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MAGAZINE October 2006

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"LULAVA"

by Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

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Rabbi Shammai Parnes is one of the principal rabbis of the Israeli army. He is a deeply religious man who descends from a long line of Jerusalem families.

This story took place during the Yom Kippur War in 1973, when the Israelis were caught by surprise and attacked by Arabs on all fronts. One of the critical points of battle was near the Suez Canal. For days after Yom Kippur and throughout Sukkos, Rabbi Shammai and his assistants traveled throughout the Sinai desert and southward towards Suez, where they cautiously and caringly gathered the bodies of those who had fallen in battle.

Throughout the days of Sukkos, Rabbi Shammai traveled in his jeep, taking with him his prayer book, Tehillim (Book of Psalms), tallis (prayer shawl), and lulav and esrog (used to celebrate the festival of Succos). In every army camp where he stopped, soldiers approached him, asking for permission to use his lulav and esrog.

Infantrymen who were otherwise irreligious would pick up his siddur and say, "Rabbi Shammai, let us pray from your siddur ... Rabbi Shammai, let us say the Shema ... Rabbi Shammai, could we say some Psalms." He would help as many as he could, and at times he was detained from his work for more than an hour. Much to his regret, though, he eventually had to say to the young men, "I can't stay any longer. I've been summoned elsewhere."

* * *

On Hoshana Rabbah (the last day of Sukkos), Rabbi Shammai and his assistants were near the Suez. It was late morning, and as he drove towards a newly constructed army base in the wide open desert, the thought occurred to him that because he had already used his lulav and esrog for the last time this Yom Tov, he could leave them in the army base.

Shortly after Rabbi Shammai's arrival at the base, a long line of soldiers began to form, waiting to use his lulav and esrog. As a crowd began to assemble, a young non-religious soldier, Arik Shuali, driving an ammunition truck, was making his way southward. Looking through his powerful binoculars he noticed a large crowd of fellow servicemen gathered in one area. Curious, he got out of his truck and made his way on foot to where the soldiers had assembled.

As he came closer, he asked someone, "What is all the commotion about?" They explained to him that Rabbi Shammai had come, and people were waiting for an opportunity to use his lulav and esrog. Arik was not interested in waiting around. However, when one of his friends mentioned that it was the last day to do this mitzvah, he agreed to wait his turn.

Eventually Arik's turn arrived. Just as he received the lulav and esrog, a bomb hit his truck. The vehicle exploded and set off multiple explosions of the ammunition on board. The blasts were so intense that a crater was formed in the ground where the truck had been parked. When they later examined the spot where the truck had been, the soldiers couldn't find even a shard of metal remaining from the shattered vehicle.

* * *

Three months later, Rabbi Shammai read a short notice in the Israeli army newspaper. It was an announcement stating that the wife of serviceman Arik Shuali had given birth to a little girl. The announcement included a statement by the new father. "I believe with every fiber of my being, that I am alive today and that I merited to see my new daughter only because of the mitzvah that I was doing at the time my truck was bombed."

To remember God's goodness, he named his daughter Lulava.

(Names have been changed by personal request)

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**Amira L'Nachri**

**By Rabbi Mordechai I. Willig**

An important aspect of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews is the roles and boundaries that define how non-Jews can assist Jews in fulfilling ritual responsibilities. In some other articles we have explored the ethical implications in the interaction between Jews and non-Jews. In this piece, we will explore the halachic implications, through the sugya of Amira l'Nachri, telling a non-Jew to perform melacha on Shabbat.

May one ask a non-Jew to carry food from the house to the Sukkah on Shabbat if the eruv falls down? For the sake of a mitzvah, one may instruct a non-Jew to do something that is Rabbinically proscribed for a Jew.<sup>1</sup> An eruv is effective only in an area in which one may carry by Torah law. If the eruv falls down, a Jew is only prohibited to carry by Rabbinic law. As such, he may instruct a non-Jew to carry, so as to enable the mitzvah of eating in a Sukkah to be fulfilled.<sup>2</sup>

This leniency requires explanation. One may not tell a non-Jew to do a melacha, a Torah prohibition, even for the purpose of doing a mitzvah.<sup>3</sup> If no mitzvah is involved, one may not instruct a non-Jew to perform even an act that is only prohibited Rabbinically. Why is it that if the prohibition is Rabbinic and a mitzvah is involved, a non-Jew may be instructed to perform some act? The Gemara questions whether the Rabbinic injunction against instructing a non-Jew applies to Torah laws other than Shabbat, such as muzzling an ox that is threshing, for example.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this question depends upon the nature of the injunction. Do we consider the non-Jew an agent of the Jew who instructs him? If so, the injunction applies to all prohibitions, since an agent is bound to the same laws as the principal who empowered him.<sup>5</sup>

If thou turn away thy foot because of the Sabbath, from pursuing thy business on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the LORD honourable; and shalt honour it, not doing thy wonted ways, nor pursuing thy business, nor speaking thereof; Isaiah 58:13

In particular, the Gemara points to the latter part of the passuk “nor pursuing thy business, nor speaking thereof”. One may not discuss a melacha that he, or anyone else, plans to perform.<sup>7</sup> Instructing a non-Jew to do a melacha necessarily includes mentioning that melacha, which is forbidden. If this problem of mentioning a melacha is the only reason for the injunction against instructing a non-Jew, it is limited to Shabbat and does not apply to other Torah laws. The potential dual nature of the injunction affects Shabbat as well. One may not tell a non-Jew to do a melacha after Shabbat. The instruction on Shabbat constitutes “discussing the forbidden.”<sup>8</sup> However, if one tells a non-Jew on Friday to do melacha on Shabbat, no forbidden discussion takes place. Since the non-Jew can still be considered an agent of the Jew, and as we mentioned above, an agent is bound to the same laws as the principal, we may still have a problem. Indeed, this stricter view is accepted, indicating that we are concerned about agency as well.<sup>9</sup> The Gemara ultimately rules that only “seeking your needs” is prohibited.<sup>10</sup> It is permissible to seek the “needs of Heaven”, which presumably includes discussion of the mitzvah needs also. This addresses the first component of our case. The source of prohibition for discussing melacha only rules out discussing melachot that are not related to doing a mitzvah. Speaking about the melacha in question to a non-Jew may appear permitted. The question remains whether asking him to perform is still a problem, based on our understanding of agency law. The Gemara does not resolve the question of agency, giving us no determination as to whether the non-Jew is an agent, and thus bound to the same laws as the Jewish principal.<sup>11</sup> Our general rule is that unresolved questions that relate to Torah prohibitions require stringency. Even though the entire concept of agency in this context is only a Rabbinic chumra, nevertheless, since the melacha itself is a Torah law we adopt the strict view. The end result, as mentioned earlier, is that we may not tell a non-Jew on Friday to do melacha on Shabbat. When, however, the act that the non-Jew is instructed to perform is only a Rabbinic violation, we may adopt a lenient position with respect to the unresolved question of agency in the Gemara. The non-Jew could then be considered an independent actor, not an agent of a Jew, and a Jew could instruct him to perform an act that is a Rabbinic violation of Shabbat. This is the plain reading of the Rif in the context of a milah on Shabbat. <sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere, the Gemara prohibits telling a non-Jew to do a Rabbinically forbidden act, seemingly contradicting the Rif!<sup>13,14</sup> To resolve this contradiction, we learn that the Rif’s ruling is limited to milah and other “needs of Heaven,” which may be discussed. The Gemara’s ruling applies to all other situations, including asking a non-Jew to violate a Rabbinic prohibition that is not for the purpose of a mitzvah. The result of the preceding discussion is that telling a non-Jew to perform a Rabbinically prohibited act (Shvus D’Shvus) is a forbidden discussion. Instructing a non-Jew to do a melacha (that is, a violation of Shabbat m’deoraisa) for a mitzvah is prohibited since the non-Jew is considered the Jew’s agent. Yet a shvus d’shvus for the sake of a mitzvah, like telling a non-Jew to perform a Rabbinically prohibited act on Shabbat, is allowed. The mitzvah eliminates the problem of forbidden discussion. The fact that the act is prohibited Rabbinically enables us to rely on the lenient position that the non-Jew is not an agent of the Jew.

Returning to our opening question, if the eruv fell down one may ask a non-Jew to carry food to the Sukkah on Shabbat? First, let’s answer the foundational question: May one ask a non-Jew on Friday to perform a Rabbinically prohibited act on Shabbat? According to our analysis, it should be permitted. There is no forbidden discussion, and no agency since one may rely on the lenient position regarding Rabbinic violations. Indeed, the Mishna L’Melech (6:9) cites such an opinion. But this is not the actual ruling - the leniency should in fact be avoided. We rely on the rule that an

unresolved Rabbinic question may be resolved leniently (safek derabanan l’kula) only in a case of need. We do not enter into such a situation unless it is unavoidable. Therefore, under ordinary circumstances, we may not tell a non-Jew on Friday to perform a Rabbinically prohibited act on Shabbat, even though it is technically permitted.

Similarly, the dispensation of shvus d’shvus for a mitzvah, which is based on the decision rule of safek derabanan l’kula, may be relied upon when necessary. The answer to our question then is that a Jew may ask a non-Jew to bring food to the Sukkah on Shabbat if the eruv has fallen down during Shabbat. However, in a place that has no eruv to begin with, every effort must be made to reach a different arrangement before Shabbat. Only when there is no alternative may a non-Jew be told to perform a Rabbinically prohibited act for the sake of a mitzvah.

1 Rambam Shabbat 6:9, Shulchan Aruch OC 307:5

2 See Beur Halacha 364:2

3 Mishna Berurah 307:19,24

4 Bava Metzia 90a

5 In agency law, the person who dispatches an agent to serve as his representative is referred to as the principal.

6 Shabbat 150a

7 Shulchan Aruch 307:1

8 See ibid. 307:22

9 Rambam 6:1, See Magid Mishna and Hagohos Maimoniyos, and see Shulchan Aruch 307:2

10 Shabbat ibid.

11 Bava Metzia ibid.

12 See Rif on Shabbat 56a

13 Shabbat 122a, 150a

14 Sefer Hamachira #57

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From: [ZeitlinShelley@aol.com](mailto:ZeitlinShelley@aol.com)

Sent: Wednesday, October 04, 2006 10:04 PM

To: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com

Subject: The Central Theme of the Sukkah by **Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**  
The Central Theme of the Sukkah

By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss We all know that the Sukkah covering, called schach, commemorates the “Ananei HaKavod,” the Clouds of Glory that sheltered and protected our ancestors during the forty miraculous years that we spent wandering in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. This stupendous miracle was in the merit of Aharon HaKohein. The reason why it was specifically Aharon who generated for the Bnei Yisroel this amazing protection lies in the fact that Aharon was the great man of peace. As the Mishna teaches us in Pirkei Avos, “We should be from the disciples of Aharon, to love peace and pursue peace.” And because of this, it was through him that we merited the Sukkas Shelomecha, the Booths of Peace.

The Chofetz Chaim teaches us that we should be especially careful not to get angry in the environs of the Sukkah. This is not simply because it would be grossly inappropriate to lose our temper in the presence of the Holy Ushpizin, nor is it simply because it would be an act of brazen chutzpah to fly-off the handle under the schach which symbolizes the Tzeila Deimenusa, the Zohar’s terminology for the presence of the Shechinah. It is also because getting angry in the Sukkah is the antithesis of the message of the schach which is a message of peace, harmony, and tranquility. When Hashem was about to create Man, He exclaimed, “Naase Adom, - Let us make Man.” Rashi explains that He was conferring with the angels, teaching us that it should not be above us to take counsel from our inferiors. However, the father of Chassidus, the great Baal Shem Tov, Zt”l, Zy”a, gives a novel explanation to Hashem’s statement of “Naase Adom.” He explains that Hashem was talking to Man himself, saying to him, “Let us together make Man,” for Hashem gave us, the human, an animal-like body that has many physical and materialistic cravings. In this shell he infused a holy neshamah. He then gave us the

great charge to make out of that human animal an Adom, a mentch. As we say in our kiddush, "Asher borah Elokim laasos," that Hashem created and it is our job to develop the creation further. The Gemora also elaborates on this expectation when it teaches us that if we live properly, it is "Kiilu naase shutaf l'haKodosh Boruch Hu b'maasei bereishis – We become a partner with Hashem in the very creation." By doing mitzvahs, we make a holy Adom out of the humanoid. The Netziv, Zt"l, Zy"l, elaborates that the rarified term 'Adom' is closely related to the term adameh, which means 'to be like,' and thus Adom points to the charge of man to be "adameh l'Elyon," like the One Above. Thus, our charge in life is to rise above the needs of self-gratification and sensual pleasures and to become like Hashem. One of the great character traits that we know about Hashem is that He is "Oseh Shalom Bimromav – He makes peace in the Heavens." Hashem is described as the Great Peacemaker. It therefore behooves us throughout our stay on earth to pursue peace in every area in our lives, whether at home with our spouse and children, with our in-laws, at work with our co-workers, in shul, with our colleagues, and on the block with our neighbors. Let's take the message of the Sukkah and the message of Aharon HaKohaim and rise above the pettiness of life, to become the Likeness of our Creator, and go the extra mile to find peaceful solutions. Let's learn how to look away more often, let's sharpen our skills at compromise and, as we grow older, let's become mellower with age. Let's try to adopt a posture of tolerance and not demand perfection from others but wisely be accepting of others even with their obvious faults and eccentricities. Not only is this the recipe to become beloved by our fellow men, it assures us that Hashem will treat us likewise, with tolerance and with forbearance, and look away from our occasional misdeeds and follies.

It is no wonder that Succos is known as Zman Simchaseinu, the Time of Happiness, for when there is peace there is happiness. It is no wonder that while we never invite the Holy Ushpizin into our homes, we invite them every time into our Sukkah for, when we create a rarified chamber of peacefulness and tranquility, our great ancestors feel comfortable to enter. It is similarly no wonder that the Shechinah abounds in the Sukkah for, as the Gemora teaches us in the case of a husband and wife, if there is peace between them there is the Divine Presence in the midst. So too, the Sukkah, which is an airlock of harmony is a fitting domicile for the divine presence. May it be the will of Hashem that our Sukkah brings home the important and challenging message of peace to all of our family members, teaching siblings not to fight with one another, reminding husbands and wives how very vital it is for them to strive to work out their differences, and urging all of us to bury the hatchet with those that we haven't been getting along with and, in that zechus, may Hashem bless us all with a very healthy happy, and wonderful new Year.

To receive a weekly cassette tape or CD directly from Rabbi Weiss, please write to Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss, P.O. Box 140726, Staten Island, NY 10314 or contact him at RMMWSI@aol.com. Attend Rabbi Weiss's weekly shiur at the Landau Shul, Avenue L and East 9th in Flatbush, Tuesday nights at 9:30 p.m. Rabbi Weiss's Daf Yomi shiurim can be heard LIVE on Kol Haloshon at (718) 906-6400. Write to KolHaloshon@gmail.com for details. (Sheldon Zeitlin transcribes Rabbi Weiss' articles. If you wish to receive Rabbi Weiss' articles by email, please send a note to ZeitlinShelley@aol.com.)

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from "Shabbat Shalom: **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's** Parsha List"  
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 Shabbat Shalom: Sukkot  
 By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - For some, the very idea of religion is paradoxical. On the one hand, we want to experience G-d, to soar to great spiritual heights. But on the other hand, we are often taken aback by the seemingly picayune

details of our rituals: The precise quantity of wine necessary for the kiddush cup, the exact phrase to be substituted in our prayers during the ten days of Repentance - thousands of laws affecting every aspect of our lives. On the festival of Sukkot, the most universal of all Jewish celebrations, this paradox is muted, if not totally resolved. The Bible commands us to take "four species" on Sukkot, which the Midrash classifies as to their taste/fragrance attributes. The etrog has both good taste and fragrance (Torah and good deeds), while the lulav's fruits, dates, have taste but no fragrance (just Torah). The hadas (myrtle) has an excellent aroma (good deeds), but no taste at all. And the arava, the weeping willow, has neither taste nor fragrance. When we make our blessing over them, these species are to be held together; even the weeping willow-Jew is included, and given an honored place together with his siblings, in one bond, aguda ahad. The commandment of the four species recognizes how all Jews, from the most learned to the most ignorant, from the most pious to the most removed from traditions, are part of a fundamental, and even halachic connection. The physical structure of the sukka itself reflects the same principle. Its walls may be comprised of virtually any material; wood, metal, brick, objects which can become ritually defiled. But the roof may consist of only vegetation, matter which can never become ritually impure, an innate holiness, so to speak. Thus, in the sukka's construction, we see the necessity of relying on two different elements working together, those born into holiness who are never defiled, and the more common reality of those whose lives risk potential defilement. The story is told that Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev would invite all types of Jews into his sukka, simple people, beggars, even scoundrels. But the more established members of the community, the learned and the wealthy, felt uncomfortable around this motley crew. Reb Levi Yitzchok explained that Jewish tradition records that in the world to come, the holy Jews of all the generations would be gathering inside sukka of Leviathan, led by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses would be speaking words of Torah, Aaron would conduct the ritual and the songs of praise would be sung by King David. But if the doorkeeper would demand to know what right Levi Yitzchok thought he could enter (because, after all, he was hardly of the caliber of the aforementioned spiritual giants of our nation), then he would answer that since he invited everyone, including the "lesser lights" into his sukka, wouldn't these true masters of our faith open their hearts and invite him into their sukka? On Sukkot, we include everyone because we want G-d to include us. In effect, just as we forgive others (which is what placing all Jews in one bond means) G-d also forgives us. But there is another, more profound dimension to Sukkot, a celebration of nature and all of its implications. Exposed to the elements, under the sky, a sukka is a nomad's hut. For seven days, the Torah commands us to leave our homes and enter the world of the ancient Israelites, a temporary dwelling where we eat, study Torah and even sleep. In giving up the comforts of home and shedding rigidity, we sense a different part of our being; in a fragile hut, we become more fragile and see how everything in nature has its place and purpose. Invariably, the perfection of creation helps us look differently upon those Jews who run from the sight of a synagogue, universal spirits who often feel constrained by walls and pews. We understand better Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook's teaching that the messiah will come because of Jews who may not keep the external details of the commandment, but are nevertheless deeply committed to the internal national bond of all Jews. (Letters, No. 555). Rav Kook exhorts us to learn from every human being, even those who look like sinners. In the early years of this century, when faced with hard working farmers freeing the soil, the Chief Rabbi of Israel embraced them all into his concept of spirituality. In his work Arpelei Tohar (Clouds of Purity), Rav Kook speaks of the highest sanctity being the "sanctity of silence," a sanctity which transcends words (even the words of prayer), a sanctity which encompasses every aspect of life, from the inanimate to the life which pulses through the veins of every human being." This sanctity reaches into the depths of every creature, expressing the bond of all with, and within, all. But a collision was inevitable. If the person who feels

“this universality of holiness,” Rav Kook continues, “this sanctity of silence, the sanctity of universalism. . . will then descend into the narrow service of the particular ritual, to prayer, to even a word of Torah, to any kind of narrow and restricted emphasis on a detail of the law, he will suffer and become depressed, he’ll feel that his soul which is filled with the sanctity of all existence is being depressed by pin-cers . . . forced into a certain narrow road at a time when all of the roads seem opened before him in the way of sanctity, all of them filled with light.” Placing these non-observant pioneers on a pinnacle of spiritual excellence was revolutionary. Obviously, Rav Kook saw a light which most observant people could not see. But on Sukkot, we can all catch a glimpse of Rav Kook’s vision. We understand that the Torah encompasses every human being, every idea, every emotion, all of creation. This is the deepest joy of Torah, the Torah of Sukkot, in which there is room for the pure and the impure, the good and the not so good, from the smallest weeping willow-Jew to the greatest sages of the age. Still, what do we say to a great soul who cannot be burdened with ‘bureaucratic’ religious details? The following analogy may help: On a clear night, I can often manage to see stars hundreds of light years away, but on a cloudy night I may not be able to see anything at all. However, if I learn the laws of optics and build a telescope, I will see much further and clearer. But acquiring a telescope has its price. There are many facts to learn regarding its proper use, and an object comprised of countless details is placed between the eye and the world. But just look at the added vision it provides! The laws of the Torah are like this telescope (or microscope) into reality. It seems constrictive, but it’s really liberating. On Sukkot, we embrace the stargazers who shun telescopes, we open our hearts and invite them into the sukka but at the same time we know how sharper our vision is when we look at the stars through the gaps (required by halacha) in the roof of the sukka.

Shabbat Shalom and an Easy Fast Shlomo Riskin Chancellor Ohr Torah Stone Chief Rabbi - Efrat Israel

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Rav Mayer Twersky Succos: A Time for Teshuva

With Elul and yomim noraim behind us, we are ready to shift focus. For the past forty days, the focus has been on teshuva. Cheshbon hanefesh and teshuva have been the mitzvos hayom. Now we are ready for change. What are the mitzvos hayom as we move forward?

One of the mitzvos hayom may come as a surprise. It is teshuva. The days after Yom Kippur are a time for teshuva - in fact, an optimal time for teshuva.

Two perspectives will help illumine this surprising answer. The first perspective is provided by the Maharsha. The gemara at the end of maseches Megillah teaches that Moshe Rabbeinu instituted that we should study the halachos of each yom tov on that yom tov - the halachos of Pesach on Pesach, Shavuot on Shavuot, and Succos on Succos. The Maharsha comments on the omission of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur from the list of yomim tovim. He explains that Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are not mentioned because the dominant mitzvah of these days is teshuva, and it is ALWAYS a mitzvah to do teshuva. The mitzvos of chametz and matzah are limited to Pesach, shte'i halechem to Shavuot, etc. Hence, there is a special obligation to study Hilchos Chametz U'matzah on Pesach, etc. But mitzvas teshuva is perennial, and hence our preoccupation with teshuva ought to be constant. Accordingly, the days after Yom Kippur - as all days of the year - are a time for teshuva.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this perspective. I am not sure how much we think about teshuva during the year between motsaei Yom Kippur and the following Rosh Chodesh Elul. I am, however, sure

about one thing. We do not think enough about teshuva. Mesilas Yesharim recommends that a person make a cheshbon hanefesh daily. Consider the following mashal. If the captain of a ship checks the ship's course daily, it can not veer too far off course. But if he neglects to check daily, the ship can veer far off course, and the necessary corrections become increasingly difficult. The analogue to this mashal and its relevance to our lives are obvious. And thus teshuva and cheshbon hanefesh are perennial, not seasonal.

There is a second perspective as well. This latter perspective is, inter alia, expounded upon in sifrei chassidus. Succos, in particular, is a time for teshuva m'ahava. The teshuva of the yomim noraim was most likely a teshuva m'yira. Sullied by our sins, our teshuva was most likely inspired by the awe and dread of the yemei hadin. Having been granted atonement by Hakadosh Baruch Hu on Yom Kippur, we, in our newly attained state of tahara, have an enhanced capacity for teshuva m'ahava, a teshuva inspired by love of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

May we merit to be chozer b'teshuva shaleima lefanav m'ahava.

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Rabbi Wein - Sukkot **Rabbi Berel Wein** <rbwein@torah.org>

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Sukkot comes at the exact right time of the year, psychologically and emotionally speaking. If it were not for the advent of Sukkot and all of the preparations involved regarding this festival of joy and happiness, we would all be very depressed at having to climb down from the pinnacle of Yom Kippur to everyday mundane existence.

The Torah allows us to contemplate our future year with a sense of happiness and satisfaction. The sukkah signifies the protection that the Lord will provide us with for the whole coming year. Though the actual sukkah may be small and relatively flimsy as compared to our homes, it nevertheless symbolizes faith, serenity and confidence in the eternity of Israel and its Torah.

The four species of vegetation that are an integral part of Sukkot reinforce our appreciation of the beauty of God’s world. It reminds us that the world can be a Garden of Eden and we should endeavor not to destroy it or be expelled from it.

The different species represent the harmony of nature, the flash of its color and its built in symbiotic nature. Whereas pagans worshipped nature, Judaism stressed its role as being one of the great wonders of God’s creation.

Abraham had it right when he stated that people wonder at the magnificence of a beautiful building but ignore the genius of the architect that designed it. Judaism, while always impressed by the wonder of the building itself, always looks intently to recognize and acknowledge the architect behind it.

Sukkot helps remind us of the necessity to always search for that architect in all of the facets of our lives and world.

Sukkot also reveals clearly our dependence upon Heaven for rain – for water. Without water in abundance, life cannot function and grow. The Torah tells us that the Lord sent us purposely into a land where water is a precious commodity. There are no great rivers or giant lakes that appear on the landscape of the Land of Israel. We are therefore dependent on the winter season’s rains.

We pray on Sukkot for those rains to be abundant, gentle and saturating. Rain has a cleansing effect not only on the air we breathe but on the life

spirit that exists within us. Hence its deep association with the joy of Sukkot.

Rain and water also symbolize Torah and purification. Moshe, in his final oration to Israel, states that his words of Torah should be felt as gentle rain and dew descending on the Holy Land. The prophet Yeshayahu compares Torah to water as does King David in Tehillim.

The holiday of Sukkot reinforces this connection with its own link to Simchat Torah, the day that marks the conclusion of this great and noble holiday period. For as obvious as it is that the Land of Israel cannot survive and prosper without water, so too the people of Israel will be unable to prosper and survive without an attachment to Torah, its commandments and values. The message of Sukkot is the perfect conclusion to the spirituality of Yom Kippur.

Chag sameach.

Rabbi Berel Wein            Rabbi Berel Wein, Copyright &copy 2007 by Rabbi Berel Wein and Torah.org

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