sense this revolution has returned us to the ideological mindset of 1947 and 1948. And this time the Arabs have no intention of fleeing the country.

There are still those among us that refuse to see the situation as it is. They sponsor large ads in Israeli papers demanding Jewish withdrawal from all the territories - Arafat must be delighted to read those ads - and a continuation of the peace process no matter what. However, I think that most of the country is reluctantly coming to the same conclusion that our prime minister is apparently reaching - that we have no current partner for peace. And since that is the case, we really cannot afford another revolution just now. Look how quickly the world and its media have turned against us. We are again diplomatically isolated, the European leaders hypocritically chastise us for trying to defend ourselves, and the newspapers and television distort the facts to portray us in the worst light possible. The Oom - Shmoom UN is on our case again.

Well, for us old, primitive, believing Jews, all of this hardly comes as a surprise, though it does make us sick to our stomachs. But what a blow it must be to the sons of light who were going to solve all our problems by making us less Jewish. It seems that we are in for a rocky ride in the foreseeable future. Well, the old Jewish remedy in such situations is not a revolutionary one but a practical and time-proven one. It is one of patience and strength, tenacity and firmness, faith and belief in ourselves and our prophetic destiny.

We are all ready for peace and coexistence. We must however have partners to our peace efforts. When those partners eventually appear, that will be the revolution we are all praying for.

Shabat Shalom and Hag Sameach

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From: Yated-Usa[SMTP:yated-usa@yated.com]  
The Vilna Gaon on Sukkos  
[byline missing]

Every Jewish festival is associated with a famous question. On Chanukah we ask why we light eight and not seven candles; on Purim we ask why the walled cities of Eretz Yisroel are different from the walled cities of the rest of the world; and on Pesach we ask the Four Questions. Sukkos also has its own famous question: Why do we celebrate it on the fifteenth of Tishrei and not on the fifteenth of Nissan? The reasoning is as follows: Sukkos commemorates the Ananei Hakavod, the clouds of glory, that Hashem created to protect the Jewish people from the harsh conditions of the wilderness they traversed to reach Eretz Yisroel. Now, as every schoolboy knows, Hashem took the Jews out of Egypt in the month of Nissan and the clouds of glory appeared shortly thereafter. So, if Sukkos commemorates the clouds of glory, it would make more sense to celebrate it in Nissan. Why, then, does the Torah tell us to celebrate it on Tishrei, a full six months after the event that the festival is supposed to commemorate? Many answers are given. This is the Vilna Gaon's explanation: While it is true that the clouds of glory appeared in Nissan, one must keep in mind that they subsequently disappeared when the Jews committed the sin of the Egel Hazahav, the Golden Calf. At this point, Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai for the second time and remained there an additional 40 days and 40 nights, beseeching Hashem to forgive the Jewish people's sin. Moshe Rabbeinu came down from the mountain on Yom

Kippur, the tenth of Tishrei, and on the following day, the eleventh day of the month, he assembled the entire congregation and instructed them to build the Mishkan (Shemos 35:1). After receiving these instructions, the Jewish people spent the following two days collecting and bringing the materials needed to build the Mishkan, as it is written, "They brought him gifts morning after morning" (Shemos 36:3). The double use of the word "morning" teaches that two days elapsed, which brings us to the thirteenth day of Tishrei. On the fourteenth day of Tishrei, the craftsmen appointed to build the Mishkan received the gold and other materials from Moshe, and on the following day-the fifteenth of Tishrei, when we celebrate Sukkos -they began to actually build the Mishkan. At that very moment the clouds of glory reappeared and enveloped the Jewish people once again. This is the reason we celebrate Sukkos in Tishrei, and not in Nissan: The clouds appeared in Nissan, but they only returned to stay in Tishrei. In this sense, writes the Vilna Gaon, it would be more accurate to say that Sukkos comes to commemorate not the clouds of glory, but rather Hashem's decision to forgive the Jewish people and to once again dwell in their midst. This was arguably the single most important development in our people's history, especially when one considers that Hashem had already decreed a much less satisfactory alternative plan: "I will send an angel before you to safeguard you on the way and bring you to the place that I have prepared" (Shemos 23:20). Sukkos commemorates the return of the Shechina to Am Yisroel despite Hashem's declaration to Moshe that things would never be the same again. On Sukkos we rejoice over the fact that Hashem forgave our sin and caused His presence to dwell once again in our midst. We find an allusion to this idea in the juxtaposition of two verses in Tehillim. The first, 90:17, refers to the building of the Mishkan: "May the pleasantness of Hashem our G-d be upon us. Let the work of our hands be established for us; the work of our hands, let it be established." The following verse then describes the return of the Shechina: "The one who abides in the protection of the Almighty, who dwells in the shadow of Hashem." This illustrates the cause-and-effect relationship that exists between the building of the Mishkan and the return of the Shechina-which is what Sukkos is all about. . . .

Chazal in Arachin 32b imply that the mitzvah of Sukka is somehow related to the nullification of Avoda Zara, idolatry, in Ezra's day. However, they do not elaborate on this concept or explain this relationship. The Vilna Gaon clarifies the matter: As explained above, Sukkos commemorates the reappearance of the clouds of glory after the Jewish people committed the sin of the Golden Calf, which constituted the gravest form of Avoda Zara. When the clouds reappeared, the Jewish people ejected all members of the Erev Rav, the "mixed multitude" that was mainly responsible for the sin, out of the camp. These people remained part of the encampment, but they had to travel outside of the cloud-covered area and endure full exposure to the harsh elements. The Jewish people saw this and internalized the lesson, and they prevented members of the Erev Rav from participating in any way, shape or form in the building of the Mishkan. This demonstrated that they realized the folly of Avoda Zara as well as the importance of taking concrete steps to distance themselves from such sins in the future. This was a major factor in obtaining Hashem's forgiveness and meriting to have His presence dwell once again in their midst. A similar event took place in Ezra's day, when the Jewish people responded to his words of rebuke and ejected from their midst all non-Jews with whom they had intermarried. This decision on the part of the Jews in Ezra's day was reminiscent of the events that took place centuries earlier in the desert, since the non-Jews with whom they had intermarried were in the process of slowly introducing idolatry into the psyche of the Jewish people. . . .

The Vilna Gaon explains that all of the Yomim Tovim that take place in Tishrei represent the various stages of the Geula, the Final Redemption: Rosh Hashana is the Yom Hadin-the Day of Judgment, paralleling the great Day of Judgment described by the Nevi'im. Next is Yom Kippur, when our sins are forgiven. This parallels the event described in the verse "In those days and at that time says God, Israel's sins will be sought but there will be none. Yehuda's sin too [will be sought] but they will not be found for I will forgive those I allow to survive" (Yirmiyahu 50:15). Sukkos represents the next stage of the Geula, as described in the verse "He will create cloud and smoke by day and the splendor of glowing flame by night over the building and places of assembly on Mount Zion. Indeed a canopy will hang over all the glory; a booth for shadow from the heat of day, and shade and shelter from the storm and shower" (Yeshayahu 4:5-6). On Simchas Torah we rejoice, and we will also rejoice in the final stage of the Geula, as it is written: "Strangers will rise and pasture your sheep. Foreigners will be your farmers and your vine growers, while you will be called 'G-d's priests' and dubbed 'the servants of our G-d.' You will enjoy the wealth of nations and glory in their riches" (Yeshayahu 61:5-6). . . .

The mitzva of Sukka has the effect of diminishing the impulse to speak Lashon Hara, as implied by the verse, "Hide them in a canopy (Sukka) from the

belligerence of tongues" (Tehillim 31:21). But an even deeper allusion to this can be found in the very word "Sukka": There are five categories of Hebrew letters: those enunciated primarily by means of the teeth (e.g., samach), the lips (e.g., vav), the palate (e.g., kaf), the throat (e.g., hey) and the tongue (e.g., daled, lamed, nun, taf, tes). The Hebrew word "Sukka" contains letters belonging to only four categories. Conspicuously missing are letters belonging to the fifth category—the ones enunciated by means of the tongue. The Vilna Gaon explains that the other four regions of the mouth surround the tongue and guard it, preventing it from getting out of control. It is these four aspects of speech that Sukkos emphasizes. This insight into the impact of Sukkos also explains the relationship between Sukkos and the Geula—the latter will come when the former is eliminated. . . .

Sukkos was only a few days away, and the Vilna Gaon was speaking to his talmidim about the importance of mastering at least one maseches, tractate, of the Talmud. One of the reasons he gave was that mastering one maseches enables a person to continue learning Torah under all circumstances—while traveling, in the dark when the candle has run out, and even when there are no sefarim to be found anywhere. The message hit home, and one of the Gaon's talmidim decided there and then to follow his rebbi's advice and master one maseches. He headed directly to the beis medrash, chose maseches Sukka, with which he was already familiar, and stayed there for several days, studying it backwards and forwards and sideways, scrutinizing every Rashi, Tosfos, Rishon and Acharon on the Gemora. Only when he had memorized every last word in the entire volume did he emerge from his self-imposed period of exile, and in good time, too, for it was already the day before Sukkos and there were a 101 things he still had to do. His big moment came on Chol Hamoed Sukkos, when he and several other talmidim received an invitation to visit the Gaon in his Sukka. As soon as they walked in the talmid cleared his throat and informed the Gaon that he had mastered the entire maseches Sukka. The Vilna Gaon was very pleased to hear this, and after congratulating the talmid, he asked him whether he would like to undergo a test. The talmid, who had already played this scene numerous times in his mind, answered that he would indeed be honored to undergo a test. The Gaon asked him one question: "How many times do Rav Meir and Rav Yehuda disagree with each other in this maseches? And Rav Akiva and Rav Tarfon? And Abbaye and Rava?" The list of Tanaim and Amoraim went on and on and, needless to say, the talmid was stunned and dumbstruck. At this point the Gaon began enumerating every single discussion and difference of opinion in the entire maseches. He presented them according to ascending page numbers, then according to logical order, then according to chronological order, and then, finally, in the order in which the sugyos appear in Talmud Yerushalmi. To top it all off the Gaon then enumerated every discussion concerning the kashrus of a Sukka. Exactly 85 passul Sukkos are discussed in the maseches—equal to the numerical equivalent of the word Sukka spelled without a vav. Exactly 91 kosher Sukkos are discussed in the maseches—equal to the numerical equivalent of the word Sukka spelled with a vav. . . .

Throughout the seven days of Sukkos, the Vilna Gaon would hold the Lulav and Esrog in his hand and would not let go of them until nightfall. He followed this practice until his dying day, and in fact he was niftar on Sukkos while holding a Lulav and Esrog in his hand. . . .

On the first day of Sukkos we are commanded to sacrifice 13 bull offerings along with, among other things, one Seir Izim, male goat, as a sin offering. Interestingly, this expression Seir Izim appears only on the first, second and fourth days of Sukkos. On the third, fifth, sixth and seventh days, the expression used is Seir—the term Izim is omitted. To explain this anomaly, the Vilna Gaon cites three statements by Chazal: First, the well-known statement, "the seventy bulls that the Jewish People would offer on Sukkos represented the seventy nations" (Sukka 55b). Second, the not-so-well-known Zohar, "Yishmael and Esav are the basis of the seventy nations." And third, the even less-well-known Zohar that says the expression Seir Izim refers specifically to Yishmael, while the term Seir refers specifically to Esav. Combine these three statements together, and there you have the reason why the terms come up in the Torah as they do: Since 70 bulls are to be sacrificed in all, it stands to reason that 35 should go to Yishmael and 35 go to Esav being that they are the basis for the 70 nations. That being the case, Yishmael—who takes precedence over Esav because he was the son of Avraham while Esav was only the son of Yitzchak, gets the 13 bulls of the first day, the 12 bulls of the second day, and the 10 bulls of the fourth day. This is the only way to give Yishmael 35 bulls. For this reason, the term Seir Izim, which as we explained earlier, refers specifically to Yishmael, appears on days one, two and four. As for Esav's 35 bulls, they are given to him on days three, five, six and seven, where only the term Seir is used which, as explained above, refers specifically to Esav. . . .

Chol Hamoed Sukkos was a special time in Vilna because it was the only time of the year when anyone could just visit the Vilna Gaon unannounced and spend time with him in his Sukka. At this particular time of the year the Gaon was always

in an extremely expansive mood, and he would converse with his visitors at length and show a deep interest in their health, occupation, learning situation, and so on. A certain Torah scholar took advantage of the yearly opportunity to speak candidly with the Vilna Gaon and visited him in his Sukka. It was late at night and there was no one in the Sukka other than himself and the Vilna Gaon. The Torah scholar was overjoyed over this stroke of luck—to spend time all alone with the Vilna Gaon! Who would have thought that such an opportunity would ever come up?! But things didn't go exactly as planned. The Vilna Gaon was deeply engaged in a sugya, and his head and shoulders stooped over several sefarim at once. The man just stood there, transfixed. Then it happened—suddenly the Gaon's head snapped up, he looked straight at his visitor, and thus he stood, not saying a word. The visitor, not wanting to violate the unwritten rule that a person should not speak to a Torah scholar of the Gaon's caliber without being spoken to first, just stood there withering under the Gaon's piercing gaze. This went on for several minutes until finally the Gaon broke eye contact and returned to his sefarim. The Torah scholar immediately stepped out of the Sukka, brokenhearted. "The Vilna Gaon is upset at me," he thought with increasing anxiety. "What have I done? I must have done something, otherwise he would not be angry at me!" Fortunately, he soon ran into a close friend. After hearing him out, the friend calmed him down and convinced him that both of them should pay the Gaon another visit. Into the Sukka they stepped, and immediately the Gaon greeted them and wished them a 'Gutten Mo'ed.' The Torah scholar's friend got right down to the point. "I hope the rabbi does not mind that I speak so directly, but my friend here is under the impression that the rabbi is upset with him." The Vilna Gaon looked aghast. "Upset with him?" he said. "Me, upset with him? Why in the world should I be upset with him? He should live well until 100 years of age!" The misunderstanding was quickly resolved and after spending an inspiring few hours with the Gaon, the two men went home. Forty years later, the Torah scholar became seriously ill and his grandson insisted that he call a doctor. "It's not necessary," the man wheezed, "if the Gaon said I'll live until 100 years, I will." And he recovered. Twenty years later, he got sick again. "Don't worry," he told his great-grandsons, "the Gaon said I'll live until 100 years of age." And he recovered. Eight years later, the 98-year-old man became seriously ill again. "Don't worry," he told his great-great-grandsons, "I have two more years to live. The Gaon said 100 years of age, not 98." And he recovered. Two years later, on his 100th birthday, the Torah scholar passed away.

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From: RABBI MORDECHAI KORNFELD kornfeld@netvision.net.il  
 Subject: Insights to the Daf: Nedarim  
 INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF  
 brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il,  
<http://www.dafyomi.co.il>

NEDARIM 81 - dedicated by Mrs. G. Turkel (Rabbi Kornfeld's grandmother), an exceptional woman who accepted all of Hashem's Gezeiros with love and who loved and respected the study of Torah. Tehei Nafshah Tzerurah bi'Tzror ha'Chaim.

Nedarim 81b  
 PERMITTED PRACTICES BUT PEOPLE CONDUCT THEMSELVES STRINGENTLY  
 HALACHAH: In a Beraisa, Raban Gamliel rules that even Nedarim which do not actually take effect, such as a Neder a woman makes not to serve her husband in one of the ways of endearment, still requires annulment. Raban Gamliel derives this Halachah from the words, "Lo Yachel \*Devaro\*," which implies that even if a statement does not constitute a true Neder and is no more than a "spoken word," it requires Hafarah lest people become accustomed to taking Nedarim lightly (RAN, DH Mishum she'Ne'amar). He adds that this verse is merely an Asmachta, and the requirement of Hafarah in this case is only mid'Rabanan.

The Gemara then cites the Beraisa that states, "If people regard certain permitted practices as prohibited, one is not allowed to perform those practices [in that place] in order to reject the conduct of those who prohibit them." (The Gemara earlier (15a) cites the same Halachah with a slightly different wording: "If practices are permitted but some people regard them as prohibited, one is not allowed \*to permit those practices\* in front of them.")

The Gemara explains that this Halachah is in accordance with the view of Raban Gamliel, that even a statement -- or practice, in this case -- that is not a true Neder requires Heter or Hafarah.

The SHULCHAN ARUCH (YD 214:1) rules, based on this Gemara, that if a person is accustomed to fasting during the days of Selichos or between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kipur and then he decides not to fast one year because he is weak, he must get a Heter to permit himself to eat on those days. Even if he only fasted one time but intended for it to be an accepted practice forever, he needs a Heter, unless he specified that he was not accepting the practice upon himself as a Neder and he did not intend to do it forever.

(a) Is the requirement to get Hatarah for conduct oneself stringently in a certain practice a requirement mid'Oraisa or mid'Rabanan?

(b) In addition, which types of practices are included in the requirement of Hatarah?  
 OPINIONS: (a) From the fact that the Gemara compares Minhagei Isur with Nedarim that do not take effect, it seems that just like those Nedarim are Asur mid'Rabanan, so, too, Minhagei Isur are Asur only mid'Rabanan and require Hatarah only mid'Rabanan. (It is interesting to note, however, that although the rule of "practices that are permitted..." is the Halachah, the ruling of Raban Gamliel is \*not\* the Halachah, indicating that they are not totally

comparable.)

The BIRKEI YOSEF (YD 214) indeed rules that it is mid'Rabanan, supporting his ruling with the fact that mid'Oraisa a Neder needs to be expressed verbally (Shevuos 26b). He infers this from the wording of the Shulchan Aruch as well, who writes that "it is \*as if\* he made a Neder," but not that it is considered to be an actual Neder.

It is not clear why the Birkei Yosef does not cite the Gemara earlier in Nedarim (15a) that says explicitly that this Isur of "Lo Yachel Devaro" in this case is only mid'Rabanan.

(b) This Halachah includes both personal customs (Minhagim which a person accepted upon himself privately, such as fasting on certain days), and public prohibitions or "Minhagei Isur" (stringencies which a community took upon themselves; for example, the Minhag not to work on Erev Pesach). In both of these cases, one needs a Heter Chacham to discontinue the Minhag.

Some maintain that one needs a Heter only if he was aware at the outset that this practice was merely an extra stringency and not Halachah. If one practiced an Isur because he mistakenly thought that it was really Asur, he does not need a Heter Chacham (SHULCHAN ARUCH YD 214:1, first opinion).

Others, however, maintain, on the contrary, that only if the practice was mistakenly accepted may the Chacham be Matir it. When one accepted the stringent practice knowing that it was permitted by Halachah, one may \*not\* be Matir it (TESHUVOS HA'RASHBA 1:98, and RAN in Pesachim, Perek 4, second opinion, based on the Yerushalmi).

The VILNA GA'ON (Shulchan Aruch, ibid.) cites the RAN in Pesachim who points out that the fact that our Gemara says that the source for this Halachah is from the verse "Lo Yachel Devaro" supports the first opinion that it is similar to a Neder, where a person knows that something is permitted and he consciously tries to prohibit it.

The Gemara in Pesachim (51a) cites the same Beraisa as our Gemara, ""If practices are permitted but some people regard them as prohibited, one is not allowed to permit those practices in front of them." Rav Chisda qualifies this rule and says that it is referring only to permitting the practice in front of "Kuta'i" (unlearned people who follow practices out of ignorance), because when they see us acting leniently, they will take Isurim lightly, since they see that what they think is prohibited is really permitted. Why, then, does the Shulchan Aruch cite this rule as applying to all people? The VILNA GA'ON (Shulchan Aruch, ibid.) answers that this single statement teaches two different Halachos (as the BEIS YOSEF points out). The first Halachah is that one is not allowed to permit the practice without a Hatarah; this Halachah applies to everyone. The second Halachah is that one should not \*conduct himself\* leniently in front of others who conduct themselves stringently, lest they come to deride his own Minhag. The latter Halachah is the subject of the Gemara in Pesachim which applies only in front of "Kuta'im."

Nedarim 87

"TOCH KEDEI DIBUR K'DIBUR DAMI" "OPINIONS: The Gemara mentions that the principle of "Toch Kedei Dibur k'Dibur Dami" applies for all Halachos except for blaspheming (Megadef), idolatry (Avodah Zarah), marriage, and divorce.

The Rishonim differ regarding the source for this principle and regarding the mechanics of how it works.

(a) The RAN writes that both the principle of "Toch Kedei Dibur" and its exceptions are \*mid'Oraisa\*. The logic behind this is that a person is never totally committed to his actions and reserves the right to renege within the small amount of time of Toch Kedei Dibur.

However, when performing actions which are of such a severe nature (the exceptions mentioned in the Gemara), a person does not begin the action until he is absolutely committed to doing it, and therefore he does not reserve in his mind the right to renege.

(b) The Ran writes in the name of the Ramban in Bava Basra, who quotes RABEINU TAM, that the Halachah of "Toch Kedei Dibur" is a Takanah d'Rabanan. The Rabanan instituted this principle in order to enable a buyer to greet his teacher while in the middle of a purchase, without that greeting acting as an interruption between the words he was saying beforehand and the words he says afterwards. TOSFOS cites this opinion in the name of Rabeinu Eliezer. Tosfos asks, however, that "Toch Kedei Dibur" cannot be a Takanah d'Rabanan, because it is said even with regard to Halachos that are mid'Oraisa.

(c) The RASHBAM (Bava Basra 129b) writes that the principle of "Toch Kedei Dibur" is mid'Oraisa in all cases, including those exceptions mentioned in the Gemara (that is, one can rescind within "Toch Kedei Dibur" even in cases of Megadef, Avodah Zarah, marriage, and divorce), but the Rabanan enacted that it does \*not\* work in those cases. They enacted that it not work in cases of Megadef and Avodah Zarah because of the severity of the act, and that it not work in cases of marriage and divorce in order to prevent rumors from spreading which would ruin the reputation of the children born from the union.

QUESTION: According to the opinions of the Ran and Rabeinu Tam, the cases of the application of "Toch Kedei Dibur" mentioned in our Sugya are problematic. The Gemara says that if one tore Keri'ah for a relative before the relative died, and then the relative died within "Toch Kedei Dibur" of the Keri'ah, the mourner need not tear again. The reasoning of the Ran certainly does not apply, for the person who tore Keri'ah was not transacting any sort of deal from which he might wish to renege. Rather, at the time he tore Keri'ah, he was not yet obligated to tear, because the relative had not yet died, and thus his Keri'ah should be ineffective! The same is true of the case where a man annulled a Neder mistakenly thinking that it was his wife who made the Neder, and "Toch Kedei Dibur" he discovered that it was actually his daughter who made the Neder. The Gemara applies the principle of "Toch Kedei Dibur" even though there is no question of indecision, but merely a lack of knowledge which was only rectified after the act.

According to Rabeinu Tam, who explains that the principle of "Toch Kedei Dibur" is a Takanah d'Rabanan in case one needs to greet his teacher in the middle of a transaction, the case of Keri'ah is similarly problematic, since there is no reason to apply the principle of "Toch Kedei Dibur" there.

ANSWER: TOSFOS in Bava Kama (73b) answers that even though Rabeinu Tam's

reasoning for "Toch Kedei Dibur" does not apply to Keri'ah, nevertheless the Rabanan instituted the leniency of "Toch Kedei Dibur" as a special leniency in the Halachah of Keri'ah. TOSFOS in Bava Basra (129b) answers that "Toch Kedei Dibur" applies to Keri'ah because the Rabanan instituted a "Lo Plug" -- since in some situations the rule applies, they enacted that it should apply in all situations.

These answers, though, do not answer the questions on the Ran's opinion, and we remain with the questions from the Halachos of Keri'ah and Hafarah. It must be that, according to the Ran, the basic principle of "Toch Kedei Dibur k'Dibur Dami" is a universal rule that anything which happens within the time frame of "Toch Kedei Dibur" is non-sequential; it is immaterial what happened first. Therefore, we can consider the Keri'ah as if it happened \*after\* the death. The Ran said his reasoning only in order to differentiate between normal acts and transactions to which the principle of "Toch Kedei Dibur" applies, and Avodah Zarah (and Megadef), Gitin and Kidushin -- acts which are final and irrevocable once performed, due to their severity, and are therefore excluded from the rule of "Toch Kedei Dibur k'Dibur Dami."

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