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**The Spirituality of Song**

**Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

With Ha'azinu we climb to one of the peaks of Jewish spirituality. For a month Moses had taught the people. He had told them their history and destiny, and the laws that would make theirs a unique society of people bound in covenant with one another and with G-d. He renewed the covenant and then handed the leadership on to his successor and disciple Joshua. His final act would be blessing the people, tribe by tribe. But before that, there was one more thing he had to do. He had to sum up his prophetic message in a way the people would always remember and be inspired by. He knew that the best way of doing so is by music. So the last thing Moses did before giving the people his deathbed blessing was to teach them a song.

There is something profoundly spiritual about music. When language aspires to the transcendent, and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Jewish history is not so much read as sung. The rabbis enumerated ten songs at key moments in the life of the nation. There was the song of the Israelites in Egypt (see Is. 30:29), the song at the Red Sea (Ex. 15), the song at the well (Num. 21), and Ha'azinu, Moses' song at the end of his life. Joshua sang a song (Josh. 10:12-13). So did Deborah (Jud. 5), Hannah (1 Sam. 2) and David (2 Sam. 22). There was the Song of Solomon, Shir ha-Shirim, about which Rabbi Akiva said, "All songs are holy but the Song of Songs is the holy of holies."<sup>1</sup> The tenth song has not yet been sung. It is the song of the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

Many biblical texts speak of the power of music to restore the soul. When Saul was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (1 Sam. 16). David himself was known as the "sweet singer of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (2 Kings 3:15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with Pesukei de-Zimra, the 'Verses of Song' with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing G-d's praises.

Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called "the music of the spheres". This is what Psalm 19 means when it says, "The heavens declare the glory of G-d; the skies proclaim the work of His hands . . . There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music 3 carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world." Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.

So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for shacharit, mincha and maariv, the morning, afternoon and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the Yamim Noraim, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation for Torah, another for the haftorah from the prophetic books, and yet another for Ketuvim, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the written Torah: Mishnah and Gemarah. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is and what kind of text is being used. Jewish texts and times are not colour-coded but music-coded. The map of holy words is written in melodies and songs.

Music has extraordinary power to evoke emotion. The Kol Nidrei prayer with which Yom Kippur begins is not really a prayer at all. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. There can be little doubt that it is its ancient, haunting melody that has given it its hold over the Jewish imagination. It is hard to hear those notes and not feel that you are in the presence of G-d on the Day of Judgment, standing in the company of Jews of all places and times as they plead with heaven for forgiveness. It is the holy of holies of the Jewish soul.<sup>4</sup>

Nor can you sit on Tisha B'av reading Eichah, the book of Lamentations, with its own unique cantillation, and not feel the tears of Jews through the ages as they suffered for their faith and wept as they remembered what they had lost, the pain as fresh as it was the day the Temple was destroyed. Words without music are like a body without a soul.

Beethoven wrote over the manuscript of the third movement of his A Minor Quartet the words *Neue Kraft fühlend*, "Feeling new strength." That is what music expresses and evokes. It is the language of emotion unsicklied by the pale cast of thought. That is what King David meant when he sang to G-d the words: "You turned my grief into dance; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent." You feel the strength of the human spirit no terror can destroy.

In his book, *Musicophilia*, the late Oliver Sacks (no relative, alas) told the poignant story of Clive Wearing, an eminent musicologist who was struck by a devastating brain infection. The result was acute amnesia. He was unable to remember anything for more than a few seconds. As his wife Deborah put it, "It was as if every waking moment was the first waking moment."

Unable to thread experiences together, he was caught in an endless present that had no connection with anything that had gone before. One day his wife found him holding a chocolate in one hand and repeatedly covering and uncovering it with the other hand, saying each time, "Look, it's new." "It's the same chocolate," she said. "No," he replied, "Look. It's changed." He had no past at all.

Two things broke through his isolation. One was his love for his wife. The other was music. He could still sing, play the organ and conduct a choir with all his old skill and verve. What was it about music, Sacks asked, that enabled him, while playing or conducting, to overcome his amnesia? He suggests that when we "remember" a melody, we recall one note at a time, yet each note relates to the whole. He quotes the philosopher of music, Victor Zuckerkandl, who wrote, "Hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once. Every melody declares to us that the past can be there without being remembered, the future without being

foreknown.” Music is a form of sensed continuity that can sometimes break through the most overpowering disconnections in our experience of time.

Faith is more like music than science.<sup>5</sup> Science analyses, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. G-d is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of G-d’s song. Faith is the ability to hear the music beneath the noise.

So music is a signal of transcendence. The philosopher and musician Roger Scruton writes that it is “an encounter with the pure subject, released from the world of objects, and moving in obedience to the laws of freedom alone.”<sup>6</sup> He quotes Rilke: “Words still go softly out towards the unsayable / And music, always new, from palpitating stones / builds in useless space its godly home.”<sup>7</sup> The history of the Jewish spirit is written in its songs.

I once watched a teacher explaining to young children the difference between a physical possession and a spiritual one. He had them build a paper model of Jerusalem. Then (this was in the days of tape-recorders) he put on a tape with a song about Jerusalem that he taught to the class. At the end of the session he did something very dramatic. He tore up the model and shredded the tape. He asked the children, “Do we still have the model?” They replied, No. “Do we still have the song?” They replied, Yes.

We lose physical possessions, but not spiritual ones. We lost the physical Moses. But we still have the song.

1 Mishna, Yadayim 3:5. 2 Tanhuma, Beshallah, 10; Midrash Zuta, Shir ha-Shirim, 1:1. 3 Kavam, literally “their line”, possibly meaning the reverberating string of a musical instrument. 4 Beethoven came close to it in the opening notes of the sixth movement of the C Sharp Minor Quartet op. 131, his most sublime and spiritual work. 5 I once said to the well-known atheist Richard Dawkins, in the course of a radio conversation, “Richard, religion is music, and you are tone deaf.” He replied, “Yes, it’s true, I am tone deaf, but there is no music.” 6 Roger Scruton, *An Intelligent Person’s Guide to Philosophy*, Duckworth, 1996, 151. 7 Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, II, 10.

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From Mordechai Tzion toratravaviner@yahoo.com [ravaviner] ravaviner-noreply@yahoogroups.com via returns.groups.yahoo.com to ravaviner Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva **Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit" a**

**Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion**

**Laws of Dwelling in a Sukkah**

Obligation:

1. During all seven days of Sukkot (eight days outside of Israel), one’s house should serve as his temporary dwelling and his Sukkah as his permanent dwelling. He should eat, drink, sleep and live in the Sukkah, day and night, just as he does the rest of the year in his house (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 639:1).
2. There is an obligation to sleep in the Sukkah, even for a nap. The law of sleeping in the Sukkah – for men – has a greater foundation in Halachah than does eating in the Sukkah. The basic halachah is that except for the first night (and the second night outside of Israel), there is no obligation to eat in the Sukkah unless one is eating foods made from flour such as bread, cakes or noodles. In contrast, there is an obligation to sleep in the Sukkah, even for a nap. Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, would remind his students of the importance of sleeping in the Sukkah. When he was in Switzerland in the cold and snow, he would not forgo even one night of sleeping in the Sukkah (Sefer Rabbenu - on the Life of Ha-Rav Zvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, p. 187).
3. Because of the great holiness of the Sukkah, it is proper to limit non-holy discussions and speak words of holiness and Torah in the Sukkah, and all the more so one must be cautious to refrain from speaking Lashon Ha-Ra (Mishnah Berurah ibid. #2).

4. At the beginning of the Laws of the Sukkah, the Bach explains that there are three Mitzvot which one does not fulfill in the proper manner if he does not elucidate the reason for performing them. They are: Tzitzit, Tefillin and Sukkah. During Sukkot, Maran Ha-Rav Kook would mention this idea and explain at the length the reason for dwelling in the Sukkah (Siddur Olat Re'eiyah vol. 1, p. 11 in the notes of our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah).

Eating in the Sukkah:

5. The order of Kiddush on the first night is: The blessing on the wine, the Kiddush, the blessing of "Leshev Ba-Sukkah" and Shehechyanu. On the second night outside of Israel, Shehechyanu is recited before the blessing of "Leshev Ba-Sukkah" since the Shehechyanu applies to the holiday and not the fulfillment on the mitzvah of dwelling in the Sukkot which was performed the previous night for the first time (ibid. 661:1 and in the Rama and Mishnah Berurah #1).
6. On the first night of the holiday (and the second night outside of Israel), one must eat an olive-size piece of bread in the Sukkah, just as one must eat an olive-size piece of Matzah on the first night of Pesach. And similar to eating Matzah, one should not eat on Erev Sukkot from noon onward in order to approach eating in the Sukkah with an appetite, one should not eat on the first night until it is definitely night-time and one should eat the bread before midnight (ibid. 639:3 and in the Rama).
7. It is forbidden to eat more than an egg-size piece of bread or foods made from flour such as cookies, cakes or noodles outside of the Sukkah. But if one eats meat, fruit or vegetables there is no obligation to eat in the Sukkah. One who glorifies the mitzvah to eat even snacks (not containing flour) in the Sukkah is praiseworthy (ibid. 2).

Those Exempt from Dwelling in the Sukkah:

8. Women and children are exempt from the Sukkah. A boy who reaches the age of education is obligated in the mitzvah of Sukkah so he can be educated about the Mitzvot (ibid. 640:1).
9. One who is distressed is exempt from the Sukkah whether he is sick, too cold or too hot, bothered by the wind, flies, bees or mosquitoes, etc. as long as the Sukkah was not constructed in a place where there would certainly be a hardship. Therefore, if it is raining to the extent that the rain would spoil a cooked dish – even if you do not currently have such a dish there – one may go into his house. This applies to all days of Sukkot, but on the first night (and on the second night outside of Israel) one is required to eat an olive-size piece of bread in the Sukkah even if it is raining (ibid. 639:5 and in the Rama). If it is raining on the first night (and on the second night outside of Israel), some authorities say that it is proper to wait until midnight to see if the rain will cease. Others explain that one should wait an hour or two in order not to impinge on the joy of the holiday (Mishnah Berurah ibid, #35). If the rain does not stop, one should recite Kiddush, eat an olive-size piece of bread in the Sukkah without the blessing of "Leshev Ba-Sukkah" and eat in his house. If the rain stops during the meal, he should go out to the Sukkah and finish it there (Shulchan Aruch and Rama ibid. and Mishnah Berurah #36).
- During the remaining days of Sukkot, if one is eating in the Sukkah, and it begins raining so that he goes inside his house to eat, he may remain inside until the end of the meal, even if it stops raining (ibid. 6). If one is sleeping in the Sukkah, he need not wait until the extent that the rain would spoil a cooked dish in order to go inside his house since even a little rain is distressing when sleeping (ibid. 7 in the Rama). If he went to sleep at night in the house due to rain, he may remain in the house until the morning (ibid. 7).
10. It is permissible to take trips on Chol Ha-Moed Sukkot, and to sleep and eat outside the Sukkah, if a Sukkah cannot be easily found. One who is strict not to lose out on the mitzvah of Sukkah even once is praiseworthy (Shut She'eilat Shlomo 1:238 and 2:149).

Prayers in the Sukkah:

11. There is a custom to welcome in each night one of the seven spiritual guests called "Ushpizin." According to Ashkenazic tradition, the order of the Ushpizin is: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon and David. According to Nusach Sefard, the order is: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and David.

12. When departing from the Sukkah at the end of Sukkot, some say: May we merit to dwell in the Sukkah of the Leviathan" (ibid. 667:1 in the Rama). And the Aderet – Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Eliyahu David Rabinowitz Te'omim – the Rav of Jerusalem and Maran Ha-Rav Kook's father-in-law, would say: May we also merit in the coming year, may it be good for us, to fulfill the mitzvot of Sukkah and the Four Species, the rejoicing on Holiday and all of its parts according to their proper halachic prescriptions, and fulfill all of the Mitzvot from now until next year, may it be good to us and all Israel, amen (Tefillat David, p. 110 and Nefesh David, p. 197, 211).

### **Sukkot: Chosen People**

#### **Rabbi Nisson E. Shulman**

What being a "Chosen People" really means, and how the only way Hashem would be revealed throughout the world would be by choosing a particular people. How this is expressed in the Sukkot holiday, as well as in the Rosh Hashanah and Shalosh Regalim prayers. Sukkot: Chosen People

In the Amida of every Yom Tov, we read, ATA BECHARTANU MIKOL HAAMIM, AHAVTA OTANU VERATZITA BANU VEROMAMTANU MIKOL HALESHONOT VEKERVATANU MALKENU LAAVODATECHA VESHIMCHA HAGADOL VEHAKADOSH ALEINU KARATA.

"You have chosen us from all nations; you have loved us, and desired us above all other people; you have brought us to your service and called us by your great and holy name: In short, you have made us the CHOSEN PEOPLE.

This theme reappears, again and again in the Torah and in the prophets. ET HASHEM HEEMARTA HAYOM LIHIYOT LECHA LEELOKIM VELALECHET BIDRACHAV, VAHASHEM HEEMIRCHA HAYOM LIHIYOT LO LEAM SEGULA

"You have this day declared the Lord your G-d, to walk in His ways, and He has this day declared you HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE...

Or again, LO MERUBCHEM MIKOL HAAMIM HASHAK HASHEM BACHEM KI ATEM HAMEAT MIKOL HAAMIM.

Not because you are more numerous than other nations did G-d desire you and choose you, but despite the fact that you are smallest of the nations.

KI AM KADOSH HASHEM ELOKECHA You are a nation holy to G-d and G-d has chosen you.

- and so too in the words of Amos: "I have chosen you from amongst all the world's nations. Therefore shall I punish you for all your sins.

But, for this idea, which appears so often, we have received a great deal of criticism from our enemies, from our detractors, and even from our friends.

For the idea that a Universal G-d of all people chose to reveal Himself uniquely to one nation, is a most awkward doctrine to explain.

Awkward, not only because it seems partial and unfair, but also because so many other people have made similar and therefore incompatible claims: In fact, almost all religions of ancient times repeated this claim: Shall we consider our claim to be a similar kind of religious chauvinism?

No, indeed, because of many reasons.

But first of all, that when we study the Jewish principal of the Chosen People, we are immediately greeted with a sharp surprise. For unlike all other people, we Jews did not say we are chosen for any special privilege. We were chosen to serve, and to suffer the ordeals such service entails!

When we said NAASE VENISHMA, "We will do and obey all that the Lord has commanded, we undertook a far more exacting morality and code

of law and discipline than any of our contemporaries both present and in the past.

The Midrash portrays this nicely, in the picture of how G-d first offered the Torah to every other nation on earth, but found only the Jews willing to accept the rigor of its demands.

But acceptance of the very high demands of the Torah, also opened us to penalties for its violation.

How different from the common conception of chosenness does this turn out to be, How much more demanding; how unenviable. No wonder other nations didn't accept it:

Of course, non-Jews are often still not satisfied even after they understand this.

For granted that G-d required of us heroic ordeal instead of giving us privilege. Nevertheless, the fact that we were singled out for any role of special partnership with the Almighty in the redemption of the world is still an indication that we were held in special regard and even love.

The Torah states this openly:

This flies in the face of democracy. It has given rise to a special theological term, used as an accusation against our people, called "The scandal of particularity." It questions how G-d, who envelops all of history, would focus at special times, in specific places and upon a particular people.

Yet, if we examine our history, we see no other possibility. Of course, our survival, our existence till this day, mysteriously, in spite of all logic, in spite of the rules of history, attests to this unique role. A nation defeated, exiled, refusing to assimilate, loyal to its land and capitol even if thousands of miles away, retaining its culture and its language, in a spiritual sense even its original borders wherever they were forced to wander, doing this for two thousand years of time, with loyalty unabated, yearning undimmed, resolution and faith unquenched, surely this attests to our unique role. No other explanation accounts for it. It has come to pass, just as it has been foretold in scripture and prophecy. We are here, alive, living witnesses to the chosenness of Israel.

To a large extent, the very mystery of all this, the impossibility of explaining it in any other way, has fed the flames of the hatred of our enemies. The fear of this mystery; the lie that it gives to their theology; the wonder that it engenders is more likely to make us enemies than friends. Many theological excuses have been devised to explain the fantastic, miraculous, unbelievable survival of the Jews, despite loss of land, and exile.

But not only our history attests to this; our very birth as a nation does so too. For it is not only our survival beyond all expectations, but also that we became a nation at the very outset against all the rules of society and history. And perhaps that is the reason the Exodus from Egypt is repeated in the Torah as the basis for many commandments. In fact the Succah itself is commanded "so that generations shall know that you dwelt in booths when I took you out of the land of Egypt."

According to all the rules, we should not have been able to escape from Pharaoh in the first place: No single slave, let alone an entire nation had ever done that: We were a weak, demoralized people, tyrannized by the most oppressive, powerful empire in the world at that time!

We had no allies, but the help of G-d. And yet, we were brought out to freedom, to the amazement of the world, and to the confounding and the desolation of Egypt.

Now there are two possible explanations why G-d did this: either the credit belongs to the Jews, or it belongs to G-d. Given those two alternatives we Jews accepted the only possible truth, and turned to G-d with thanks.

In fact, one of the striking features of our exceptional people has been our refusal to see anything intrinsically exceptional in ourselves:

And so, in beautiful poetic ways, we constantly taught that all men are equal.

We taught the Midrash, that when G-d made man he gathered the material from all parts of the earth to insure the universality of the human race. We taught the Mishna that man was portrayed as having been created alone so

that no man could say to his neighbor "My father is better than yours," for we are all children of one man:

Whatever special had come to Jews could not have been by our own doing. The only answer was that it came from G-d.

Thus, an idea, which looks at first to have been prompted by national arrogance, turns out to be the humblest interpretation of the facts of history.

The same interpretation must be given to the revelation at Sinai, which did not happen to one man only but to our entire nation. It too was a national, historical experience, which we have transmitted through authentic tradition so that it is as if each of us was there.

A philosopher once tried to explain why G-d choose the Jews. Was it because Abraham sought G-d first? Was it because we were possessed, as Yehuda Halevi wrote, with a special faculty of spiritual sensitivity? "It is hard to know" he said "But this is sure. If G-d had blessed and chosen all nations equally, He would not be known in this world. The blessing would be so universal, that we would take it for granted. There would be no one to recognize G-d as the author of the blessing."

"Just as we take the presence of the oxygen we breathe for granted and do not infer G-d's goodness from it, though the miracle of the air is ever so great; just so would we take the blessings of G-d's providence for granted if they were given equally to all people on earth. It is only when G-d selects one nation for a special role and a special revelation of His spirit that G-d's blessing and spirit stand a chance to be recognized by the rest of the world. So, until the day when G-d will be accepted by all nations He continues to need a people apart, G-d's special task force in history" (Huston Smith, "The Religions of Man", Harper and Rowe, p. 294).

But this is not new. It is a message of Isaiah the Prophet: "Listen to me O Islands, hearken you people from far: The Lord called me from the womb, made my mouth a sharp sword ...and said: "You are My servant; Israel in whom I will be glorified" (49:1-3).

Perhaps the best expression of this thought is in the Succos service in the Holy Temple on behalf of all the nations of the world. Then too, as now, many were our enemies, Yet we prayed for them, offered sacrifices for them and dedicated a large part of the Succos service in their behalf. Underlying all of the service is the prayer that we should one day not be the only ones praying for all the world: that foes will turn to friends, and all nations shall come to recognize, accept and worship one G-d, offering sacrifices on each other's behalf, even as we now do on theirs.

The ideal is expressed in the Rosh Hashana Mussaf "Our G-d and G-d of our fathers reign in Thy glory over the universe. Shine forth in thy majestic glory upon all Thy worlds inhabitants. Let every creature recognize Thee as its Creator - let every living, breathing thing proclaim - the Lord G-d of Israel is King and His dominion is over all."

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from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org  
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The Majesty at Hand: The Torah Readings of Yom Kippur and Sukkos  
**Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger**

### **The Majesty at Hand: The Torah Readings of Yom Kippur and Sukkos**

It should certainly not surprise us that Chazal would emphasize our responsibilities to the poor even as we are celebrating our yomim tovim; after all, it is inconceivable for us celebrate in an uplifting manner without sharing our joy with the less fortunate (Rambam Hilchos Yom Tov perek 6). At first glance that explains why Chazal expanded the reading of Shmini Atzeret, the final reading before we resume the regularly scheduled conclusion of Devorim, to include a section that addresses our obligations to those in need. The central part of the reading focuses on aliya laregel - the mandated ascent to Yerushalayim every yom tov, but it is expanded to include the laws of tithing for the poor and leaving them with some provisions in our fields.

Nevertheless it is surprising to find embedded in the talmudic passage (Megilah 31a) that records the readings for Rosh Hashana through Simchas Torah the oft quoted passage of Rav Yochanan, "Wherever you find the greatness of Hashem, there you will find His humility as well". Whether Rav Yochanan is quoted to introduce the yom tov readings of Sukkos and Shmini Atzeret or as commentary to the haftora of Yom Kippur morning is open to interpretation, but incorporating his teaching as a bridge between the yomim tovim of this season should pique our curiosity in any event.

How does Rav Yochanan's observation deepen our understanding of the Yom kipur and Sukkos readings? How is he commenting on Yishayahu's stinging rebuke of a fast day that is superficial, that stresses our communications with Hashem without inspiring a commitment to be more empathetic and giving? "Can such be the fast I choose, a day when man afflicts himself? ... Surely this is the fast I choose ... Share your bread with the hungry, and bring the terribly downcast to your home, when you see the naked, give him clothes..."

Additionally every motzaei Shabbos we complete Maariv with a quick review of this passage. At that time we recite the teaching in its entirety, as Rav Yochanan continues to record three proof texts, one from each part of Tanach, establishing at once the depth of this teaching and the relevance and meaningfulness that he attached to it.

Yet the proof texts quoted to uphold the principle focus on Hashem's benevolence rather than His humility, and in fact relate His charity, rather than His modesty, to His immanence. "It is written in the Torah (Devorim 10) 'For Hashem is a great, mighty and awe inspiring G-d...He upholds the cause of the orphan and widow, loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing'. It is repeated in the Nevi'im (Yishayahu 57) '...I live in a high and holy place...to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite'...It is stated a third time in the Kesuvim, (Tehillim 68) '...extoll Him who rides the cloud...' immediately afterward it is written, 'Father of the fatherless and judge of widows is Hashem...'"

Thus it would be more accurate to translate Rav Yochanon's tradition as teaching us that we find Hashem's benevolence juxtaposed to the descriptions of His majesty.

Consequently, Rav Yochanon reminds us that even though days after the spiritual high of a Yom Kippur we find ourselves at a distance from the "great and mighty", and this could be frustrating, we can still emulate Him in our efforts on behalf of the orphan and the defenseless. We are certainly far from "His high place" and imitating His ways seems far out of reach, but that should not deter us from trying to cheer up the hearts of the lonely and bereft. Hashem encompasses majesty and benevolence, as emphasized by Rav Yochanan, and being G-d like in our benevolence is far more accessible to us than the majesty that oft can only be observed from afar.

That lesson may not only be recorded explicitly at the end of our weekly appointment with the spirituality of Shabbos, but may give meaning to a phrase in Nishmas, recited Shabbos morning, as well.

How jarring is it that we praise Hashem for saving the poor from those who rob him and the weak from those who overpower, instead of thanking Him for reducing the thieves and bullies to begin with? Whereas the answer to the question in our hearts is well beyond our grasp, the words that roll from our lips remind us that the opportunity for us to act in a G-d like fashion is readily at hand.

This idea may give meaning to a phrase in Hallel, "Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes but cannot see...Their manufacturers should become like them." Rashi and Radak both explain that we are praying for the diminution of idol worshippers - they should become as lifeless and uninfluential as the idols they serve. Yet one could also translate the phrase to teach that those who fashion and worship unresponsiveness will themselves develop ears and eyes that will not hear or see the pain of others, and will not have the hands or legs that try to lighten those loads.

Thus at the close of the yom tov season, and even at the close of Shabbos, with its many moments filled with Hashem's majesty, Rav Yochanan reminds us that some of ty that majesty can indeed become ours.

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<http://www.jewishlinknj.com/features/15141-the-use-of-baby-monitors-on-shabbat-and-yom-tov>

### **The Use of Baby Monitors on Shabbat and Yom Tov**

**By Rabbi Haim Jachter** | October 13, 2016

A lively discussion ensued at the conclusion of Rosh Hashanah at Congregation Shaarei Orah, the Sephardic Congregation of Teaneck. The topic was a hotly debated topic, as to the permissibility of parents turning on a baby monitor prior to Shabbat or Yom Tov and placing it in an infant's room so that parents can be alerted to a baby's crying.

The question hinges on the halachic evaluation of the use of microphones on Shabbat and Yom Tov. As such, we first examined Rav Moshe Feinstein's classic teshuvah strongly forbidding the use of a microphone on Shabbat and Yom Tov. Rav Moshe (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 4:84) sets forth four prohibitions associated with using a microphone on these holy days. Rav Moshe argues that there is concern for transgression of two Torah prohibitions and a definite violation of two Rabbinic edicts.

Rav Moshe is concerned that the process of making a voice louder violates a Torah prohibition such as boneh (building) or makeh b'patish (completing a construction process). He also is concerned that the increased current caused by speaking into a microphone constitutes a Torah-level infraction.

He insists, though, that the microphone parallels the Talmudic prohibition (according to some) of setting a mill before Shabbat to grind grain on Shabbat. In this case, Chazal prohibit this activity since avsha milta (the thing grows louder) and people will suspect that the mill was loaded on Shabbat. Similarly, Rav Moshe notes, regarding a microphone turned on before Shabbat or Yom Tov, there is concern that others will think it was turned on in violation of Shabbat.

Rav Moshe also notes that Chazal prohibit playing musical instruments on Shabbat and Yom Tov lest one fix the instrument. This prohibition extends to even to a kli hameyuchad l'hashma'at kol, an instrument dedicated for projecting sound. Rav Feinstein insists that a microphone is included in this prohibition, as there is definite concern that one may come to adjust it on Shabbat or Yom Tov.

If one read only this teshuvah it would seem that baby monitors are unquestionably forbidden. However, in the very next responsum (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe O.H. 4:85), Rav Moshe endorses the common custom of speaking on Shabbat and Yom Tov to people who are wearing a hearing aid. This is simply astonishing, based on Rav Moshe's strenuous objections to microphone use on Shabbat and Yom Tov. After all, earphones and microphones are identical in operation!

Rav Moshe explains that since the concern he raised for violation of Torah prohibitions is in serious doubt, we have no right to prohibit the use of hearing aids due to the great need for their use. He also notes that the hearing aid is not parallel to the Talmudic case of a mill since a loud noise is not created. Regarding the prohibition of using an instrument made to project sound, Rav Moshe boldly states that since it constitutes a great need for a hearing-impaired individual, Chazal's edict was not issued in such circumstances.

How do we classify a baby monitor? Is it similar to a microphone or hearing aid? Hacham Ovadia's grandson Rav Yaakov Sasson rules that one who wishes to be lenient regarding a baby monitor has upon what to rely. He notes that Hacham Ovadia (Teshuvot Yabia Omer 1:19) concludes, based on discussion with Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, who had a very sophisticated understanding of electricity and Halacha, that no Torah prohibitions are violated when using a microphone. Thus, the question regarding the use of baby monitors involves only a Rabbinic prohibition.

Rav Sasson supports a lenient approach "since an infant is considered to be 'an individual ill with a non-life-threatening illness' even when he is healthy (since a baby's condition is very sensitive and he is constantly in need of his parents' care); thus, there is room for leniency regarding a Rabbinic prohibition not being performed by the parents and which is only a result of the raising of the baby's voice." Thus, there is no parallel between an adult making a conscious decision to use an instrument intended to project sound and a baby whimpering in his room in which his parents placed a monitor.

What remains, though, is a possible parallel to the Gemara's mill case. There is legitimate concern that people will think the monitor was plugged in on Shabbat. Regarding this concern, we noted that Hacham Ovadia, following Rama, permits setting a machine (such as a washing machine) before Shabbat to run during Shabbat in case of great need. The use of a baby monitor certainly constitutes a great need since it is an essential tool for parents and older siblings to enjoy Shabbat and Yom Tov while responsibly caring for an infant. Therefore, we concurred with Rav Sasson's conclusion that there is ample room to be lenient and set up a baby monitor before Shabbat or Yom Tov for use on Shabbat and Yom Tov. Indeed, for many families, it is difficult for them to function otherwise. However, as Shaarei Orah family member Steven Noll points out, parents should not deliberately use the baby monitor to communicate across the home.

By Rabbi Haim Jachter

Rabbi Haim Jachter is spiritual leader of Congregation Shaarei Orah, the Sephardic Congregation of Teaneck

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From Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein <ravadlerstein@torah.org>

### **Meshech Chochmah**

**By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**

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No Magic Kingdom Dear subscriber: This week's selection will likely be the final one for Meshech Chochmah. With the new cycle of Torah reading, we will transition to a new work, HaMedrash v'haMaaseh, by R. Yechezkel Libshitz, one of the most important leaders of East European Jewry in the first part of the 20th century. He was a powerful orator, and his derashos are full of creative thought, as well as provide a window to the turbulence of a European Jewry dealing with the challenges of modernity. Subscribers to Meshech Chochmah will automatically transition to the new shiur. Anyone not interested in receiving the mailings can easily unsubscribe. We hope you will find these selections to be full of Torah thought and stimulation

When I will proclaim the Name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to our G-d.

Meshech Chochmah: We can conceptually telescope the function of the Jewish people into a simple, neat formula: Our purpose is to live within the natural world, but to demonstrate the imprint of Hashem's providential supervision of our individual lives. We are to sow and plant and reap – but to then take the first portions of our crops to the beis hamikdash, and to G-d's holy servants there. Three times yearly, we are to entrust our possessions to Hashem's protection, as we show ourselves before Him in the Temple. The enmity of surrounding peoples is held in check by their fear of Hashem. In all of our doings, we invoke and bless the name of Hashem. The upshot of living this way is that when we act properly, the earth itself acknowledges our behavior by more generously yielding its produce. This happens within the laws of nature, and does not require altering them through miraculous intervention.

This kind of life style is, despite its physical and material trappings, a spiritual existence. To those who understand, it is dearer than olam habo.

Such, however, was not the life the Bnei Yisrael lived in the time of Moshe. That life tore asunder all laws of nature. The ordinary conventions of life did not operate. The mohn fell daily; the Pillar of Cloud and the Presence of Hashem were open and manifest.

G-d truly walked before them. It was a grand moment – but did it have anything to do with the actual purpose of life that we outlined above? They lived in a kind of olam habo – not in this world! Chazal[2] emphasize how surreal was their existence. “‘Grace is false’[3]– this refers to the generations of Moshe and Yehoshua; ‘Beauty is vain’ – this is the generation of Chizkiyahu; ‘The woman who fears Hashem – she is to be praised’ – this is the generation of R. Yehudah b’rebi Ela’i.” The grace shown to the generation of the Wilderness is false, as we showed above. Chizkiyahu’s time was also punctuated by the miraculous, including the incredible defeat of Sancherev’s army. But in the time of R. Yehudah b’rebi Ela’I, six yeshiva students shared a single garment and studied Torah. They lived entirely within the confines of natural law, and elevated it by their decision to study Torah even in poverty. In those other generations mentioned in the midrash, their was almost no room left for the exercise of free will; Hashem and His Will were so apparent, that the room for struggle was constricted.

If commonplace miracles make life artificial, what was the point of those generations? The answer is that they placed our people on a firm footing for the future. Just as the first two commandments of the Ten establish the most important foundational elements of the Torah, the forty years in the wilderness created an experiential basis for emunah. It was not the miracles per se that accomplished this (other than for the least astute among them), but what the Bnei Yisrael were able to do with their time, once their needs were miraculously provided. They had four magical decades to pore over the Torah, to explain it well and deeply, and in so doing, acquire a bedrock faith which they transmitted to their offspring.

For this, they needed a Moshe. Moshe redirected their energies to the task of deeply comprehending Torah. This was a very different role from that of previous greats. The avos did not generally see Hashem as a constant worker of miracles. Avrohom, our Founding Father, was not even granted a burial plot for his wife through G-d working out a miracle or a deal for him. He had to acquire title the hard way, paying a premium price. Not so Moshe, who was entirely at home with miraculous existence – and understood its place and its value.

Thus, the Zohar[4] calls Moshe the “spouse of the matron.” The latter, according to the Gra,[5] means the Shechinah, which relates to the world through natural means, in accordance with the name Elokim, the aspect of G-d that uses fixed law.

Moshe is the complementary spouse of the fixity of law. Through his mastery of the miraculous – the opposite of law – he instructed the Bnei Yisrael to be able to live lives within the limitations of natural law, but to live them so richly as to bring blessing and abundance even within the world of teva.

This, then, is the meaning of our pasuk: When I (singular, i.e. Moshe) will proclaim the Name of Hashem – the Doer of miracles, who breaks the laws of nature at will – then you (plural, i.e. the Bnei Yisrael) – ascribe greatness to Elokenu, to the aspect of law. The life you lead in the here and now, in the ordinary non-miraculous world will lend power to the Heavenly Court to shower blessing in return, even within the confines of the laws of nature. 1. Based on Meshech Chochmah, Devarim 32:3 2. Sanhedrin 20A 3. Mishlei 31:30 4. Zohar 236B 5. Aderes Eliyahu, Devarim 33:1 in the second approach

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**Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:**

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from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>  
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com  
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

#### **HAAZINU**

Haazinu is a poem with definite stanzas. It is one of the few places in the Torah where Jewish law dictates where the stops in the Torah reading should

take place. This is done in order to retain the integrity of the poetic form of the reading. Aside from the aesthetic value of poetry itself, the Torah wishes to emphasize to us that there is a rhythm, order and cadence in life that influences us in myriad ways.

Though poetry can be freestyle, non-rhyming and sometimes jarringly dissonant, it nevertheless always carries with it a sense of melody. It allows for memory to operate in a way that prose does not. It emphasizes to us the infinite wisdom and beauty of language itself and always carries with it a sense of nuance; of words not written or expressed, but evoked by the rhythm of the poetry

The Torah describes itself as a poem, a song, the melody of which is intangible but always present within us. It is no wonder that the concluding chapters of the Torah are written in this poetic form, for it is the memory of these words that has guided and preserved the Jewish people for the many millennia of our existence.

Language is not only words but rather how the words are put together. The Torah is always read as a melody accompanied by musical notes and poetic punctuation. The words of the Torah enter our ears and minds while the melody and poetry reach our hearts and souls.

The Torah reading begins with the instruction to listen. This is not only a request that is made to the Jewish people and to humanity generally but is made to the entire universe, to nature itself and to the heavens and the earth. This comes to inform us that there is a poetic rhythm to the universe itself, and part of our life challenge is to hear and recognize that melody.

There are very different melodies that exist in the world. There is a famous anecdote regarding a well-known Jewish philosopher of the past generation who was raised in a German school in the 1930s. He underwent the horror of Hitler and after the war emigrated to Canada. He wrote, as a preface to one of his books, that when he was a schoolchild in Germany his father allowed him to sing the melody of the German and Christian songs along with his class as long as he did not mouth the actual words. He now realizes, he wrote, that he should not even have sung the melody. Heaven and earth transmitted to us the melody of the Creator, so to speak.

The Jewish soul also has the capacity to tune in to that eternal melody and find the right frequency to be able to hear it and absorb it. Moshe, in his final oration to the Jewish people inspires us to live by the words of the Torah and to sing its melody with our voices and to hear it in our hearts.

Shabbat shalom Chag sameach  
Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>  
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com  
subject: Weekly Parsha from **Rabbi Berel Wein**

#### **SUCCOT**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shabbat shalom  
Chag sameach  
Berel Wein

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from: Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>  
to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com  
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff  
**Sukkah Walls Review**

### **By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

At RabbiKaganoff.com, one can find many other articles about various topics of Yom Kippur, Sukkos, and Yom Tov, under the headings: Yom Kippur, Sukkah, Esrog, Yom Tov

Question #1: A strapping of a sukkah

"I have noticed recently that prefab Sukkos come with straps or bars that run along the sides of the sukkah. Could you please explain to me why the manufacturers are now making a more complicated product?"

Question #2: Pergola or sukkah?

"May a pergola or trellis be used to hold the schach of a sukkah?"

Question #3: Going out to a sukkah

"My aunt, who always takes the family out to eat when she visits, will be in town for Sukkos, and she knows that her favorite restaurant has a sukkah for Chol Hamoed. Can we rely on the restaurant's sukkah?"

Answer: This is the second part of a revised version of an interview I provided to Mishpacha magazine a few years ago. This article covers some of the more common halachic issues and problems one finds regarding sukkah walls. Although I have edited the original article somewhat, I have left the interview structure. A pdf of the original article can be found on RabbiKaganoff.com

Mishpacha:

Why should sukkah walls require a hechsher?

RYK:

Let me first present the basic laws of sukkah walls, and then I will explain what a hechsher on a prefab sukkah should mean.

Many people have learned that since the word sukkah has three letters -- the samech with four sides, the kof with three, and the heih with two and a small yud opposite it -- a sukkah may be kosher with four, three or even two walls as long as there is a bit of a third wall on the third side. Unfortunately, the halacha is not as clear-cut as this vort makes it seem. Although there are situations in which a sukkah is kosher when it has three partial walls that do not run the length or width of the sukkah, the laws pertaining to such a sukkah are extremely complicated, and one should not build such a sukkah without conferring with a halachic authority.

Because of the concern that a partial wall often does not qualify as a proper sukkah wall, the Rama mentions that it is now customary not to build a sukkah with only partially constructed walls, but, instead, to make sure that it has three walls that are the full length or width of the sukkah.[i]

Nevertheless, there are situations when this is not practical. I find this situation most common in Eretz Yisroel or in some parts of New York City, where people must assemble their sukkah in a courtyard or porch that has several entrances or is unevenly shaped, so that it is impossible to construct three full walls. I strongly recommend that someone in this situation consult with a competent halachic authority before building the sukkah to ascertain that their plans, indeed, meet the halachic requirements. Then have the rav see the actual sukkah after it is constructed, with enough time before Yom Tov to make any necessary changes. It is a shame to have invested the time and money for a sukkah and then not fulfill the mitzvah because someone was too proud or too busy to check that the sukkah was kosher. (In addition, eating in a sukkah whose kashrus is questionable could entail violating halacha and reciting brochos levatalah.)

Keep your roof near your walls

Furthermore, the law is that the walls of the sukkah must be fairly close to the schach. The horizontal distance between the schach and the three walls must be less than three tefachim (according to some opinions, 24 centimeters or 9.4 inches[ii]), or the sukkah is not kosher. Every year I see sukkahs that, unfortunately, are not kosher because of this problem. Sometimes people build a framework for their sukkah, including walls and schach, but do not realize that the schach must be near the walls. I have also often seen fancy, pergola-like frames built on patios and upon which the schach is placed, but the schach is at too great a distance from the patio walls for the sukkah to be

kosher. These sukkahs can almost always be fixed so that they are kosher halachically, but one has to know how to do it properly.

With the wind to my sukkah's back

Here is another common problem -- sukkahs made with walls that are too flimsy. The Gemara teaches that "any partition that cannot withstand a typical wind does not qualify as a partition." [iii] The Gemara then notes that this principle seems to be contradicted by a Mishnah that rules that a sukkah may be constructed using trees as its walls, yet trees move in the wind. The Gemara responds that the Mishnah refers to substantive, thick trees that will not move in the wind. The Gemara then asks that even if the tree is strong, the canopy of the tree will certainly be blown by the wind. To this the Gemara responds that the Mishnah must be discussing a case where the tree's canopy was reinforced so that the wind would not move it.

There are two ways of explaining this section of Gemara:

Some understand that the Gemara invalidates a sukkah only if the wind will blow down the wall or blow apart the materials that constitute the wall such that it now has gaps that invalidate it; but a wall that sways is valid. [iv] According to this approach, a cloth-walled sukkah assembled such that its walls are tied properly at the top and bottom is kosher, even though the middle of the "walls" sways considerably in the wind.

However, most authorities rule that the Gemara means that if a typical wind causes noticeable movement to the wall, it is invalid as a sukkah wall. The wording of Rambam and Shulchan Aruch seems to bear out this approach: "Someone who makes his sukkah among the trees, using them as walls; if they were strong or he tied them until the point that a common wind would not constantly move them, and he filled in between the branches with straw tied in a way that the wind would not sway them, the sukkah is kosher." [v] According to this approach, most prefab sukkos pose a halachic concern, since they are usually made of cloth or plastic walls that blow in the wind. One finds some discussion among authorities as to how much swaying is called too much. Some authorities rule that if one makes the walls very taut, the sukkah is still valid.

Many years ago I was approached by a manufacturer of prefab sukkahs to provide him with a hechsher. His sukkah was indeed made of very thick cloth which, when assembled according to his instructions, was very taut. Mishpacha: Did you give him a hechsher?

RYK: No, I did not. Some early authorities are concerned about the use of cloth walls for a sukkah, even when they are made very taut, because of concern that they will loosen and then sway in the wind. [vi] The same passage of Shulchan Aruch I just quoted cites this opinion. Allow me to quote the Shulchan Aruch's conclusion:

"Therefore it is improper to make all the walls from linen curtains without sticks, even if one tied them well, because sometimes the ties loosen without anyone realizing it, and now the wall can no longer withstand a typical wind. Someone who wants to use sheets [for his sukkah walls] should weave sticks into his walls within every three tefachim." [vii]

It seems to me that one should not build a sukkah with any type of cloth walls, unless one reinforces them with something that the wind cannot blow. I presume that the rav who did provide this manufacturer with a hechsher on the sukkah walls felt that one can draw a distinction between thick, strong cloth and the "curtains" and "sheets" mentioned by the Shulchan Aruch. However, I was (and remain) unwilling to provide a hechsher to something that runs counter to the Shulchan Aruch, according to my understanding. Today, the halachically better quality cloth-walled sukkos come with straps or cords that create halachic walls. Let me explain how this works. There is a halachic principle called lavud, according to which a gap of less than three tefachim (24 centimeters or 9.4 inches) in a wall is treated as if it is actually closed. According to this principle, one can technically build sukkah walls with sticks placed either horizontally or vertically every 24 centimeters along its sides.

If one uses vertical sticks or wires, one needs only to construct "walls" through lavud until they reach a height of ten tefachim (80 centimeters or

31.5 inches), which is technically the minimum height requirement for the walls of a sukkah (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 630:9). For this reason, the prefab sukkos made with belts or crossbars have them only from the floor until they reach this height.

Mishpacha:

"Rav Kaganoff, could I ask you to address this actual case we were asked: My aunt, who always takes the family out to eat when she visits, will be in town for Sukkos, and she knows that her favorite restaurant has a sukkah for Chol Hamoed. Can we rely on the restaurant's sukkah?"

RYK: Even when the restaurant has a good hechsher, the sukkah assembled often is a cloth-walled type that most authorities invalidate. I have even seen restaurants with excellent hechsherim sporting sukkahs that were not kosher at all. For example, the cloth walls were not secured properly and they billowed upward in the wind, which is not kosher even according to the lenient position mentioned above. Yes, I also find it surprising that the hechsher is assuming responsibility only for the kashrus of the food, but does not get involved in whether the sukkah built by the restaurant is kosher. Thus, if you want to accept Aunt Shprintzah's wonderful invitation, check in advance how the restaurant sukkah is constructed. It has often happened that I received a phone call from a person at a restaurant trying to figure out what to do, and I have advised him to eat only items that one may eat outside the sukkah.

Conclusion

We all hope to merit performing this beautiful mitzvah in the best way possible. After having davened for a good, sweet new year, the logical continuation is to observe mitzvas sukkah in a halachically correct manner, getting our year off to a wonderful start!

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from: *Ohr Somayach* <ohr@ohr.edu>

to: *weekly@ohr.edu*

subject: *Torah Weekly*

***Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Ha'azinu  
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com  
For the week ending 15 October 2016 / 13 Tishri 5777***

***Insights***

***A Silver Lining***

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sources: *Rabbi Simcha Zissel Zaleznik in Iturei Torah*

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<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/>

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites

***The Jerusalem Post***

***Succot: To enjoy being in G-d's shadow***

***Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz***

***October 13, 2016 Thursday 11 Tishri 5777***

*What are these succot, these booths in which our forefathers sat in the desert? Two thousand years ago, the sages of the Mishna were divided about this issue.*

The holiday of Succot is an especially happy one. After the transcendent and fearsome feelings of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, it feels great to be released into nature, to go out to the succa with the entire family to celebrate the holiday about which the Torah says, “Be wholly happy.” But why? What is the purpose of celebrating this holiday? The Torah states: “...in order that your [ensuing] generations should know that I had the Children of Israel live in booths when I took them out of the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 23:43).

What are these succot, these booths in which our forefathers sat in the desert? Two thousand years ago, the sages of the Mishna were divided about this issue.

Rabbi Akiva thought that these were regular booths that the people built in the desert. Rabbi Eliezer claimed that “succot” referred to the Clouds of Glory that G-d brought to protect the people from mountains, obstacles, wild animals and other potential harm along the way.

These explanations are hard to understand. If these were real succot, what would be the reason to remember them every year? What was so special about them? And even if we are talking about the Clouds of Glory that came miraculously, why do we celebrate a special holiday for this miracle in particular? The Torah tells us about many other miracles that our forefathers merited in the desert – for example, the miracle of the manna, the heavenly food that they ate in the desert; the miracle of Miriam’s well, which provided them with drinking water throughout their journey. In what way were the succot so unique that we celebrate a special holiday to remember them?

Let us ask one more question. There is a halacha (Jewish law) regarding the mitzva of succa that is unlike any other commandment: A person for whom eating or sleeping in the succa would cause physical distress is exempt from being in a succa. For example, someone who lives in a very cold place or whose succa is full of mosquitoes may eat and sleep in his home as usual.

Why? A person for whom giving charity or keeping Shabbat or eating matza on Passover causes distress would not even imagine being exempt from these mitzvot. What is so special about the mitzva of being in the succa? To understand this, let us look at the two opinions we mentioned above – actual booths or Clouds of Glory – and see that they are two sides of the same coin. When the people of Israel left Egypt, G-d placed them under His wings and they merited life accompanied by His special kindness. Their relationship with the Creator was simple: At any time, they could approach Moses, who had “free access” to talk to G-d and look into their doubts. Simultaneously, G-d gave them mitzvot and directions to raise their spiritual level, which reached its peak when they received the Torah on Mount Sinai. They lived in G-d’s shadow at every moment.

Along with this lofty spiritual sense came an amazing physical reality as well. An entire nation of millions of people (600,000 men between the ages of 20 and 60, plus women and children) walked through the desert. Where did they get food? Where did they get water, clothes, shelter? They merited heavenly miracles in these spheres as well: Food fell from the sky, water came up from the well, the clothing never wore out, and the succot were built.

In memory of this wonderful wholeness, of the journey through the desert under the wings of G-d Who accompanied us with extraordinary material abundance, we celebrate the festival of Succot. The holiday includes two sides of the same coin: We are commanded to go out into nature and try to reexperience the feeling of dependence on G-d and being sheltered in His shadow as were the Children of Israel in the desert, but all this under the condition that there is no physical distress.

We try to recreate the spiritual experience our forefathers had in the desert: perfect dependence on G-d that comes with physical comforts even in a barren desert. This is why we have that unique halacha that states that if a person feels distress sitting in his succa, he is exempt from this mitzva.

Now we can better sense and understand that the holiday of Succot is not just a joyful holiday and a commemoration of miracles that occurred in the desert. It is a lofty, spiritual experience that comes at the perfect time: after Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, when we felt the judgment and mercy of the Creator and our sins were atoned for. Then we merit the Divine light that leads us to live in a different atmosphere, in the ambience of a succa which G-d shields, with the sense of the Clouds of Glory enveloping us and walking alongside us in every step of life, and in the great joy over being privileged to live in this great light, the light of the Creator which accompanies our lives in great love.

*Hag Sameah!*

*The writer is the rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.*