HAMIZRACHI

הַמִּזְרָחִי

MIZRACHI

VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 4

תשרי תשפ"א
OCTOBER 2020

UK EDITION
LONDON

TORAT ERETZ YISRAEL • PUBLISHED IN JERUSALEM • DISTRIBUTED AROUND THE WORLD

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO THE FOUNDING SPONSORS OF HAMIZRACHI – **THE LAMM FAMILY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA**

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon
examines the case of benching lulav on Shabbat

PAGE 8

Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel
on how to enjoy the here and now... forever

PAGE 21

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
teaches us how to live with uncertainty

PAGE 18

Rabbanit Shani Taragin
offers consolation for Coronavirus

PAGE 7

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski
explains why specifically Kohelet

PAGE 17

Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
with eight thoughts for the sukkah

PAGE 10

Sukkot and Simchat Torah

INSIDE:

This edition is sponsored by Emma-Jane & Elliot Weider
with *hakarat hatov* to the staff of Israeli yeshivot and seminaries who have worked tirelessly to make this year's learning happen for overseas students

MIZRACHI
WORLD MOVEMENT

www.mizrachi.org
office@mizrachi.org
+972 (0)2 620 9000

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Harvey Blitz

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Rabbi Doron Perez

HAMIZRACHI
PUBLISHED BY THE MIZRACHI WORLD MOVEMENT

EDITORIAL TEAM
Daniel Verbov
Esther Shafier

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Jonny Lipczer

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Hadas Peretz

PRODUCTION AND ADVERTISING MANAGER
Meyer Sterman
production@mizrachi.org

HaMizrachi seeks to spread Torat Eretz Yisrael throughout the world. HaMizrachi also contains articles, opinion pieces and advertisements that represent the diversity of views and interests in our communities. These do not necessarily reflect any official position of Mizrachi or its branches.

If you don't want to keep HaMizrachi, you can double-wrap it before disposal, or place it directly into *sheimos*.

MIZRACHI
UNITED KINGDOM

www.mizrachi.org.uk
uk@mizrachi.org
020 8004 1948

PRESIDENT
Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES
Steven Blumgart

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Rabbi Andrew Shaw

BOARD
Michelle Bauernfreund
Matti Fruhman
Grant Kurland
Sean Melnick
David Morris
Alex Pfeffer
Sammy Rubin

HAMIZRACHI DEDICATION OPPORTUNITIES

If you would like to dedicate an issue of HaMizrachi in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a simcha, please send an email to uk@mizrachi.org

Rabbi Andrew Shaw

Reasons to Rejoice

Globally, *simcha* seems to be very far from humanity at the moment, with the coronavirus still spreading.

One of the main differences between this outbreak and pandemics of yesteryear is that now, due to science, we know exactly what is causing the infections and deaths.

During the Black Death, when 25 million people died, there was no understanding of germs or infection. Some of the reasons given at the time included the movements of the planets, a punishment from G-d, bad smells, corrupt air, enemies who had poisoned the wells, staring at a victim and wearing pointed shoes!

Science has endowed us with tremendous knowledge and insights about our world yet in many ways it has decided there is no more need for G-d and religion.

"In the beginning, people believed in many gods. Monotheism came and reduced them to one. Science came and reduced them to none" (Rabbi Sacks, Radical Then, Radical Now).

A few years ago, Brian Cox, the physicist, wrote a wonderful blog on the BBC website about how our existence depends on an apparently unlikely sequence of cosmic moments:

For a billion years, the only life on Earth was single cells. Then something happened which created the template for all complex life. Two single cells merged together. They got inside each other and, instead of dying, formed a kind of hybrid, which survived and proliferated. And because every animal and plant today shares the same basic building block – the same type of cell structure – we are very confident that this only happened once, somewhere in the oceans of the primordial Earth. Biologists call this one-time event 'The Fateful Encounter,' and it suggests that complex life requires a good dose of random chance.

The Big Bang, the moment when the Universe came into being, seems like the greatest chance event in the story of human existence. At the Big Bang, the ingredients of the Universe were created – a set of numbers, called constants of nature, such as the speed of light, the strength of gravity, and the number of dimensions of space. Remarkably, these numbers seem to be just right for our Universe to contain life. If they were just a little bit different, it might quickly collapse, or not contain the right chemical elements, or stars and planets might not form. So is there a reason that we seem to have won the cosmic lottery?

Surely the incredible 'coincidences' science has discovered points to a Divine creator. Yet here we are simply told it is 'random chance' and a 'cosmic lottery.' Why? What scares us from believing? There is no need to detach our scientific brain from our faith.

During Sukkot, we journey into a rickety shack, look up at the stars and deeply understand that we are here for a reason; that Hashem has created this universe and we are all here with a purpose, with a responsibility.

Z'man Simchateinu at its core is simply to realise who we are and what we can achieve, regardless of the current predicament, and to place our faith not in finite humans but in an infinite G-d. As Kohelet reminds us, "The end of the matter, everything having been heard, fear G-d and keep His commandments, for this is the entire Man."

Rabbi Andrew Shaw is Chief Executive of Mizrachi UK.

Cover photo: Sharon Gabay

Rabbi Doron Perez

Celebrating Vulnerability

There is no more intense feeling of vulnerability than over the *Yamim Noraim* – The Days of Awe. The very name conjures up trepidation for the Great Days of Judgement, when the world in general, and our lives in particular, hang in the balance. The image is powerfully captured in the Mishna that says every creature passes before G-d to be judged, one at a time, and humanity's fate is determined over these days.[1]

This sense of vulnerability is particularly acute this year, as we embark on 5781. Each of us continues to experience the unthinkable reality of how a tiny microscopic virus has wreaked such havoc in almost every single corner of the earth. Over the last 10 months, this invisible foe has infected 30 million people and caused almost one million deaths, with over 1,000 in Israel, particularly affecting the elderly and infirm. Waves of widespread sickness continue and the situation seems far from under control. COVID has profoundly altered our religious, social, financial and communal lives and an inescapable feeling of vulnerability hangs over us almost every day.

Vulnerability is linked to a lack of control. When we think we are in control of our lives, we feel things are stable, predictable and permanent. The moment we lose control, we begin to feel the uneasy sense of instability, unpredictability and transience. We are now vulnerable. Things can change for the worse in a moment and life, G-d forbid, can cease in an instant.

The author of the haunting *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer captures this sense of human transience and vulnerability with some powerful imagery: "like a broken shard, like dried grass, like a faded flower, like a fleeting shadow, like a passing cloud, like a breath of wind, like whirling dust, like a dream that slips away."

All these images describe the tenuous fabric of the human condition. Grass, flowers, shadows, clouds, dust... all are susceptible to external elements that can dry them up, blow them away or make them disappear in the blink of an eye. Their predicament is volatile and unstable and their similarity to our own fragility is strikingly all too close.

Because the stark truth is that the vicissitudes of life guarantee we will

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

profoundly encounter this existential reality at different times in our lives.

Somber? Most definitely. Depressing? Not at all.

The festivals of the month of Tishrei offer a strong spiritual response to this unavoidable vulnerability. Yes, we do have an inevitable fear and concern, awe and trepidation over the *Yamim Noraim* – we are being judged and our fate is being decided.

But this is only part of the story.

When we fully accept our vulnerability and life's fleetingness – and embrace them – an amazing transformation occurs. We are able to celebrate them. This is precisely the point of the immediate transition from the Days of Awe to the days of unbridled celebration on Sukkot.

No, our vulnerable state has not miraculously vanished within the space of four days. What has changed is our attitude. Having accepted vulnerability as an unavoidable reality, we are now ready to embrace and even celebrate it.

Our sense of vulnerability is certainly no less on Sukkot than it is on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – perhaps even more so. We leave our safe and permanent homes and live for an entire week in flimsy huts and temporary booths – totally exposed to the elements, both natural and manmade. For seven days, we shake the Four Species, all of which have to be severed from the ground and detached from their permanent source of life. As each day of Sukkot passes, they all slowly wilt away in our hands. Pertinently to our theme, the species which degenerates the quickest, the willow, forms the centerpiece of our prayers on the final day of Sukkot, Hoshanah Rabbah. And the *megillah* we read on Sukkot is Kohelet, which focuses on this very same theme of life being vulnerable and transient while celebrating its inherent joy.

What happened here? How did the very feeling which provoked such concern, anxiety and trepidation suddenly morph into joyous national celebration?

The answer is two-fold: the power of acceptance and the power of Faith.

Regarding the former, M. Scott Peck brilliantly summarized it in the opening of his bestselling book: "Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult – once we truly understand and accept it – then life is no longer difficult. Because once it is accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters."[2]

In our context, after experiencing the intensity of the Days of Awe and internalizing and accepting this reality – that our vulnerable state is an inescapable component of life – we are now ready to celebrate it.

Acceptance and submission are the gateways to transformation. We are now open to the power of Faith.

In our unpredictable and transient world, there is one immutable constant – G-d. It is our unshakeable faith that everything is somehow ultimately for the good. There is Providence in unpredictability and purpose in seeming chaos. This allows us to transform our perspective and trust that the Almighty knows what He is doing.

Such is the transcendent power of faith and belief. It is for this very reason the Zohar calls the *sukkah "tzila demehimenuta,"* the shadow (or shade) of faith. Nothing is more temporary and transient than a shadow. It has no existence of its own and can disappear in a moment. Nevertheless, our temporary *sukkah* is the shadow cast by the most permanent reality of life – G-d, the Creator and Sustainer of all Life. When we understand we live in His shadow and all that happens is somehow a reflection of the purposeful plan of Providence – whether we understand it or not – we are ready to transform.

So as we begin the new year, still very much in the throes of the old, we can change. With our belief that everything is ultimately for the good, we can begin to celebrate the gift of life. We can cultivate peace of mind and faith-based serenity in our unpredictable, vulnerable world.

Wishing everyone a *Chag Sameach* and a healthy, happy and joyous 5781.

---

1 Rosh Hashanah, Chapter 1, Mishna 2.

2 The Road Less Travelled, page 1.

Rabbi Doron Perez is Chief Executive of the Mizrachi World Movement.

Rabbi Hillel Van-Leeuwen

Survival of the Weakest

I used to get frustrated each year when, on the last few days of Sukkot, I noticed how quickly the *arava* leaves lost their vitality, shriveled up and died. In my attempts to keep them fresh like the beautiful *hadas* branches, I kept them rolled up in a wet towel in the fridge, standing in a bucket of fresh water, even tucked away inside the freezer – but to no avail. Nothing seemed to really work. Recently, however, I have changed the way I look at those pale-green dried leaves. Here's why.

At first glance, the *arava* is indeed the least impressive of the Four Species. According to our Sages, the *arava* is the least worthy when compared to the *etrog, lulav* and *hadas.* It has some value only if bound together with the other species, which are of higher importance and can therefore atone for it. How surprising it is, therefore, to find two Sukkot practices focusing on the *arava* alone:

a) the *Murbiyot*, the long *arava* branches – 5.5 meters tall – picked by a river outside Jerusalem and erected at the four corners of the altar in the courtyard of the Temple throughout the seven days of Sukkot, with their ends bent onto the top of the altar (Mishnah Sukkah 4:5), and b) the *Chavata*, the five *aravot* we tie together and beat on the floor in shul at the end of the *Hoshanot* on Hoshanah Rabbah, a custom originated by the early Prophets (Rambam, Lulav 7:24).

So here is a fresh look at the *arava:* Sukkot is known as the "Judgement Day for Rain" (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:2), and the *arava*, whose leaves are the fastest to dry once removed from a water source, is the most fitting tree through which to show our absolute dependence on rain, our primordial fear of famine and our inherent thirst for water – all of which are strongly felt in a desert land like Israel.

The *Murbiyot* branches of the *arava,* which naturally grow on the riverbanks and need lots of water to survive [the one growing in my own back yard consumes three times as much water as the rest of my fruit trees], are placed at the corners of the altar, not far from the large fire burning on top of it. Within a matter of minutes the fresh, beautifully-shaped leaves darken, twist and dry, hanging there lifeless and miserable in front of the massive celebrating crowds. Apart from being a catalyst for the upcoming Prayer for Rain recited on the last day of Sukkot, this sight serves as a symbolic reminder of our complete dependence on G-d, and of our thirst for Torah.

The same applies to the *Chavata*, the beating of the *arava* on the floor. When seeing how easily even the fresh leaves fall off the *arava* branches, we are reminded of our eternal state of mortal helplessness. I personally try to apply this idea to various aspects of Jewish practice, which include humbling experiences such as dipping in a *mikveh* or the horrible weakness I feel at the end of fast days.

The need for such visual effects and physical actions to reinforce and impress spiritual messages into our psyche is obvious. But it makes even more sense if we remember that there are six long months after Sukkot until all Jewish pilgrims gather again at the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate Pesach together. Since Sukkot is followed by the year's longest break between holidays, it is imperative to raise awareness of our need for G-d's loving, caring, protecting and providing hand in our daily lives while we are far from the Place He chose. The *arava* was selected, due to its evident weakness, as the medium through which to convey this important value in Jewish life. In that sense, I'm happy to see my *aravot* begin to dry.

I once saw a rationalist bumper sticker that read "Prayer is for Wimps." True enough. Prayer can be such a powerful tool and connect us to G-d only after we admit our own powerlessness and stand before Him with a genuine feeling of constant need. This is what we learn from the *arava.* Indeed, the secret of *tefillah* rests in the awe-inspiring knowledge that we are absolutely dependent on G-d, every minute of every day.

This is powerful. For truly attaching ourselves to the Absolute Power rests on our understanding that we are absolutely powerless without Him.

Rav Hillel Van-Leeuwen is Head of Leadership Development at World Mizrachi.

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

What We Celebrate

Zman Simchateinu

Although there is a *mitzvah* of *simcha* on all *Yamim Tovim*, only Sukkot is described as [1]זְמַן שִׂמְחָתֵנוּ. This is because three[2] of the Torah's four *Yom Tov*-related mentionings of *simcha* refer to Sukkot. The famous words וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְחַגֶּךָ וְהָיִיתָ אַךְ שָׂמֵחַ refer specifically to *Chag HaSukkot.*

The simplest explanation of the Sukkot *simcha* is that we are celebrating a successful harvest.[3] This is why Sukkot is also called חַג הָאָסִיף, the harvest festival.[4]

Lifnei Hashem – Before G-d

The Rambam[5] points out that our celebration of a successful harvest is similar to that of other cultures. However, ours differs in its focus – on the Beit HaMikdash. The Torah mandates this with the words וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים (Vayikra 23:40).[6] This is also why Sukkot is described as *Chag Hashem*.[7]

We celebrate *lifnei Hashem* because we realize He is the cause of our success. Much like the *mitzvah* of bringing *bikkurim,*[8] on Sukkot we use products of the harvest to praise[9] and thank[10] Him for our success. We recount how *Hashem* cared for us in the desert and realize that He continues to do so.

Simchat Beit HaShoeva – Celebrating the Water Libation

The focus of the Beit HaMikdash *simcha* was the *Simchat Beit HaShoeva.*[11] Throughout each night we would celebrate the water we had just drawn (*shoeva*) from the Shiloach spring before pouring it on the *mizbeach* the next morning. This *simcha* was so special that Chazal describe it as qualitatively greater than any other.[12]

Why was this ritual (not mentioned explicitly by the Torah) the center of the celebration and even celebrated at all? At the end of the summer (with the springs at their low point) we pour water as a *tefilla* to *Hashem* to provide us with more.[13] Why would this be the focus of or even a reason for *simcha*?

A Deeper Level Of Simcha

The focus on the *Simchat Beit HaShoeva* expresses a deeper level of the *simcha*. We are happy not only because of our success but also because of our realization that *Hashem* cares and provides for us. Most people celebrate their success but have no real reason to assume it will continue. Because we know that our success signifies the strength of our relationship with *Hashem*, we are confident that success will continue.

When we pour our precious water on the Mikdash's *mizbeach* we are like Eliyahu HaNavi at Har HaCarmel who poured out four large jugs of their last remaining water (after years of drought) on *Hashem's mizbeach.*[14]

We express this confidence by not only pouring the last of our water but by also celebrating when we do so. We reflect on our success of the past year, appreciate where it emanates from, thank and praise *Hashem* for it, and celebrate the fact we are confident moving forward.

Like Eliyahu HaNavi whose actions and *tefillot* at Har HaCarmel were answered with rain,[15] our proper celebration and show of faith make us worthy of receiving rain and *Hashem*'s other *berachot.*[16]

This year is one in which we can easily focus on what we are missing and unhappy about. It is critical we use *Chag HaSukkot* to focus upon and celebrate all of *Hashem*'s blessings (that we often take for granted). May this celebration help strengthen our confidence and merit us continued good health, happiness and *hatzlacha* in the coming year.

---

1 See also Rambam (Sukkah 8:12), who speaks of a '*simcha yeteira*' on Sukkot as opposed to the regular level of *simcha on other Yamim Tovim*.

2 Vayikra 23:40, Devarim 16:14,15.

3 Vayikra 23:39. See also Sefer HaChinuch 324. Chazal also link the celebration to our having received *Hashem's* forgiveness during the first part of the month of Tishrei (See Midrash Tehillim 102, Sukkah 53a, Vayikra Rabbah Emor 30).

4 Shemot 23:16.

5 Moreh Nevuchim 3:43.

6 This verse is the basis for the fact that the Four Species are taken seven full days only in the Beit HaMikdash (Mishnah Sukkah 41a). See Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvot, Asei 169, who connects the taking of the *arba minim* to the *simcha* of Sukkot

7 Vayikra 23:39. See also Devarim 16:15.

8 Note the parallel between the verses that describe the *simcha* of Sukkot with the *arba minim* (Vayikra 23:40) and those that describe the bringing of *bikkurim* (Devarim 26:2,11).

9 This is why we take the *arba minim* during and integrate them within Hallel.

10 See Rashbam and Ramban on Vayikra 23:39 and Ritva on Sukkah 53a.

11 See Rashi, Sukkah 50a.

12 Sukkah 51b.

13 Rosh Hashanah 16a.

14 Melachim 1 17:34-35. See also Shmuel 2 23:16.

15 Ibid 45.

16 Sefer HaChinuch 325.

Rabbi Reuven Taragin is Educational Director of Mizrachi and Dean of the Yeshivat HaKotel Overseas Program.

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Zecharia and Sukkot: Consolation for Corona

For many months now, Covid-19 has disrupted our civilization. The whole of humanity has found itself contending with a common threat to life as we know it, and it behooves us to re-explore universal messages of our past in the Torah and the words of the Prophets.

As we open the Tanach, we find numerous precedents for plagues and pandemics that have stricken either the Jewish people and/or specific nations, ranging from plagues in Egypt though pandemic punishments in the wilderness. Both the Plishtim and people of Yehuda suffer pandemics due to improper interaction with the *Aron Kodesh*, and David HaMelech faces national disease after conducting a census. However, there is only one מַגֵּפָה (plague) mentioned in Tanach with parallel global ramifications and fatalities – and we read its messages on the first day of Sukkot!

Sukkot is celebrated as a holiday of nature, as we enjoy our harvest through the Four Species and dwell in *sukkot* (Ibn Ezra, Vayikra 23:43). Yet *Chazal* teach us to simultaneously recognize *Hashem's* miraculous supervision, in the form of the Clouds of Glory that sheltered us in the wilderness.[1]

The *haftarah* on the first day of Sukkot revisits these existential themes as we hear Zecharia's eschatological prophecy (chapter 14). He sought to encourage the minority Jewish population of *Shivat Tzion* to regain sovereignty in the Land of Israel. He begins his prophecy by describing how *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will fight against foreign nations in Yerushalayim (reminiscent of the Six-Day War):

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished, and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, but the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall Hashem go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fights in the day of battle (Zecharia 14:2-3).

> **The climax, however, will be a global plague that will not be overcome through natural means and will elicit a recognition of Hashem's powers.**

He continues to detail miraculous changes in the political and natural realms as victory will ensue and Yerushalayim will be safe. The climax, however, will be a global plague that will not be overcome through natural means and will elicit a recognition of *Hashem's* powers. Zecharia then notes that those nations that survive this cataclysmic war will be required to go to Yerushalayim every year on Sukkot to pay homage to G-d.

The message of the pandemic is to teach the world that rules of nature may change. Even "super-power" countries must recognize *Hashem's* kingship. Countries such as Egypt, who depend on the Nile River for water, must learn that *Hashem* controls natural and supernatural forces, and has the ability to stop the most natural phenomenon of rainfall!

Zecharia concludes his vision with a poignant description of horses and pots – symbols of man's efforts to control natural forces through warfare and cooking, which will be transformed into sacred objects dedicated to *Hashem's* Mikdash. Even household pots will be treated as holy as we recognize Divine immanence in every aspect of our lives!

Sukkot is the time to relay this message to the global community. *Hashem* controls agricultural-natural forces and provides us with seasonal huts. On Sukkot we are meant to recognize and internalize mankind's vulnerabilities and *Hashem's* omniscient powers – which extend beyond the natural – providing us with Clouds of Glory and miraculously-supervised rainfall in Israel and throughout the world.

Perhaps if we do that this COVID-affected Sukkot, then together with the global community, we will merit

And the L-rd shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall the L-rd be One, and His name one (ibid. v.9).

---

1 See the Tannaitic dispute between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yishmael, Sukkah 11b.

Rabbanit Shani Taragin is Educational Director of Mizrachi and the Director of the Mizrachi Matan Lapidot Educators' Program.

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Sukkot on Shabbat in the Kovno Ghetto

This year, the first day of Sukkot falls on Shabbat, as it did in 1943. In his Holocaust responsa, Rabbi Ephraim Oshri tells the following story: Sukkot was approaching and no-one in the ghetto had *arba minim*. Not only were they distraught but they were also afraid they may never shake a *lulav* again.

Suddenly, a Jew appeared with a set of *arba minim*! He had come from Vilna on business but the Germans would not allow him to stay for the second day. He had to return to Vilna immediately after Shabbat. The Jews in the ghetto were worried they'd miss out on the *mitzvah* so they asked Rabbi Oshri if in those circumstances they could bench *lulav* on Shabbat.

The Gemara (Sukkah 42b) says that although the Torah indicates we should take the *arba minim* even when the first *yom tov* falls on Shabbat, Chazal decreed not to, in case a person may carry his *arba minim* four *amot* in the public domain, which of course is forbidden on Shabbat.

It seems the Sages' intention was to make sure that when Yom Tov falls on Shabbat, we don't entirely forget the Shabbat part.[1]

So did Chazal completely uproot this *mitzvah* or did they perhaps only forbid it, in which case if one was to take the *arba minim* on Shabbat one would still be fulfilling a *mitzvah*? Another question is whether taking the *lulav* is forbidden because it is a *mitzvah* that comes from an *aveira* (i.e. overriding the words of the Sages). Rav Oshri discusses this too and writes that this concept is perhaps not applicable when the *aveira* is *mideRabbanan*.

He adds: "The decree was to prevent someone carrying in a public area. Usually, even if there is an *eruv*, we are still concerned someone may step outside the boundaries of the *eruv*. However, in the Kovno Ghetto, there was no chance of that because it was hermetically sealed – "No-one was allowed in or out and it was bordered by an electric barbed wire fence guarded by German soldiers."

Perhaps in this context, when there is no chance of carrying something in a public domain, there is no rabbinic prohibition of taking the *arba minim*, and if the *mitzvah* was not uprooted, one would be able to take them.

Although Rav Oshri cited various arguments permitting taking *arba minim* on Shabbat, he didn't rule in favor of any particular position:

"I did not want to rule in this matter – neither prohibit nor allow, and since I did not rule it was forbidden, they understood themselves that one who does bench *lulav* will not lose out."

He then relates that many Jews did indeed make the *beracha* over the *arba minim* and even said *"Shechechiyanu."* He adds that Reb Feivel Zissman הי"ד said he would observe the *mitzvah* without asking any questions: "I am ready to accept *Gehinnom* for observing this *mitzvah*, because all my life I spent a fortune on buying beautiful *etrogim*, and now – perhaps before my death – I know that observing this *mitzvah* will be a merit in my favor on the Day of Judgement."

At the same time, the *Gadol HaDor*, Rabbi Avraham DovBer Kahana-Shapira, was also in the ghetto. He was sick and in no state to respond to such a question in real time. However, he felt better during the holiday and Rav Oshri asked him what he would have responded. He replied, "Chazal did not talk about a reality in which people are imprisoned and in perpetual fear of their lives."

This year, we will also be celebrating Sukkot on Shabbat and we have the fortune to be free people in our own Land. Yes, we are experiencing a pandemic but that pales in the face of everything we have suffered throughout our history.

We pray the pandemic ends soon, that the world will be a better and purer place, and that *B'Ezrat Hashem* we ourselves will be able to do good deeds, sit in the *sukkah* and joyously take the *arba minim*, relishing all the good G-d has given us and using that good to make a difference to the world around us.

---

1 See more on this in my book "Purim – *Halacha Mimkora*," p.353.

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon is Head of Mizrachi's Shalhevet Educational Advisory Board and Chairman of Sulamot.

Rabbanit Sharon Rimon

The Universality of the Festival of Sukkot

In Zecharia's prophecy (14), he describes a day when the Kingship of *Hashem* is revealed to the entire world. As a result, there is great turmoil in the world: G-d wages war against the nations, there is a great earthquake, a spring bursts forth from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea and there is a total eclipse of the celestial luminaries. The end result of this tremendous upheaval is, "And G-d shall become King over all the earth; on that day the L-rd shall be one, and His name one" (14:9). One of the expressions of G-d's Kingship in the world is that all the nations of the world will also acknowledge and accept Him and they will all come to worship Him in Jerusalem.

"And it will come to pass, that everyone who is left of the nations who came up against Jerusalem, will go up every year to prostrate themselves to the King, the L-rd of Hosts, and to celebrate the festival of Sukkot" (14:16). Zecharia specifically focuses on the festival of Sukkot as the time when the nations will come to worship G-d. Why?

The Malbim states that "The Downfall of Gog will be on the festival of Sukkot, and they shall all go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival, as a commemoration of the miracle that occurred on that day."

According to this, it is precisely the great downfall of the gentiles/enemies of Israel in war that will bring those who are left to the understanding that G-d is King. Therefore, they must celebrate on that very day they come to this understanding and revelation. However, it would seem there is a deeper meaning to the celebration of Sukkot, beyond commemorating the date of the war.

At the inauguration of the First Beit HaMikdash, on Sukkot, Shlomo designated it as a place of prayer for *all* of the nations, not just *Am Yisrael* (Melachim I 8:41-43). It appears it is no coincidence that both Shlomo and Zecharia designated the Beit HaMikdash for a universal purpose, which specifically revolves around the festival of Sukkot.

It is interesting to note that the *mitzvot* connected to Sukkot do possess a universal element and meaning:

The Four Species represent the prayer for rain, which is a basic, existential need for the entire world, not only for *Am Yisrael*.

The *korbanot* of the holiday are different from all the other festivals. On Sukkot, there are a total of 70 offerings, symbolizing the 70 nations of the world. As the Talmud states (Sukkah 55b): "Rabbi Elazar said: These 70 bulls to what do they correspond? They correspond to the 70 nations." Rashi explains there: "There are 70 bulls corresponding to the 70 nations of the world in order to atone for them, so that rain will fall in the whole world, for we are judged regarding rainfall on the festival of Sukkot."

Sitting in the *sukkah* symbolizes impermanence, vulnerability, and simplicity, and thus can unite all human beings around one common denominator. During most of the year, one is locked up in one's own home, disconnected from others and wrapped up in one's own definitions, impressions and sense of security. The walls, partitions, defenses, definitions and stereotypes, prevent people from connecting with one another. So too, the feelings of haughtiness and abundance obstruct G-d's Kingship in the world and cause divisiveness among people.

On Sukkot, everyone goes outside, and all are equal in their humble dwelling. As such, everyone can feel G-d's Providence, and a sense of equality with their fellow. It is precisely in this reality that people are able to make room for one another in their hearts, and for G-d's presence among them. Humility, simplicity, vulnerability and the feeling of impermanence allow people to connect, as well as allowing for G-d's Kingship to be felt.

The festival of Sukkot is a holiday when we pray for all of the world's existential needs. It is a time we all unite under the banner of humility and simplicity, a time we realize just how small we are compared to the Creator of the Universe. Sukkot is a festival in which it becomes possible for everyone on earth to unite in serving G-d.

Rabbanit Sharon Rimon teaches Tanach and is Content Editor for the HaTanakh website.

Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir

Eight Thoughts Under the S'chach

1. Freedom

Sukkot is the chag of Faith. We leave our homes, we don't know what the weather will be, and we feel just like *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert, under G-d's wing. This year we understand this more than ever. Since Purim we have been participating in a "Sukkot Workshop" – relax, let go, understand you're not in charge. Lockdown and quarantine, no *shul*, none of our regular frameworks, schools, shows… our beloved routine. This year it's easier for us to relate to the *chag*, and fulfil the wonderful *pasuk* in Tehillim: הַרְפּוּ וּדְעוּ כִּי־אָנֹכִי אֱלֹקִים – 'chill out' and know that I am G-d.

2. Between Yom Kippur and Sukkot

We tend to think the highlight of the *chagim* is Yom Kippur, Neilah, and then we come back down to earth. But no, the peak is now. To fast all day like angels is not the ideal. There's something even higher, and it's called Sukkot.

Yom Kippur is only one day, when everything stops. The aim is to draw strength from it for the other 364 days of the year. To take the messages and energy of this special day into our lives, into nature, into the world. Thus writes Rav Kook: "Those days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot were given to educate us about returning to the matters of this world." In other words, one needs to build a *sukkah*. One needs to go to the market to buy *arba minim*, and yes, there are family meals that need to address everyone's preferences and dislikes, and yes, sometimes the noise from the neighbor's *sukkah* is annoying, and yes, you need to juggle all the kids, etc. But when you take what you've gleaned from Elul, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and apply them to all these seemingly mundane assignments… that's the ideal. Life itself.

3. Family

These are very much family-oriented days. Here's one idea, from the well-known Israeli parenting counselor, Ziva Meir (who also happens to be my mother-in-law): "Notice that many of the most moving songs in the world are about "Mother." In all styles. In all languages. "Umi" in Arabic, "Mama" in Yiddish, everyone worships Mommy. How did Deborah the Prophetess say it? "Until I, Deborah, arose, I arose as mother in Israel." אֵם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, a mother in Israel, is a concept. A Jewish mother should be proud of who she is. She does not need to put herself down. Mom has often become a focus of guilt. We blame her for anything that's not okay or we just blame her for the sake of blaming…

Mothers! At this time of year, find out who you really are. Don't follow the external needs of others but connect to yourselves. After all, the world is lying to us all the time: at work, it's easy to glean compliments and at home, you can work hard all day every day and after all your effort, your child can give you a generous mouthful of *chutzpah*. Outside you receive feedback and praise, inside everyone is not always happy. Your work is sacred but not appreciated: why keep the house in order if it's just going to be chaos again tomorrow?

"*Eim BeYisrael*" – mothers need to value themselves and what they do. They're full of self-criticism, taking on more and more assignments and constantly frustrated and unhappy. I urge them to connect inwards, give themselves a pat on the back for being who they are and doing what's right for them. Do that from the inside and everything outside will change as well."

4. Know to Differentiate

On Shabbat during Sukkot we read *Megillat Kohelet*. In our crazy times, the profound words of Shlomo HaMelech carry a lot of significance: "Everything has its season and there is time for everything under the Heaven: a time to give birth and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot… a time to cry and a time to laugh, a time to eulogize and a time to dance… a time to hug and a time to avoid hugs…"

In our confusing reality, we try to do everything at once. Career and family and marriage and relationships and studies and hundreds of WhatsApp messages in between all that. Kohelet reminds us of a simple truth: one needs time for everything. Stop creating chaos in your reality. There are times for that, and there are

other times. There's permitted and forbidden, right and wrong, and it's important to discern the difference and be cognizant of what you're doing and when. For each area of our lives to blossom and flourish we need to learn to differentiate and distinguish between what's important and what's more important.

5. Arba Minim

Rav Erez expands on the famous symbolism of each of the species representing a different type of Jew:

"As we know, the *arba minim* symbolizes unity, but it's not only the unity of different parts of the people, but unity within us – unity between all the parts and all the situations Jewish souls can possibly encounter. Each one of us could be a *rasha* or a *tzaddik*. And what is our call as we shake the *arba minim*? First, connect to *Am Yisrael*. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done or do, you have a connection too; you can come closer to being a *tzaddik* as well. Second, it's not only "connect" but also "wake up!": we are shaking the *arba minim* to the four corners of the earth and up and down, and the message is: whoever, whatever, wherever you've been thrown or fallen, do not despair. You can come back and come closer from absolutely anywhere in the world."

6. Ushpizin

The *Ushpizin*, the guests we invite into our *sukkot*, are seven fathers of the nation – Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon and David. There are many profound and kabbalistic explanations for this custom, but in "*Be'er Miriam*," I found an historic reason I've never thought of before: our national fathers were largely nomads. Avraham left his birthplace and came to Israel, and then to Egypt, and back. Yitzchak went to the land of the Philistines during the famine, and then to the western Negev, to Beer Sheva and Chevron. Ya'akov fled to Charan, returned to Cana'an, and emigrated to Egypt. Yosef was sold as a slave, Moshe and Aharon wandered for 40 years in the desert and Moshe had already been in Egypt as a child. David too fled from Shaul and Avshalom.

Their lives were lives of *sukkah*, not of permanent homes. They well understood how much the permanent reality is transient, and how much flexibility, faith and creativity one needs in life. And, despite all the inconveniences and troubles mentioned here, each one of our ancestors built himself up and led and educated. We too can take our circumstances and become better people.

7. Simcha

You can't miss it. *Simcha* is supposed to be the central element of Sukkot – וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּחַגֶּךָ וְהָיִיתָ אַךְ שָׂמֵחַ – and you shall rejoice in your holiday… and you shall just be happy. The Rambam tells us that in Jerusalem on Sukkot there was "excess *simcha*" and writes that *simcha* on Sukkot is a "great service [of G-d]," while in our *siddurim* Sukkot is referred to as זְמַן שִׂמְחָתֵנוּ, the time of our joy.

So what's the connection between joy and Sukkot? The big test in our times – generally – is not one of poverty but of wealth. Not of lack but of plenty. Nevertheless, most of us are not content. *Chag HaSukkot* offers an alternative: we leave our comfortable homes for a shaky hut, which reminds us of the wanderings in the desert. That's how our ancestors lived. And it is precisely out of this minimalism and simplicity we remember the great historical story and everything we've been through. We look at nature anew (*s'chach, lulav, etrog*, etc.), and renew our bonds with our families and community during this week of celebration. We learn to appreciate everything we have around us all year long… and be happy.

8. Starting Over

Meals, dancing, candy bags, laundry, and suddenly, we're starting over again. The Shabbat after Simchat Torah is *Shabbat Bereishit*, on which we read the first *parasha* of the Torah again. Yet we notice something intriguing: the Torah does not spend too much time on the Creation of the World. Rather than describing the details of the cosmos and the stars and the oceans at length, it stops and details the first sin of the first human being. As it continues, the Torah does not report on all the peoples and kingdoms that rose and fell during those times, but it does stop to record how Avraham Avinu welcomes guests into his tent, or how Rivka quenches the camels' thirst near the well.

Why? Because that's what important. The Torah is not a book of science or history. The word תורה comes from the word הוראה – to teach, to guide, to educate. These "small deeds" are the most significant and influential.

The effort and the running around – the *sukkah*, the house, the meals, the little conversations, the family moments – all of these are the foundation stones of *simcha*, solidity and stability.

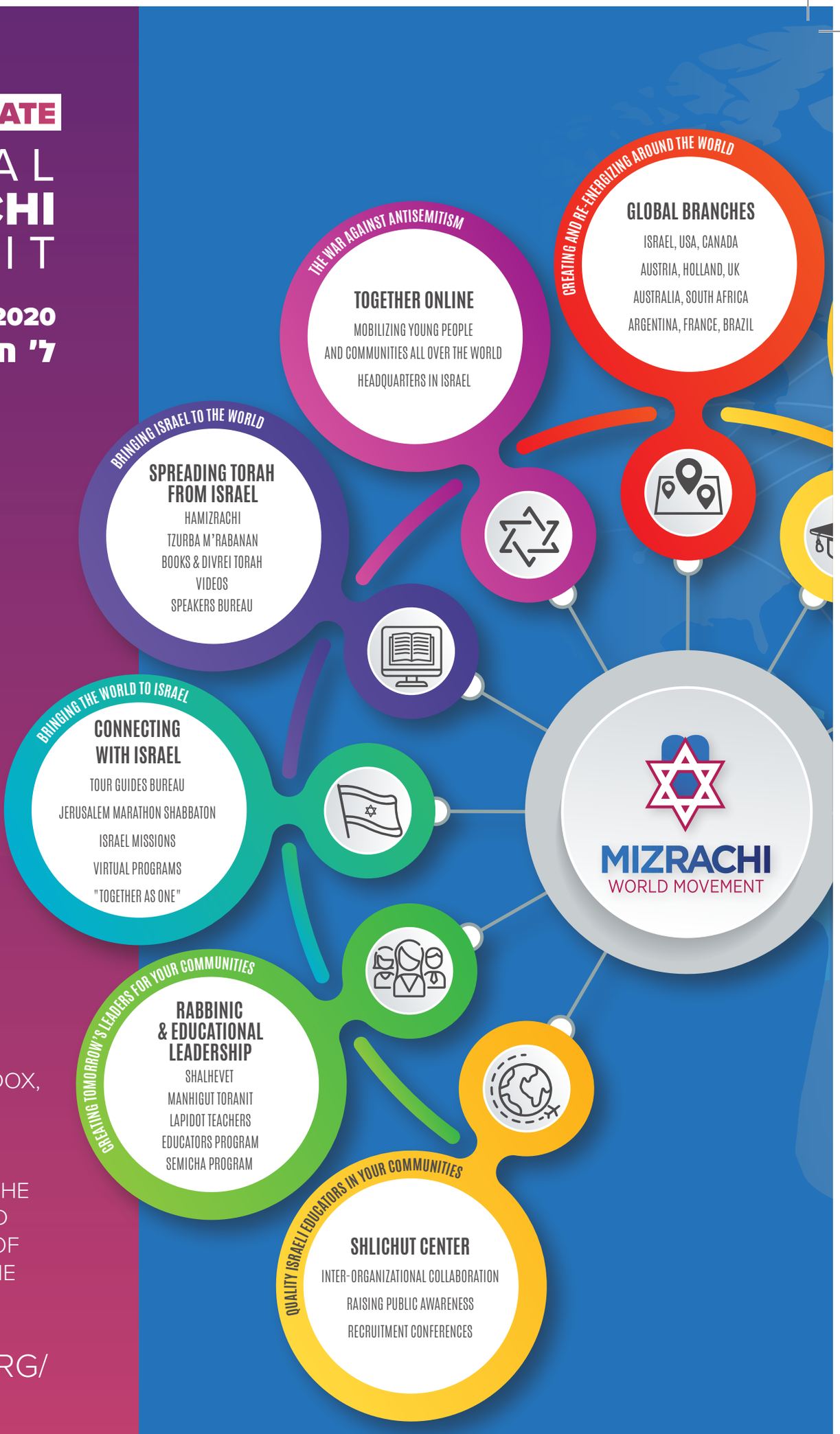
Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir are popular Israeli media personalities and World Mizrachi's Scholars-in-Residence.

SAVE THE DATE

GLOBAL MIZRACHI SUMMIT

OCTOBER 18, 2020

ל' תשרי תשפ"א



BRINGING THE GLOBAL, ORTHODOX, ISRAEL-FOCUSED COMMUNITIES TOGETHER IN ISRAEL TO FACE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF JEWISH LIFE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

MIZRACHI.ORG/SUMMIT

THE RENEWED MIZRACHI WORLD MOVEMENT

Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu זצ"ל

The Ethics of Etrogim

SHORT ETROG STORIES

The $1,000 Etrog

(Heard from the *etrog* dealer who used to bring *etrogim* to Rav Eliahu.)

Rav Eliahu was famous for being able to assess an etrog in seconds. He would check hundreds of *etrogim* yet despite the huge quantity, he never once said "*pasul*") invalid), but only "take another one." Only once did I hear him say "*pasul*."

A man came in and proudly told the Rav: "I paid $1,000 for this beautiful *etrog*!" The Rav looked at it and asked the man: "If this *etrog* is *pasul*, will you get your money back?" "Yes," said the man, "I bought it on condition the Rav says it's kosher." "Tell me," replied Rav Eliahu. "Have you bought your wife some jewelry for the *chag*? That's also a *mitzvah* – ושמחת בחגך!" The man mumbled something and the Rav decreed: "*Pasul*!"

"*Pasul*?! How can it be *pasul*?"

The Rav turned the *etrog* over and showed the man a very small hole near the stipe, partially covered by the stipe itself. And when the Rav moved the leaf, he revealed signs of a caterpillar burrowing into the fruit.

"You don't need to splash out $1,000 on an *etrog*. It's fine to buy a *mehudar* (halachically beautiful) *etrog* like everybody else for 100 shekels and go make your wife happy with the rest of the money. That's a positive Torah *mitzvah*!"

After the man left, we asked the Rav how he had managed to spot that tiny hidden hole. He told us that in Chassidic tradition, אתרוג stands for אל תבואני רגל גאווה (let not the foot of pride come to me). "This *etrog* did not match its mnemonic."

The Rav's Own Etrog

When the dealer brought Rav Eliahu *etrogim* for himself and his family, he would bring him the very best he had. The Rav would select a few, lay them all out in a line and say, "This one's the most beautiful, but I won't take it. I'll take this one or that one."

When the dealer asked him why he didn't take the most beautiful one for himself he replied, "So as not to make Jews feel bad. When they see the Rabbi has an *etrog* with a slight dent – that he too is not perfect – they will value their own *etrog* more. They won't think it's sub-standard. And they won't think that Rabbis take the best for themselves and leave whatever's left for everyone else. "

Fair Swap

"When I was eight, my father was tragically killed in an accident. When I reached *bar mitzvah*, I really wanted my own *etrog* but my mother couldn't afford it. I saved up, little by little, until I had enough to go to Machane Yehuda and buy my very own *etrog* in a sealed box which said "*mehudar*" on the lid! I was overjoyed.

But when I opened the box, the *etrog* really wasn't that beautiful. I didn't know whether I'd been deceived or that I just didn't know the *halachot*, so I decided to knock on Rav Mordechai Eliahu's door (he lived very close to us).

The Rav studied my *etrog* from all angles… '*Kasher* (kosher).' 'Only *kasher*?' I said. 'Not *mehudar*?' '*Kasher*.' I kissed his hand and left.

I'd barely closed the door when someone came out and said," Excuse me, the Rav asks you to come back inside.'

The Rav smiled at me and said, 'Let's do an exchange deal. You give me your *etrog*, the kosher one, and I'll give you mine, the *mehudar* one.'

I blushed and couldn't stop the tears. I gratefully accepted the Rav's offer and I was the happiest boy in town.

The next day, I went to daven in Rav Eliahu's *shul*. I wanted to see what *etrog* he would make the *beracha* on. Lo and behold… mine!

Suddenly, I understood.

Zionist Etrogim

"Once I visited Rav Eliahu and we were talking about Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzeira, the Baba Sali zt"l. 'Come, I'll show you something,' said the Rav, and took out what looked like some very thin sticks. 'What are they?' I asked. 'Dry *etrogim* originally grown in Morocco. The Baba Sali used to send me some every year.'

Then he added: 'I never made a *beracha* on them though. I only say a *beracha* on *etrogim* from our holy Land. I told that to the Baba Sali and he still sent me his Moroccan ones. But there's nothing like the sanctity of *Eretz Yisrael* and the *etrogim* of our holy Land."

Translated and adapted from www.yeshiva.org.il.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu זצ"ל was the Rishon LeTzion and Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel.

Rabbi Ya'akov Ariel

Our Sukkot Lesson from Ya'akov Avinu

Ya'akov Avinu's greatness lay in the fact that he managed to maintain his spiritual stability even in the midst of constant life crises. His brother was out to kill him, he fled to the wily Lavan and despite his uncle's trickery and deceit, Ya'akov still remained faithful to the *mitzvot* and upright and pure in his ways.

Even Ya'akov's two names say something of his mental strength in the face of his difficult life. יעקב is related to עקב, heel – the curved area at the base of the leg. עקב can also mean a cause of. Ya'akov's other name, ישראל, contains the Hebrew word ישר, straight. Despite his many struggles with forces more numerous or powerful than he, Ya'akov's integrity, sense of right, and loyalty to G-d remained intact.

Israel, the aspiration to uprightness, purity, and truth – is the ideal name. Ya'akov, the necessity to face evil and cruel reality in our world – is the actual name. The tension between the real and the ideal accompanies *Am Yisrael's* long and complicated history, yet we are known by our ideal name.

This teaches us that despite everything we have been through – the persecutions, the pogroms and the murders, the battle for good and truth has not been lost. On the contrary. Our core values became stronger and more prominent. The wandering Jew, even when walking through the valley of the shadow of death, did not fear the evil forces attempting to forcibly convert and confuse him. The more they tortured us, the more we grew.

Am Yisrael has been through its fair share of ups and downs. Yet whenever we were in trouble, wherever we were, our eternal values remained firm and unshaken. This remarkable ability – to be stable while everything around you is unstable – is the hidden power of Ya'akov Avinu. And indeed, in this sense, he has never died. As we continue to live our lives based on Jewish principles and values, he lives on too.

"Esav returned along the way to Seir on that day. Ya'akov went to Sukkot" (Bereishit 33). The Zohar expounds upon the juxtaposition of these two journeys, likening them to the relationship between Yom Kippur, when the scapegoat is sent to Azazel, and the Jewish people moving into their *sukkot*. After Ya'akov, the idealist, freed himself from the influence of Esav, the materialist, he was able to relax in the shade of truth and faith in his *sukkah*. The *sukkah* is the antithesis of aggressiveness, dominance and evil. Its physicality is purely functional – a vessel for holding Jewish law, faith and deep spiritual joy.

Sukkot actually contains a double message. On the one hand, our temporary, often flimsy *sukkah* symbolizes transience and impermanence – the exile. Yet it is also a holy sanctuary within the ups and downs of regular life, a little Israel among the other nations.

There is no contradiction between the two. Even in exile, in unimaginable conditions, we continued to develop our culture and strengthen our spirit.

This double message carries far-reaching implications. In our times, mass media has exposed our homes to the world outside and the winds of that world blow strongly in all corners of our homes and communities.

So much so that the Jewish home is no longer as stable as it once was. Its foundations are wobbling and for many, it is no longer a safe fortress. Nevertheless, if the home is still identified as a Jewish one, it is likely to remain that way forever, whatever the challenges. In such a home, the spirit of the individuals, the family, and the nation must be reinforced, nurtured and developed.

Our nation possesses such inner strength to combat and overcome life's challenges because we inherited this trait from Ya'akov Avinu. He taught us that we can overcome temptations, avoid danger and stay strong, whatever the circumstances.

Am Yisrael, the ideal people, has the power to filter things and to absorb only the good, the true and the beautiful, while discarding falsity, ugliness and evil. Even if our *sukkah* appears to be unstable on the outside, there is nothing more stable than the spirit within.

Rabbi Ya'akov Ariel was the Chief Rabbi of Ramat Gan, Israel, and one of the leading rabbis of the Religious Zionist movement.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

True Simcha

Rav Soloveitchik was fond of discussing a comment of the Ramban in his *Hasagot* to *Sefer HaMitzvot* (*shoresh rishon*, s.v. *vehapli'ah*). The Ramban believes that the recitation of *Hallel* is a *d'oraita* obligation. This is in contrast to the Rambam, who did not count the recitation of *Hallel* on Yom Tov in the count of *taryag mitzvot* because he held it is only a *mitzvah deRabbanan*. The Ramban cites the *pasuk* in reference to the *shira* of the *Levi'im*: "On a day of your gladness, and on your Festivals, and on your New Moons, you shall sound the trumpets over your *olah*-offerings and over your *shelamim*-offerings" (Bamidbar 10:10).

This *pasuk* describes that during the *nisuch haYayin* (wine libation) of *korbanot tzibbur* (communal offerings), the *Levi'im* engaged in *shira* through singing and musical accompaniment (on weekdays), which included the use of *chatzotzrot*. The Ramban suggests that *Hallel* is a similar obligation to the *shira* sung during the *avodah* – both of them are manifestations of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*.

Indeed, one of the sources in the Gemara (Arachin 11a) for the *shira* of the *Levi'im* is the *pasuk* found in the *tochecha*, תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב – "Because you did not serve *Hashem*, your G-d [a reference to *avodah* in the *Beit HaMikdash*] with joy and goodness of heart" (Devarim 28:47). Rashi adds, "One sings *shira* only out of a feeling of joy and goodness of heart."

Thus, the *mitzvah* of *simchat Yom Tov* includes more than the offering of a *Korban Shelamim* and the partaking of its meat and of wine. According to the Ramban, one of the manifestations of this *mitzvah* is the singing of praises to *Hashem* in the form of *Hallel*. *Simcha* also includes the obligation to provide colored or pressed linen garments for one's wife and to distribute nuts and almonds to one's children (Pesachim 109a; Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:1).

The Rambam (Hilchot Yom Tov 6:18; Hilchot Chagigah 2:14) writes that *simcha* on Yom Tov requires not only that we ourselves eat, drink, and be in a joyous mood. The Rambam terms such enjoyment as *simchat kreiso* (joy of one's stomach), instead of *simchat mitzvah*. Rather, on Yom Tov, there is also a *mitzvah* to provide for the poor and those who are less fortunate, to enable them to have food and drink for Yom Tov. In other words, an important part of the *mitzvah* of *simcha* is to be *mesameach* others.

That is why there is a *minhag* to make a *tzedaka* appeal every Yom Tov, as an expression of *simchat Yom Tov*. In fact, it is because we pledge *tzedaka* on Yom Tov that the *Yizkor* prayer was introduced (Levush, Orach Chaim 490:9). The pledge of *tzedaka* should be considered as a *zechut* for one's parent(s) who raised a child with proper attitudes and values regarding sharing their assets with others. Thus, the recitation of *Yizkor* is not at all a form of *aveilut*, but rather a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*.[1]

The notion of sharing one's *simcha* with others may be relevant to a *chatan* during his seven days of *Sheva Berachot*. The Rama (Orach Chaim 135:1) records the *minhag* that a *chatan* should be given an *aliyah* since it is like a Yom Tov for him. What is the halachic basis for this *minhag*?

The Rav explained that a *chatan* has a *mitzvah* of *simcha*. Since *Talmud Torah* is a form of *simcha*, as evidenced by the restrictions to learning that apply to an *avel* and on Tisha B'Av, it follows that teaching Torah is a further fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*. Through teaching others, one causes them to experience *simcha*. For this reason as well, the *minhag* is for the *chatan* to deliver *divrei Torah* at the *chatan*'s *tish*. The *chatan* receives an *aliyah* in which he is *melameid Torah* to the *tzibbur* that listens to the *kriya*, essentially the function of every *oleh laTorah*, in order to enhance his *mitzvah* of *simcha* by being *mesameach* others.

According to this explanation, it would seem one should endeavor to be called up for an *aliyah* on every Yom Tov, not only on the Yamim Noraim (as mentioned by the Mateh Efrayim 584:17). This way, one adds to the joy of others by teaching them Torah, and by so doing, he fulfills the *mitzvah* of *simchat Yom Tov*.[2]

---

1 See TorahWeb.org, Pesach, 2006, "True *Simcha*."

2 See *B'Ikvei HaTzon*, pp. 94-95.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter is Rosh Yeshiva and Rosh Kollel at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

Why Kohelet on Sukkot?

As a psychiatrist, I was once asked to explain why we read Kohelet on Sukkot, the season of joy. After all, Kohelet is so terribly depressing, negating everything as futile and worthless.

Sukkot is indeed the season of *simcha.* However, our concept of *simcha* is flawed.

I have heard people say, "If only I could get out of debt, I would be happy," or "If only I had a better job, I'd be happy," or "If only I could get relief from my arthritis, I'd be happy," or "If only my daughter would do a *shidduch*, I'd be happy." The "If onlys" are countless. I've been around long enough to see people get what they thought would make them happy, but remain unhappy.

Happiness does not depend on comfort or pleasure. They are indeed admirable desires but they do not produce happiness. The Talmud says, "No one leaves this world having achieved even half of his desires."

In Kohelet, Shlomo states this clearly. "As a king, I was the richest of all. I did not deny myself any human pleasure. But I found that this too was a vexation."

It is wonderful to enjoy good things, but don't deceive yourself that these enjoyments will bring you happiness. Happiness is achieved when you work toward becoming what G-d wants you to be, a *mentsch!*

What separates a *mentsch* from animals is not his greater intellect. Animals are totally self-absorbed, seeking their physical pleasures. One cannot be happy if one lives a life of self-absorption, seeking pleasure. You are a *mentsch* when you get out of your own skin, when you do *chesed*, when you have a goal in life of serving G-d instead of expecting that G-d should fulfill all of your desires.

Shlomo ends Kohelet by saying, "In summary, fear G-d and do His *mitzvot*, because then you will be a *mentsch.*" Only when one is a *mentsch* can one be happy. So, reading Kohelet on Sukkot is most important. We live in a culture that places self-gratification as a goal in life. Kohelet tells us this can never result in *simcha.*

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski is a psychiatrist and rabbi, and founder of the Gateway Rehabilitation Center in Pennsylvania.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Radical Uncertainty

There is something very strange about the festival of Sukkot. On the one hand, it is the festival supremely associated with joy. In the whole Torah, joy is *not mentioned* at *all* in relation to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur or Pesach, *once* in connection with Shavuot and *three times* in connection with Sukkot. Hence its name*: zman simchateinu*, the festival of our joy.

Yet what it recalls is one of the more negative elements of the wilderness years: "You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, so that future generations may know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the L-rd your G-d" (Vayikra 23:42-43).

For 40 years, the Israelites lived without permanent homes, often on the move. They were in the wilderness, in no man's land, where it is hard to know what to expect and what dangers lie in wait along the way. The people certainly lived under Divine protection. But they could never be sure in advance whether it would be forthcoming and what form this protection might take. It was a prolonged period of insecurity.

How then are we to understand the fact that of all festivals, Sukkot is called *zman simchateinu*, the festival of our joy? It would have made sense to call Pesach – freedom's birthday – the festival of joy. It would have made sense to call Shavuot – the day of revelation at Sinai – the festival of joy. But why give that title to a festival that commemorates 40 years of exposure to the heat, cold, wind and rain. Remembering that, why should we feel joy?

Besides which, what was the miracle? Pesach and Shavuot recall miracles. But traveling through the wilderness with only temporary homes was neither miraculous nor unique. That is what people who travel through the wilderness do. They must. They are on a journey. They can only have a temporary dwelling. In this respect, there was nothing special about the Israelites' experience.

It was this consideration that led Rabbi Eliezer to suggest[1] that the *sukkah* represents the Clouds of Glory, *ananei kavod*, that accompanied the Israelites during those years, sheltering them from heat and cold, protecting them from their enemies, and guiding them on the way. This is a beautiful and imaginative solution to the problem. It identifies a miracle and explains why a festival should be dedicated to remembering it. That is why Rashi and Ramban take it as the plain sense of the verse.

But it is difficult, nonetheless. A *sukkah* looks nothing like the Clouds of Glory. It would be hard to imagine anything *less* like the Clouds of Glory.

Rabbi Akiva dissents from Rabbi Eliezer's view and says that a *sukkah* is what it says it is: a hut, a booth, a temporary dwelling. What, according to Rabbi Akiva, was the miracle? There is no way of knowing the answer. But we can guess.

If a *sukkah* represents the Clouds of Glory – the view of Rabbi Eliezer – then it celebrates G-d's miracle. If it represents nothing other than a *sukkah* itself – Rabbi Akiva's view – then it celebrates the *human* miracle of which Yirmiyahu spoke when he said: "Thus said the L-rd, 'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved Me and followed Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown'" (Yirmiyahu 2:2).

The Israelites may have complained and rebelled. But they followed G-d. They kept going. Like Avraham and Sarah, they were prepared to journey into the unknown.

If we understand this to be the miracle, we can infer a deep truth about faith itself. *Faith is not certainty. Faith is the courage to live with uncertainty*. Almost every phase of the Exodus was fraught with difficulties, real or imagined. That is what makes the Torah so powerful. It does not pretend that life is any easier than it is. The road is not straight and the journey is long. Unexpected things happen. Crises suddenly appear. It becomes important to embed in a people's memory the knowledge that we can handle the unknown. G-d is with us, giving us the courage we need.

Each Sukkot it is as if G-d were reminding us: don't think you need solid walls to make you feel safe. I led your ancestors through the desert so they would never forget the journey they had to make and the obstacles they had to overcome to get to this Land. He said, "I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Vayikra 23:43). In those booths, fragile and open to the elements, the Israelites learned the courage to live with uncertainty.

Other nations told stories that celebrated their strength. They built palaces and castles as expressions of invincibility. The Jewish people were different. They carried with them a story about the uncertainties and hazards of history. They spoke of their ancestors' journey through the wilderness without homes, houses, protection against the elements. It is a story of spiritual strength, not military strength.

Sukkot is a testament to the Jewish people's survival. Even if it loses its Land and is cast again into the wilderness, it will lose neither heart nor hope. It will remember it spent its early years as a nation living in a *sukkah*, a temporary dwelling exposed to the elements. It will know that in the wilderness, no encampment is permanent. It will keep traveling until once again it reaches the promised land: Israel. Home.

It is no accident that the Jewish people is the only one to have survived 2,000 years of exile and dispersion, its identity intact and energy unabated. It is the only people who can live in a shack with leaves as a roof and yet feel surrounded by clouds of glory. It is the only people who can live in a temporary dwelling and yet rejoice.

In *Radical Uncertainty*,[2] the book recently published by John Kay (economist) and Mervyn King (former Governor of the Bank of England), a distinction is made between *risk*, which is calculable, and *uncertainty*, which is not. They argue that people have relied too much on calculations of probability while neglecting the fact that danger may appear from a completely unexpected source. The sudden appearance of the Coronavirus proved their point. People knew there was a possibility of a pandemic. But no one knew what it would be like, where it would come from, how rapidly it would spread, and what toll it would take.

More important than the calculation of probabilities, they say, is *understanding the situation*, answering the question, "What is going on?"[3] This, they say, is never answered by statistics or predictions but rather by narrative, by telling a story.

That is exactly what Sukkot is about. It is a story about uncertainty. It tells us that we can know everything else, but we will never know what tomorrow will bring. Time is a journey across a wilderness.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we pray to be written into the Book of Life. On Sukkot, we rejoice because we believe we have received a positive answer to our prayer. But as we turn to face the coming year, we acknowledge at the outset that life is fragile, vulnerable in a dozen different ways. We do not know what our health will be, what our career or livelihood will be, or what will happen to society and to the world. We cannot escape exposure to risk. That is what life is.

The *sukkah* symbolizes living with unpredictability. Sukkot is the festival of radical uncertainty. But it places it within the framework of a narrative, exactly as Kay and King suggest. It tells us that though we journey through a wilderness, we as a people will reach our destination. If we see life through the eyes of faith, we will know we are surrounded by clouds of glory. Amid uncertainty, we will find ourselves able to rejoice. We need no castles for protection or palaces for glory. A humble *sukkah* will do, for when we sit within it, we sit beneath what the Zohar calls "the shade of faith."

I believe the experience of leaving the protection of a house and entering the exposure of the *sukkah* is a way of taming our fear of the unknown. It says: we have been here before. We are all travelers on a journey. The Divine Presence is with us. We need not be afraid. That is a source of the resilience we need in our interconnected, hazardous, radically uncertain world.

---

1 Sukkah 11b.

2 John Kay and Mervyn King, *Radical Uncertainty*, Bridge Street Press, 2020.

3 The authors derive this idea from Richard Rumelt, *Good Strategy/Bad* Strategy, Crown, 2011.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.

Mrs. Shira Smiles

Exalted Entourage

There is a well-known custom of inviting seven special guests, seven shepherds of our nation, into our *sukkot*, one on each night of Sukkot. According to the Zohar, each of these precious shepherds – Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon and David – is considered a day to which the holiday is dedicated, and all of Israel then joins them.

Do these shepherds actually come to grace our *sukkot* as guests? How do we incorporate that concept to impact our celebration? And why do we invite these special guests on Sukkot rather than on Pesach, the other seven-day holiday?

The Otzrot HaTorah, citing the Shelah HaKadosh, writes that with such exalted guests, we must practice decorum in the *sukkah*, and keep our speech Torah-based so our guests will feel comfortable. The Belzer Rebbe adds that the great wives of these leaders accompany them too. The Netivot Shalom notes they have come from Gan Eden, a place of total spirituality, to visit us on this physical earth. That is one of the reasons why they can only come to a temporary abode like the *sukkah*. While the walls of our permanent homes absorb all the improper speech and untoward behavior of the entire year (says the Minchat Michael), the walls of the *sukkah* are inherently holy, and the *s'chach* is the shade of G-d's protection.

The walls of the *sukkah* represent the Clouds of Glory that surrounded us at Sinai and then descended on the Mishkan. As such, they represent the bond between the physical and the spiritual. The clouds, like the *sukkah*, are a temporary manifestation of G-d's presence, and we can achieve that state through our service to Him. The ultimate bond, however, is achieved in the World to Come, from where our guests have come to visit us on this holiday. When we sit in the *sukkah*, we are basking in the joy of being in G-d's presence. Therefore, if one experiences discomfort while in the *sukkah*, one is exempt from sitting there, while one should attempt to "live" in the *sukkah*, catching up on one's reading and Torah study in this holy environment.

According to the Netivot Shalom, while the covenant between *Hashem* and *Bnei Yisrael* was originally forged at Sinai and the Clouds of Glory surrounded us at that time, that covenant is renewed every year when the world is recreated on Rosh Hashanah. Then we can again draw His presence down to us as we try to repair the world anew.

Each of these leaders renewed something in the world. Each year, as the world is being recreated, we draw upon these characteristics to help us repair the world, and we ask that these seven come down and impart their energies to us as individuals so we can work on our mission as G-d's nation. We do not need their help on Pesach, but on Sukkot, when we've just started rebuilding the world, we can use their help with *chesed* and *gevura* and all the other traits they embody.

Sukkot is called *z'man simchateinu*, the season of our joy, for it is the only holiday the Torah commands us multiple times to be joyous. Otzrot HaTorah cites the Zohar who picks up on this nomenclature. Every time we celebrate a *simcha*, we are joined by our parents, and G-d brings the departed souls of the previous generations to celebrate with us. How can we acknowledge their presence as our guests? By inviting the poor to our *sukkah* or giving them financial, spiritual or emotional support we are taking what we would otherwise offer these guests and giving it to others. If you keep your celebration focused only on yourselves, the *ushpizin* want no part of it and leave. After all, the whole concept of *ushpizin* is inviting guests. Your spiritual high must be grounded in reality and must include those less fortunate. It is, after all, *Chag HaAsif,* the holiday of gathering the wheat, but the gathering should also include gathering people together in joy.

Let us make our special guests feel welcome. Make each one the center of the conversation of the night dedicated to him. The point of Sukkot is to give hope to people, for just as the Clouds of Glory surrounded us in the desert, so does G-d's presence surround us throughout our lives, and He sends down some majestic mentors and role models to help us on our journey.

Mrs. Shira Smiles is a sought-after international lecturer, a popular seminary teacher, and an experienced curriculum developer.

Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel

Eternity Within the Moment[1]

Transience is at the heart of the *sukkah* experience. The need to feel it's not a permanent home influenced a multitude of *halachic* discussions: its maximum and minimum height, the materials it can be made from, the obligation of a *mezuzah*, and many others. When you live in an impromptu hut, you remember the trials of the wilderness and the wondrous Divine Providence that protected us along the way.

A major principle of Sukkot is תֵּשְׁבוּ כָּעֵין תָּדוּרוּ – dwell in the *sukkah* as you would in your own home. This is why we drag our beloved sofa out into the yard, eat our meals outside and sleep in the *sukkah* as well.

We make a huge effort to feel permanent within the temporary. To dwell in the truth, within the passing moment.

הֶבֶל הֲבָלִים אָמַר קֹהֶלֶת... הַכֹּל הָבֶל – "Futility of futilities said Kohelet... everything is futile (Kohelet 1:2). The word הֶבֶל (variously translated as futility, emptiness, vapor) appears no fewer than 38 times in *Megillat Kohelet*. However, none of those translations are accurate for the meaning of the word here.

Transience. Everything is transient. Everything will pass. Everything ends and moves on. It's neither good nor bad. Neither judgmental nor negative. It's a fundamental truth Shlomo HaMelech lays down at the outset of his book: our lives on earth are finite. Short-lived. Nothing lasts forever, and certainly not us.

Our parents said, "Before you blink, you already have grandchildren," and before we know it, we'll find ourselves saying similar things to our children. When we raised our first son, every stage seemed like an eternity. We couldn't imagine his teeth would ever come through. We bought baby clothes very carefully without understanding that at those sizes they'd last a day and a half. From child to child we internalize that babyhood just whooshes by. That we need to take in the smell because in another moment it won't be the same...

When Rabbi Yochanan finds Rabbi Elazar crying on his deathbed (Berachot 5b), he asks him why he is so distraught. For the Torah, you didn't learn? For your livelihood? For losing children? And Rabbi Elazar answers, "I'll manage without everything you asked about. But your incredible beauty, Rabbi Yochanan, that like us all will decompose and turn to dust, for that I cry!" And Rabbi Yochanan shocks us with his reply: "For that indeed you should cry!" And they both wept, over the fleeting nature of beauty and the death that overcomes us all.

When we stand before a stunning sunrise or sunset, we are awestruck. Something about that beauty strokes eternity, stems from eternity. Such an abundance of beauty is beyond us. So we do our best to bathe in the pleasure because it's going to disappear any second. We snap a photo but sense how pathetic that is. We can't just fold this splendor and stuff it into our pocket. Because just as it is sublime, it is also fleeting, temporary, ungraspable. Every brief blossom, every autumn leaf, every sunset... arouses yearning, longing, almost distress. For it lives forever in the passing moment (if we plant it within us), and then... it's gone!

Are "fleeting days" empty days, with no hope or expectation? No! Don't interpret הֶבֶל as futile! We were not given days of futility to waste away on this earth, for what was the reason to invest in love if our days are nonsensical? Kohelet tells us: treasure the days we have together, because life is temporary, and hence so valuable. Fill your days with love and good... "enjoy life"!

We are permanent tenants in our temporary *sukkah*. Through that, we understand nothing is really permanent.

Yet even when we return into our homes we can still observe תֵּשְׁבוּ כָּעֵין תָּדוּרוּ. We can experience the total beauty of the moment... of every moment, while it lasts. We can appreciate and value all the good in our personal, family and communal lives. And we can remember the *sukkot* in the desert and realize the abundance and goodness we are enjoying here and now in *Eretz Yisrael*.

---

1 Adapted from Rabbanit Fraenkel's "*The Preciousness of Transience*" (HaMizrachi 5779).

Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel teaches Torah at midrashot in Israel.

Etrogim

The Magic and Mystery

Etrogim were extensively cultivated in the Holy Land at the time of the Second Temple, and images of *etrogim* are found at many archaeological sites of that era, including mosaics at the Maon Synagogue, Beth Alpha Synagogue, and Hamat Tiberias Synagogue. The *etrog* is also found on numerous Bar Kochba coins.

After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, exiled Jews planted citron orchards wherever the climate allowed: in Southern Europe (Spain, Greece, and Italy) as well as in North Africa and Asia Minor. Jews who settled north of the warmer citron-growing areas depended on imported *etrogim*, which caused much anxiety given the dangers and uncertainties of sea travel. By the 17th century, some of the most popular sources for *etrogim* were the islands of Corsica and Corfu.

Since the late 1850s, the Fruit of the Goodly Tree Association in Palestine represented *etrog* farmers who marketed their crops to Jews in Europe. Some Jewish communities still preferred citrons from Italy, Greece, Morocco, or Yemen, but many Jews seeking citrons turned back to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel.

Diamante Etrog

The Cedro diamante is a cultivar of citron that grows in the citron coast, located in the province of Cosenza, Calabria, on the south-western coast of Italy, which is its most known cultivation point.

Many religious Jews call it Yanova Esrog (Genoa citron), because of its long association with the trading port of Genoa in northern Italy, from where it was exported to other countries. Genoa was known to supply citron for the Jews since the times of the Tosafists, along with surrounding municipalities Sanremo, Bordighera, and the rest of Liguria. Most adherent to the diamante variety of Calabria are still the Chabad sect, whose late Rabbis were always in support of this traditional variety, even claiming by virtue of a legend that Moshe himself obtained his *etrog* from this location. Among the other Hasidic sects, it is most used by the Satmars.

Greek Etrog

The Greek citron was also called pitima, or the cedro col pigolo ("citron with a *pitom*"), because of its usually persisting *pitom* (carpel).

The following description is from the Nurenbergische Hesperides (2nd Volume; 8th Chap.) by Johann Christoph Volkamer, titled "About the Cedro col Pigolo." He was growing that kind in his botanical garden in Nuremberg, and writes that it can also be called the "Jewish Citron," since it is mostly used for the Four Species.

"This tree does not become particularly big. The leaves are smaller than those of other citrons, and serrated, oblong, pointed towards the front, mixed with many thorns. The bloom is small and reddish from outside. The fruit blossoms are not less oblong from the beginning, appearing as reddish and dark-green; thereafter they turn entirely green, and when they ripen, straw-yellow, remaining, however, rather small all the time and never growing to a proper size, like other kinds of citron."

Balady Etrog

The balady citron is a variety of *etrog,* grown in Israel, mostly for Jewish ritual purposes. Not native to the region, it was imported around 500 or 300 BCE by either Jewish or Greek settlers.

During the 1800s, the Balady was grown on the outskirts of Nablus, Nazareth, Tiberias, Safed and Alma al-Shaib, in Umm al-Fahm and in Lifta village near Jerusalem. In the 1870s, Rabbi Chaim Elozor Wax devoted himself to its cultivation and organized shipments to Europe.

He felt the Balady citron had the strongest traditional lineage of pureness of species, and claimed it was to be found in the wild when Ramban arrived in the county. He wrote many letters to the rabbis hoping to influence the diaspora to use the Balady citron.

Balady citron varieties are still grown and sold today in the Diaspora as well as in Israel and are favored by the followers of the Brisker Rov and the Chazon Ish.

Moroccan Etrog

The Moroccan citron is a true citron variety native to Assads, Morocco, which is still today its main center of cultivation. It was described by the Moroccan professor, Henri Chapot, as being a sweet citron, meaning its pulp is low in acid.

The exact date when the variety came into use for the *etrog* is unknown. According to local Jewry, it has been with them since they were exiled to Morocco after the destruction of the Second Temple. From then on it was highly revered by all the rabbis and communities of North Africa, without any interruption or controversy.

Yemenite Etrog

The Yemenite citron is a distinct variety of citron, usually containing no juice vesicles in its fruit segments. The bearing tree and the mature fruit's size are somewhat larger than the trees and fruit of other varieties of citron.

Etrog haCushi is mentioned in the Mishnah as well as in both the Babylonian (Sukkah 36a) and the Jerusalem Talmud (Sukkah 3:6). The most common interpretation is that the Biblical Cush refers to Ethiopia and therefore *Etrog haCushi* should also refer to something which could be called the Ethiopian citron. The Ethiopian Jews did not observe the *mitzvah* of the Four Species, even though they did anticipate the Sukkot festival. This may have been due to their lack of ability to procure the species. Some believe this is due to some Karaite influence, whose biblical interpretation indicates the Four Species are only used as roofing for a *sukkah* (*s'chach*), and not for a separate waving ritual. However, the Yemenite citron is available in Ethiopia and its markets, where it is sold for consumption. According to Erich Isaac, the late researcher of citrus distribution, the Yemenite citron is synonymous with the Ethiopian citron, as a result of Ethiopian rule in Yemen in the past.

Did You Know?

- Eating the *etrog* or *etrog* jam is considered a *segula* (efficacious remedy) for a woman to have an easy childbirth.
- The heaviest *etrog* recorded weighed 7.5 kilo (16.5 lbs).
- Known botanically as citrus medica, the *etrog* has been used as a remedy for seasickness, muscular pain and skin disease.
- In India, the *etrog* peel is eaten to overcome bad breath.
- In Panama, citron leaves are ground up and combined with other ingredients and given as an antidote for poison.
- The *etrog* is also called "Adam's apple," or "paradise apple," and is one of the suggested candidates for the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden.
- Today Israel is the world's leading supplier of *etrogim* for Sukkot, and most Jewish communities worldwide pride themselves in using the holy fruit from the Holy Land.

Rabbi Ronen Neuwirth

"If I'm Here, Everything is Here"

REFLECTIONS ON Z'MAN SIMCHATEINU

Sukkot is defined as *Z'man Simchateinu*, the season of our rejoicing. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine true and authentic rejoicing while many of us are living under lockdown, in quarantine, or apart from our families. I wish to highlight a special aspect of Sukkot that might help us experience *Z'man Simchateinu* on a more profound level this year.

The pinnacle of the festivities during the era of the *Beit HaMikdash* was *Simchat Beit HaShoeva,* the Rejoicing of the Water-Drawing House. The Rabbis tell us: "One who has not seen the *Simchat Beit HaShoeva* has never seen rejoicing in their life." (Mishnah, Sukkah 5:1) The Rabbis asked and answered: "Why is it referred to as '*Beit HaShoeva*'? Because from there they draw the Holy Spirit, as it states (Yeshayahu 12:3), 'You will draw water in joy from the springs of salvation'" (Talmud Yerushalmi, Sukkah 22b).

Among the stories in the Talmud about this event is this puzzling statement: "When Hillel the Elder was rejoicing at the *Simchat Beit HaShoeva*, he said this: If I'm here, everything is here, and if I'm not here, who is here?" (Sukkah 53a). How can Hillel, our role model for humility, have said something that sounds so arrogant?

The explanation can be found in one of the most profound lessons of *Megillat Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes), which we read on Sukkot: "For to a man who is good in His sight, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner He has given an occupation to gather and to accumulate" (2:26). King Solomon's frustration relates to his inability to find happiness in all his endless assets, possessions and properties. He was the richest of kings, but it did not give him a sense of security and joy. He says: "I built myself houses, and I planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted in them all sorts of fruit trees. I made myself pools of water to irrigate a forest sprouting with trees… I had possessions of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. I accumulated for myself also silver and gold, and the treasures of the kings and the provinces" (2:4–8). After years of accumulating and gathering, he realizes it is all in vain because nothing external can make him happy in this world: "Then I turned [to look] at all my deeds that my hands had wrought and upon the toil that I had toiled to do, and behold everything is vanity and frustration, and there is no profit under the sun" (2:11).

According to Kohelet, the "sinner" is the person who misses out on life. He is the one who is obsessively occupied with gathering and accumulating wealth. The person who finds joy and happiness is the one who has the wisdom and the courage to realize our happiness and our sense of security comes from within us and not from any external factor. That is why "being here" was everything for Hillel.

We tend to think of our brick homes as providing us with a sense of safety and belonging. But in truth, as long as our safety depends on external factors, we will remain inherently insecure and unhappy. Our careers, expertise, accomplishments and assets do not define who we are. It is our deeper purpose in the world that brings meaning to our lives and gives us the sense we belong here.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook writes: "I must find my happiness within myself, not from social acceptance, not from my career nor anything else. The more I will know myself, the more I allow myself to be original and stand on my own – with an inner awareness combined with wisdom, emotion, poetry – the more the light of G-d will enlighten me and the more my strengths will evolve to become a blessing to me and the world" (*Arpilei Tohar*, p31).

True happiness is not defined by our social strata. It is not achieved through the acquisition of wealth, nor is it a result of any pleasurable experience. True happiness is based on the courage to present who we truly are. That is why there is no more appropriate timing to learn the message of Kohelet than on Sukkot. This was

our historical harvest festival – *Chag HaAsif* – when the farmers, having gathered all the produce of their fields, estimated the annual revenue of their business. It is specifically at this time of ingathering and assessment we were told to move out of our comfort zone and into the *sukkah*. Sitting in the most fragile possible dwelling under the shade of the *s'chach*, which symbolizes the *Shechina* (Divine Presence), teaches us to lend meaning and purpose to all we have accumulated.

In her book, *Gifts of Imperfection*, Brené Brown writes: "Often people attempt to live their lives backward: they try to have more things, or more money, in order to do more of what they want so that they will be happier. The way it actually works is the reverse. You must first be who you really are, then do what you really need to do, in order to have what you want." On Sukkot, we stop living our lives backward. We realize that in order to find true joy, we need to be our most authentic selves, and define ourselves without any external factors or conditions.

Sometimes, when we feel empty or depressed, we tend to attribute it to the many challenges and hardships we believe are unresolved in our lives. In truth, the core reason for our feelings of worthlessness emanates from our inability to love ourselves, to have self-compassion and to find the true resilience from within. The Midrash in Bereshit Rabbah (1:14) explains the meaning of this verse: "For it is not an empty thing for you, for it is your life" (Devarim 32:47): אם ריק, מכם הוא – if your life feels empty, it is because of your inner emptiness!"

The Holy Spirit drawn from the waters of the *Beit HaShoeva* was our own spirit, empowered and inspired by G-d. Only when we dare to believe in ourselves, and in the spark of holiness within our souls, can we attain the level of authentic, internal and everlasting happiness. These waters of the *Beit HaShoeva* served as a mirror to help us reflect on our inner spiritual strength, which is the root of our security and resilience, and for that reason, Hillel exclaimed: "If I'm here, everything is here, and if I'm not here, who is here?"

Our challenge this year is to develop a true inner joy based not on our external assets but rather on our faith and inner resilience. During the past few months, many of us have experienced a feeling that our world is collapsing. We have experienced enormous uncertainty, financial challenges, lockdown, illness, and the loss of dear relatives and friends. The pandemic has shut down everything that usually provides us with a sense of security and happiness. The loneliness of social distancing has affected our sense of belonging, which is an acute and primal emotional need. This year, perhaps Sukkot can give us an opportunity to recalibrate our lives according to Hillel's teaching. While most external factors are beyond our control, we still have the ability to work on our personal growth, practicing authenticity and self-compassion, and developing the muscles of resilience and belonging.

Especially this year, Sukkot is our opportunity to recognize our most authentic place in the world. When we pick up the *Arba Minim*, we say: "Let it be recognized that I am called by the Name of *Hashem*." The Sfat Emet explained this verse by saying: "The wisdom (*da'at)* that descends on us on Sukkot lies within our ability to recognize our unique place in the world" (Sukkot 5657).

Do we have the courage to leverage the challenges of COVID-19 to find our inner resilience and happiness?

"[Hillel] used to say: If I am not for me, who will be for me? And when I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, then when?" (Avot 1:14)

Rav Ronen Neuwirth, formerly Rav of the Ohel Ari Congregation in Ra'anana, is author of "The Narrow Halakhic Bridge: A Vision of Jewish Law in the Post-Modern Age," published in May by Urim Publications.

Rabbanit Sally Mayer

Why the Eighth Day?

How many days is Sukkot? The Torah describes it as a seven–day holiday (Vayikra 23, Bamidbar 29, Devarim 16), and yet the *pesukim* add an eighth day as an עֲצֶרֶת, literally "stopping" or "gathering." What is the nature of this eighth day? Why is Sukkot described as lasting seven days, if it actually lasts eight?

Indeed, Talmudic Sages debate whether we say the *beracha* of *shehecheyanu* on Shemini Atzeret (Sukkah 47b). The Gemara concludes we do say it because Shemini Atzeret is considered its own holiday in several different respects.

In Pesikta deRav Kahana (28), Rav Alexandri says that by using extra letters in the *pesukim* regarding the sacrifices of each day of Sukkot,[1] G-d hints to *Am Yisrael* to pray for rain. After Sukkot passes and we still have not taken the hint, G-d gives us a whole day just to pray for rain. The special prayer for rain, תְּפִלַּת הַגֶּשֶׁם, is in fact recited on Shemini Atzeret. According to this view, Shemini Atzeret amplifies a theme latent during Sukkot, and that theme moves to center stage on the eighth day.

What are the Sukkot sacrifices? On each day, we offer bulls on the *mizbeach* — 13 on the first day, 12 on the second, 11 on the third, and so on. But then the pattern breaks – we offer seven bulls on the seventh day of Sukkot, but just one on Shemini Atzeret. Why? Rabbi Elazar explains that the 70 bulls offered over Sukkot correspond to the 70 nations of the world, one offered on behalf of each nation. Shemini Atzeret's sacrifice, of one bull, symbolizes G-d's asking His beloved nation for just a small meal to enjoy. The Midrash in Bamidbar Rabbah slightly modifies this: G-d is like a king who invites all his subjects to a seven-day feast, and afterward says to his most beloved servant, "Let us enjoy whatever you can find, a bit of meat, fish, or vegetables." According to this idea, Sukkot is a universal holiday while Shemini Atzeret is only for the Jewish people. A modest holiday just to celebrate G-d's special relationship with His beloved people.

Rashi (Vayikra 23:36) cites the following: "I have stopped you with Me, like a king who invited his sons to a meal for a certain number of days. When the time came to part, he asked his children, 'Please stay with me one more day, קָשָׁה עָלַי פְּרִדַתְכֶם – your departure is difficult for me.'" All of Sukkot is a holiday for G-d to enjoy with His children, the Jewish people. But as we find when we say goodbye to our own children, it's hard to see them go – so *Hashem* adds Shemini Atzeret because it's so difficult for Him to see us go after Sukkot.

Let us now return to our original question as debated by the Amoraim: Should we recite *shehecheyanu* on Shemini Atzeret or not? If its main theme is to pray for rain – which we theoretically should have done on Sukkot – it is debatable whether it warrants its own *shehecheyanu.* One could argue that no new blessing is necessary, since rain is a theme that exists on Sukkot through the pouring of the water on the altar and the hints to pray for rain throughout those days. On the other hand, rain is emphasized more prominently on Shemini Atzeret. If Shemini Atzeret is a holiday purely for the Jewish people, after the universal holiday of Sukkot, we can understand why it warrants its own *shehecheyanu*. However, as Rashi writes, if *Shemini Atzeret* is an added day to Sukkot, just to stay a bit longer, why is that considered a new holiday? Isn't it just a continuation of the previous seven days?

Perhaps the nature of Shemini Atzeret is exactly that. It's a day that celebrates our unique, emotional relationship with G-d, in that He loves us and does not want to see us go. It actually *is* a separate day – a day that celebrates our close bond with G-d as His chosen, beloved people. קָשָׁה עָלַי פְּרִדַתְכֶם highlights a different quality to our relationship with G-d, one not previously emphasized.

Hence it does not simply add a day to Sukkot, but creates a unique day, one that deserves its own *shehecheyanu*, so we can focus on feeling that closeness to G-d, which will keep us going in the winter months ahead.

---

1 In Bamidbar 29:29, 33, there are three words the Midrash identifies as having extra letters: ונסכיהם, ונסכיה, כמשפטם. Those extra letters spell מ-י-מ, water.

Rabbanit Sally Mayer serves as Rosh Midrasha at Ohr Torah Stone's Midreshet Lindenbaum.

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

The Special Joy of Sukkot

We are uniquely commanded to be *beSimcha*, to rejoice and to be happy on *Chag HaSukkot*. When the *sukkah* goes up, the decorations adorn its walls, and we eagerly move from our permanent residence to our temporary one, we are enveloped by a natural feeling of excitement and joy. The feelings of warmth that permeate our homes and hearts are specific to this festival.

Sukkot reminds us of the Clouds of Glory in which G-d ensconced us when we left Egypt (Vayikra 23:43), and the protection He provides to us in each and every generation. This protection reminds us that our true security lies not in the walls of our homes of bricks and stone, but in the embrace of G-d's love for us.

> **Sukkot reminds us of the Clouds of Glory in which G-d ensconced us when we left Egypt, and the protection He provides to us in each and every generation.**

Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik teaches that "Man is basically a homeless being. No matter how large and opulent his home, he is exposed. He is subject to the vicissitudes of life, subject to nature – which at best is indifferent to man, at worst is hostile – and subject to an inscrutable future. There is only one home where man gains security: G-d is called מעונה, an abode (Devarim 33:27). The only home where man can find security is in the *Ribono Shel Olam*, the Master of the World."[1]

It is this visceral feeling of dwelling with G-d that leads to the *simcha* of Sukkot.

"You shall make the festival of Sukkot for a seven day period, when you gather in from your threshing floor and from your wine pit, *And you shall rejoice on your festival…* A seven day period shall you celebrate to *Hashem*, your G-d... and you shall be *only joyous"* (Devarim 16:13-15).

Only in regard to *Sukkot* are we commanded to not only rejoice but to *doubly* rejoice! Elsewhere, in regard to Sukkot, the Torah commands us regarding the *mitzvah* objects of the *chag*:

"And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a tree of splendor, fronds of date palms, and branches of a cordlike tree, and brook willows; and you shall rejoice before *Hashem,* your G-d, for a seven-day period" (Vayikra 23:40).

From this *pasuk*, Rav Elimelech Biederman learns an important and beautiful insight. The *mitzvah deOraita* (Biblically ordained commandment) to take the Four Species on Sukkot is a *mitzvah* only for the first day of the *chag: "and you shall take for yourselves on the first day…"* However, the *mitzvah deOraita* to be *beSimcha*, to rejoice and be only happy, is a *mitzvah* for all seven days of the chag!

Hence, we deduce from here that the *mitzvah* of *simchat yomtov* on Sukkot is greater than the *mitzvah* of taking the *Arba Minim*!

As the world around us today is storming, and life for our nation and our Land is not easy during turbulent times, it is an *avodah* we must all engage in: imbuing the *midda* of *simcha*, and the ability to rejoice, into our very selves.

Rabbi Avraham Pam taught that, "Helping others is the formula for a life of *simcha*. The theme of Sukkot is that one must leave his permanent dwelling – his own mind – and settle in a temporary dwelling – thinking of the needs of others. In doing so, he will find contentment in his own life and will enjoy a year-round *zman simchateinu."*[2]

When we live with the knowledge that G-d is the Source of our *simcha*, and we care for others as we have been commanded (Devarim 16:14, as quoted above), we will truly merit a Sukkot of unbridled, pure and holy joy!

---

1 Chumash Masoret HaRav Shemot p.224-225.

2 Rav Pam on the Festivals, ArtScroll, p.55.

Mrs. Michal Horowitz teaches Judaic Studies classes to adults of all ages.

Dr. Deena Zimmerman

Hiding in the Sukkah

For the last month, since the beginning of Elul, we have been reciting Psalm 27 – לְדָוִד ה' אוֹרִי וְיִשְׁעִי – on a daily basis. We will continue to do so until Shemini Atzeret the very end of the Sukkot holiday. The practice first appeared in the prayer book of Rabbi Marskov, a disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov and in *halachic* works such as the Mateh Ephraim by Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Margulies (1762-1828).

Elements of this psalm are reminiscent of the themes of this time of the year. For example, the Midrash (Tehillim 27:4) writes: "Our Sages have explained the verse as related to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. אוֹרִי (my light) – on Rosh Hashanah which is the Day of Judgement as it states "and let your justice and judgment shine forth like the midday sun" (Psalms 37:6), that He will save us and forgive us, and יִשְׁעִי (my salvation) on Yom Kippur, that He will save us and forgive all our sins.

Yet another hint is found in the mention of "*sukkah*" in verse five: "For on the day of trouble He will conceal me in His *sukkah*; He will hide me in the shelter of His tent and set me high upon a rock."

Let us look at this verse in greater detail. First of all, what is this *sukkah*? The Ibn Ezra states it is Jerusalem, based on the verse "and His *sukkah* will be in Shalem (one of the names of Jerusalem) and His dwelling in Zion" (Psalms 76:3). Rashi narrows the area down specifically to the Beit HaMikdash. He ties it to a historical event, where Yoash, the son of Achaziah, was in fact hidden in the Temple for six years to save him from the wrath of Atalia, the queen who succeeded in killing the remaining royal children. Other commentaries look at the phrase as a more general one referring to G-d's protection, similar to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer (Sukkah 11b and codified in the Shulchan Aruch) as to why we sit in *sukkot*, i.e. to remind us of G-d's protection via the "clouds of glory" (*ananei haKavod*).

When does G-d conceal us in His *sukkah*? בְּיוֹם רָעָה. A simple translation would be "on a bad day," but it can also mean a day of bad as in a "day of trouble." I feel it is likely that over the last six months, people have felt it is one יוֹם רָעָה after another in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. However, in Yirmiyahu (17:17–18, 51:2), the phrase has a positive connotation. It is when punishment will be brought down on evildoers and thus it is actually a good day if you are righteous.

Hiding and concealing are also concepts with dual meaning. Both sins such as idol worship (see Devarim 13:7 and 27:15) and actions of which one is ashamed are associated with hiding (see Devarim 27:24). On the other hand, a hidden place is described as the dwelling place of *Hashem* (Psalms 91:1).

Such double meaning is appropriate for such confusing times. Perhaps we can learn from them that all things that seem bad may, perhaps, have a good side to them. Alongside the damage of this pandemic to lives and livelihoods, there have been areas of growth as well. And even if the situation is truly bad, G-d is there to protect us from it being even worse. Therefore, the image of G-d protecting us during such troubling times is one worth repeating twice daily as we approach the holiday of Sukkot. If this Sukkot we will be "hiding" in our *sukkah* with just our immediate family, may we hope that next year we can all celebrate in G-d's Sukkah of Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash.

Dr. Deena Zimmerman is a pediatrician and Director of yoatzot.org, a website for women's health and halacha.

Rabbi Zev Leff

The Blessing of Self-Knowledge

The Sages tell us that Ya'akov wished to reveal the *keitz,* the time of the final redemption, to his sons, but it was concealed from him. So he blessed them instead.

The Midrash gives the following analogy. A confidant of the king was dying and called his children to his bedside to reveal the royal secrets the king had confided to him. As he was about to begin, he saw that the king too was standing at his bedside. Instead of his intended message, he immediately substituted an exhortation to his children to be careful to honor the king properly. Similarly, Ya'akov wished to reveal the secrets of Mashiach, but saw the *Shechina* at his bedside and substituted the blessings out of embarrassment.

This Midrash seems to imply that Ya'akov did not forget the *keitz* but simply suppressed it due to embarrassment. Further, how do Ya'akov's blessings compare to an exhortation to obey the king and honor him?

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

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

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

The development and perfection of this world depend on the realization of each Jew's individual potential. It is in this perspective that the world was created for the names of the Jewish people.

The confidant reflected that if he told his children the king's mysteries, they would know this information only secondhand. But if he could inspire them to be careful in honoring the king, they would merit to become confidants of the king themselves and hear his secrets firsthand. Similarly, Ya'akov wished to reveal the *keitz* to his children. But after realizing their inherent potential, he chose to impart to them that which would obviate the *keitz* and bring the redemption closer.

The greatest blessing one can bestow is to enlighten another and acquaint him with himself. The Mishnah (Avot 3:18) says: "Man is precious, having been created in G-d's image, and even more so for having been informed he was created in G-d's image." Self-knowledge of one's abilities and talents, as well as one's shortcomings and limitations, is the greatest blessing. It enables us to realize our Divine mission in this world.

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

The Midrash relates that every person has various names: the one G-d gives him, that which his parents give him, the name he is called by his friends, and above all the one he earns for himself. Everyone is endowed with a variety of talents and skills. Some are directly endowed by Heaven. Some are the result of heredity and environment. But the most significant are those that come by virtue of developing and actualizing one's potential.

As we end the Torah, may we strengthen ourselves to develop the unique potential inherent in our names for the furtherance and enhancement of Torah and the Jewish people, and thereby bring the Final Redemption speedily in our days.

Rabbi Zev Leff serves as the Rav of Moshav Matityahu.

Rabbi Ari Kahn

Liminality

One of the qualities of our postmodern world is the constant state of flux. Things move rapidly. People and ideas change. Old accepted concepts are challenged, rejected, transformed and reinterpreted. It is a world in which boundaries have disappeared. Social scientists might describe our postmodern existence as a state of constant liminality: we are consciously, constantly, on the threshold of a new reality.[1]

What does all this have to do with our religious experience or the experience of the holidays? In "Transforming Worship," author Timothy L. Carson describes Ya'akov's vision of the ladder ascending to Heaven (p. 61): "Jacob's dream floats somewhere in the sacred axis between heaven and earth." While much of Carson's analysis would be foreign to the traditional Jew, his observation of the liminality of the scene in which Ya'akov, in a dream state, observes a passage from earth to heaven and back again, is an important insight. What Carson fails to observe is the decidedly non-liminal conclusion of the scene. We as readers, and Ya'akov himself, take away a decidedly different sort of message from the vision, recasting the vision into what can only be described as a preliminal state of consciousness.

Indeed, Ya'akov lives in a preliminal state. The Land promised to him never quite becomes his; only in the future will his descendants inherit and inhabit it. He understands that his task is to lay the groundwork, but he personally will not cross the threshold.

As Moshe prepares to take his leave from the nation, they stand poised to cross the threshold into a completely new reality as a nation in its own land. Moshe's speech begins with what we may call spiritual geopolitics: G-d created clearly defined borders for the nations of the world, affording each its own space – but this overarching division reflects something particular to the descendants of Ya'akov. In Bereishit (Chapter 46), the Torah tells us the sum total of Ya'akov's family that migrated to Egypt during the great famine was 70. Corresponding to this number, Jewish tradition refers to the totality of humankind as "the 70 nations of the world," all descended from Noah after the flood. The peoples of the world were divided – linguistically, culturally and geographically – when they misused their unity to rebel against G-d in the aftermath of the great deluge.

In contrast, Moshe refers to the Jewish people as Ya'akov and the foundational experience of Jewish nationhood is depicted in a desolate wilderness, a place without borders, in which they are surrounded by G-d alone. The Torah describes the Jews being "encompassed," which the commentaries understand as the Divine protection afforded by the Clouds of Glory.

The *sukkah* is a modest structure, with no real boundaries. The walls may be made of wood, fabric, or even bits of string. The *sukkah* is a halachic construct, a philosophical construct if you will. Therefore, the walls need not be real barriers of brick and mortar. A set of strings tied three handbreadths apart is enough to create a theoretical wall according to *halacha*, and that is enough to make a *sukkah* "kosher."

Perhaps the *sukkah* is the antithesis of the postmodern state of liminality: We are commanded to create boundaries, to mark off both physical and philosophical borders. There are absolutes, and we are commanded to acknowledge and respect them. Common wisdom understands that children need rules in order to thrive and to make sense of the world around them; this is no less true of adults. We need borders and boundaries. Not everything is negotiable, subject to subjective reinterpretation. Things need firmness. The postmodern rejection of historical fact in favor of subjective narrative flies in the face of truth, and of Torah.

As Jews, we live in a world of absolutes, yet we are commanded by the same Torah that creates the boundaries never to forget that we are part of a larger world. We have Torah-mandated responsibility for those within the camp, as well as for those who remain beyond the philosophical and physical borders we construct.

---

1 Liminality is a term used to describe the psychological process of transitioning across boundaries and borders.

Rabbi Ari Kahn is Director of the Overseas Student Program at Bar-Ilan University, where he is a senior lecturer in Jewish Studies.

Rabbi Berel Wein

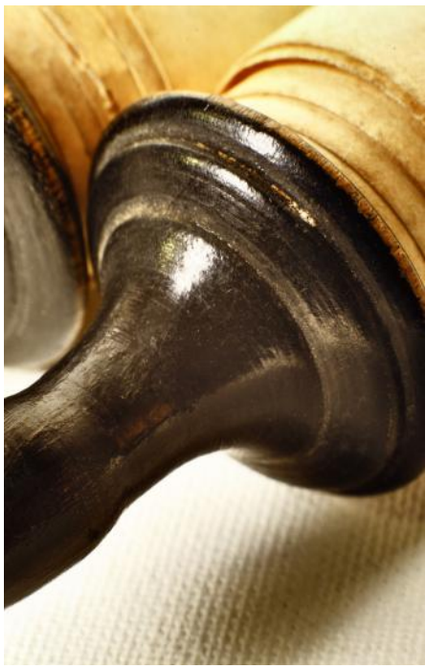
Starting Over

The completion of any significant portion of Torah learning is always an occasion for celebration. Any *siyum* (completion of a tractate of Talmud or Mishna) is usually accompanied by a festive meal to commemorate the happy event. There is a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment at having seen a difficult intellectual and time-consuming task to its successful conclusion.

Therefore, it is naturally understandable that the occasion of our completing the annual cycle of Torah readings with the reading of Vezot HaBracha on the final day of Sukkot makes it the most joyful day of the entire magnificent holiday season. Simchat Torah affirms our faith in Jewish continuity and our unshakable belief in the Divinity of the Torah Moshe brought down to Israel from Mount Sinai.

It is the holiday basically created by the Jewish people itself, replete with customs and nuances developed over the ages that have hardened into accepted practice and ritual. Here in Israel, where Simchat Torah and Shemini Atzeret occur on the same day, Simchat Torah, the folk holiday, has almost pushed Shemini Atzeret, the Biblical and *halachic* holiday, aside in thought and practice.

This is a practical example of how sometimes Jewish custom based upon intense love of and attachment to Torah overwhelms the Torah ritual itself. What makes Simchat Torah so special is the fact we begin to read immediately from the beginning of the Torah again, symbolizing no gaps in our study or our devotion to it. This is usually the case with all *siyum* ceremonies, in which the completion of one tractate immediately leads to the beginning of the study of another one.



However, despite the elation, the Torah ends on an apparently sad note, poignantly describing the death of our great teacher Moshe. He will never enter the Land of Israel but will only be able to glimpse it from afar. The generation he shepherded for 40 years has passed away, his sons will not inherit his position or power, and with his great gift of prophecy, he is aware of the terrible problems his beloved people of Israel must yet face and overcome through their long journey of history and destiny.

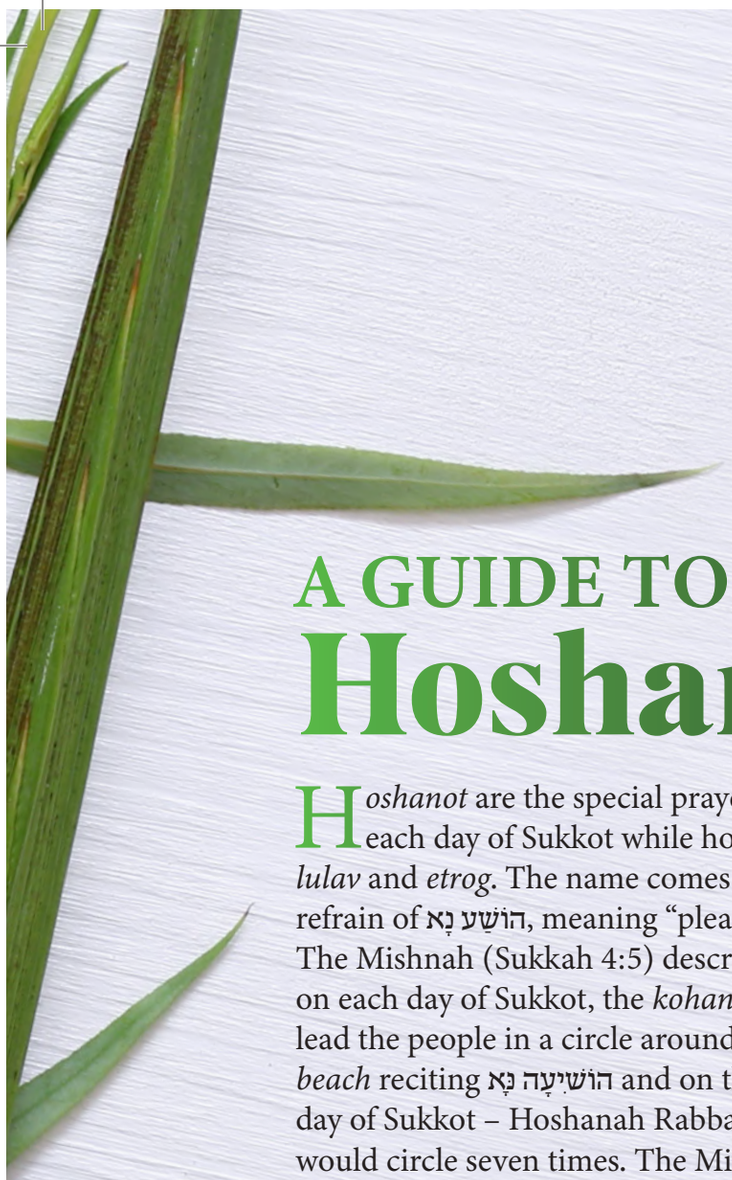
Nevertheless, the joy of the presence of the Torah within our nation overcomes these feelings of melancholy. As long as Moshe's words and ideals still live amongst the Jewish people there is great reason to rejoice. It means we have not lost our way and the eternity of Moshe and Israel is guaranteed. The nations of the world resent the fact we still have a chance to rejoice or attempt to live normal productive lives under terrible duress and distress.

Simchat Torah comes to teach us that we should rejoice when we are able to do so and celebrate our existence and accomplishments even if things are not exactly as we would wish them to be. Completing the Torah reading is a matter of perseverance, as is all of Jewish life.

The Torah's description of Moshe's death is meant to impress us with the fact that Judaism is not the cult of the personality. Even when Moshe, the greatest ever Jew ever, dies and leaves us bereft and alone, we are not to overly mourn and certainly not to despair.

We may yet continue to rejoice because the eternal Torah is still present within us with great vigor and vitality. As far as we are concerned, the game is never over. We suffer and fall but we are never defeated. That is the power the Torah grants us. It is the source of our great joy in celebrating the completion and simultaneous beginning of the reading of the Torah this year. So be it for all of the years yet to come.

Rabbi Berel Wein is Senior Rabbi of Beit Knesset HaNassi in Jerusalem and Director of the Destiny Foundation.



A GUIDE TO THE Hoshanot Prayers

Hoshanot are the special prayers recited each day of Sukkot while holding the *lulav* and *etrog*. The name comes from the refrain of הוֹשַׁע נָא, meaning "please save." The Mishnah (Sukkah 4:5) describes how on each day of Sukkot, the *kohanim* would lead the people in a circle around the *mizbeach* reciting הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא and on the seventh day of Sukkot – Hoshanah Rabbah – they would circle seven times. The Midrash describes how we emulate this ceremony as a sign we have emerged victorious from our judgment on Yom Kippur, just five days earlier.

The *hoshanot* were composed by the great liturgical poet Rabbi Elazar HaKalir and are, for the most part, arranged according to the *aleph-bet*. Each day, one *hoshanah* is read with seven being read on Hoshanah Rabbah. Each *hoshanah* has its own theme. Unlike most prayers, the order of the *hoshanah* varies depending on what day of the week Sukkot begins. This year, since Sukkot begins on Shabbat, the order is as follows:

אָם נְצוּרֵה – This *hoshanah* is recited on Shabbat and its theme is Shabbat – the obligations to remember and to keep Shabbat, the 2,000-cubit Shabbat boundary, the special Shabbat food and clothes, two loaves of bread at each meal, and more. (On Shabbat, we do not carry a *lulav* and *etrog* or circle the *bimah*.)

לְמַעַן אֱמִתֶּךָ – This *hoshanah* refers to G-d's various 'traits' – truth, greatness, splendor, kindness, goodness, unity, power, etc. It also mentions His covenant and the Beit HaMikdash which, while not traits, are still relevant to the holiday.

אֶעֱרֹךְ שׁוּעִי – The theme of this *hoshanah* is that we should arrange our prayers in advance, rather than wait till times of trouble. This prayer references the recently-completed *Yamim Noraim*.

אֶבֶן שְׁתִיָּה – This *hoshanah* mentions Yerushalayim in general and the Beit HaMikdash in particular – the foundation stone, the threshing floor purchased for the land upon which to build the Beit HaMikdash, the trees imported from Lebanon to make panels, etc. Salem refers to the name of Yerushalayim until the times of Avraham Avinu, while Zion is the Temple Mount.

אֵ־ל לִמְוֹשָׁעוֹת – Salvation is the theme here. It lauds Torah scholars, who master the secrets of the Torah and all the details of the law, and turn to G-d to beseech Him to redeem us.

אֲדוֹן הַמּוֹשִׁיעַ – This *hoshanah* discusses G-d as our savior – only He has the ability to provide us with sufficient crops and rain.

There is an additional *hoshanah* not recited during Sukkot this year, but traditionally read on Hoshanah Rabbah:

אִם אֲנִי חוֹמָה – The nation of Israel, is compared to a wall, the sun, a palm tree, and more.

On Hoshanah Rabbah, we recite seven *hoshanot*, including:

- לְמַעַן אֱמִתֶּךָ
- אֶבֶן שְׁתִיָּה
- אִם אֲנִי חוֹמָה
- and אֲדוֹן הַמּוֹשִׁיעַ.

In addition, there are three special *hoshanot* for Hoshanah Rabbah:

אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה – Man is compared to various things, ranging from a tapestry to animals.

אֲדָמָה מֵאֲרֹר – This discusses the curses Adam brought upon the world through his sin.

לְמַעַן אֵיתָן – The deeds of our righteous forebears with a unifying theme of fire. ■

Rabbi Dov Lipman

Jericho, Circles and Remembering the Goal

"And G-d said to Yehoshua, 'See I have given you Yericho… and you shall go around the city…encircle the city once. Thus you shall do for six days…On the seventh day you shall go around the city seven times'…So they did for six days… on the seventh day… they went around the city in this manner seven times" (Yehoshua 6).

Can one read these words and not immediately picture the *Hoshanot* we recite throughout Sukkot? Why is Sukkot the time we reenact the Jewish people's conquest of Yericho?

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that circling Yericho demonstrated we were not going to be influenced by the spiritual contamination of the inhabitants of the city, and by extension those who lived in the Land of Israel. The Yericho-like imagery of the circling of the *bima* on Sukkot comes to remind us that one of the goals of the holiday is to combat the negative spiritual impact of the "70 nations of the world," as symbolized by the 70 special Sukkot sacrifices offered in decreasing order.

When Israel was divided among the tribes, 500 square *amot* of Yericho, the precise size of the Temple Mount, was designated for the tribe that would host the Beit HaMikdash (Sifri Beha'alotcha 81). The Gemara (Taanit 27a) teaches that when each of the 24 groups of *Kohanim* had their two-week rotation to serve, half went to Yerushalayim to work in the Beit HaMikdash and half went to Yericho to secure food and water for the half working in the Mikdash.

The Mishna (Tamid 3:8) lists nine sounds that emanated from the Beit HaMikdash – including the *shofar* blasts and the songs of the *Levi'im* – and were heard in Yericho. Similarly, the fragrance of the incense burnt in the Beit HaMikdash could be smelled in Yericho. The Raavad explains that the sounds were not heard and the fragrance could not be smelled by any of the cities between Yerushalayim and Yericho. They miraculously reached Yericho, and Yericho alone.

The Raavad teaches that just like before eating the crops of Israel one must separate *teruma* for the *Kohanim*, Yericho was the first city captured upon entering Israel and it is sanctified as *teruma* for G-d. This can explain why Yehoshua forbade anyone to take the spoils of Yericho for their personal use. Just like the holiness of the Beit HaMikdash meant items belonging to it could not be taken and used by individuals, the same applied to Yericho.

But didn't Rabbeinu Bachya teach that Yericho represented the spiritual contamination of the inhabitants of the Land of Israel? How can it be holy like Yerushalayim and the Beit HaMikdash?

When walking around the city seven times, the people were led by the *Aron*, which carried the *luchot*, as they encircled the city. The act of simply following the *Aron*, while walking in circles as our first act upon entering the Land of Israel, demonstrated our recognition that we enter the Land to follow the Torah and gain the spiritual benefits of the Land. In doing so, we combat all impurities in the physical land and elevate it to high spiritual levels.

Sukkot is the holiday during which we ask G-d for rain and success with the coming year's crops. This focus on physical hopes and aspirations always runs the risk of pulling us away from G-d and spirituality. Thus, while asking G-d for rain during the *Hoshanot* ceremony, we reenact what our ancestors did before conquering Yericho, elevating it from the lowest levels of contamination to the highest levels of spirituality akin to Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash. This reminds us that as we pray for physical blessings in the Land of Israel, the ultimate goal of this physical success is to enable us to focus on reaping the spiritual blessings this Land has to offer the Jewish people.

As we circle the *bima* with our *lulav* and *etrog* and beg G-d to bless the Land of Israel with a successful rainy season, let us remember that the goal of physical blessings in the Land of Israel is to help us focus on Torah, *mitzvot*, and to become a holy people, experiencing a close relationship with G-d.

Rabbi Dov Lipman is a former MK and the author of seven books about Judaism and Israel.

Rabbi Ari Z. Zivotofsky

The "Flimsy" Davidic Dynasty?

On Sukkot, an enigmatic line is added near the end of *Birkat HaMazon:* הָרַחֲמָן הוּא יָקִים לָנוּ אֶת סֻכַּת דָּוִד הַנּוֹפֶלֶת – may the Merciful One restore the fallen *sukkah* of David. While this short prayer has become a popular song, its meaning and place in the Sukkot liturgy is far from clear.

The origin of the phrase is Amos 9:11, part of Amos' glorious epilogue of hope depicting the golden End of Days. The prophecy speaks of G-d raising up *Sukkat David*, closing up its breaches, raising up its ruins, and building it like in the good old days. The prophecy continues (v. 13) with the famous image of the plowman overtaking the reaper and the treader of grapes meeting the one who plants seeds, and the mountains dripping with sweet wine. Truly a beautiful vision, but it is not clear what the hapax legomenon[1] "*Sukkat David*" refers to. Most traditional commentators assume it refers to the Davidic dynasty's rule over a united kingdom, as Amos was prophesying when there was a divided kingdom while the Temple still stood in Jerusalem and the Ten Tribes had not yet been exiled. Nonetheless, others interpret the phrase as referring variously to the Mikdash, Yerushalayim, or the *Shechina*.

Irrespective of its original intent is the question of how and why it entered the Sukkot liturgy. The list of "*HaRachamans*" that we say at the conclusion of *Birkat HaMazon* are post-Talmudic, first appearing in the Rishonim period. Yet the Sukkot addition was still not included. It is not that people were not familiar with the verse from Amos. It was used, and continues to be used, poetically in rabbinic literature.[2]

The phrase from Amos did enter the liturgy in about the 12th century in a context not connected to Sukkot – and seemingly later falling into disuse – in an Ashkenazi Motzei Shabbat *piyut* recently printed from manuscript (by Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Stal in a Torah journal called Segula vol. 14, Tammuz 5780).

The earliest mention of reciting this *HaRachaman* on Sukkot seems to be the 17th century, when it was mentioned by Rav Jousep Schammes (1604-1678) in his book of customs of the Worms community and by Rav Eliyahu Spira (1660–1712) in his Eliyahu Rabbah. Neither of these early sources provides an explanation as to the connection between the *Sukkat David* and the holiday of Sukkot. The parsimonious explanation is simply the appearance of the word "*sukkah*" in the eschatological verse and hence its easy integration and acceptance in the Sukkot liturgy.

Rav Yehuda Amital, in explaining the Maharal, says that in general a monarchy is termed *bayit*, as in *beit David*, owing to its strength. But a house has an additional characteristic. If it falls down and is rebuilt it is no longer the same entity. If one makes a vow to not benefit from a house, if that house falls down and is rebuilt the person may benefit, as it is now a new house (Ran, Nedarim 7a). Conceptually, a *sukkah* is different. A *sukkah* is easily knocked down, but owing to its inherently flimsy nature, it is considered the same *sukkah* when rebuilt. Such is the way with the Jewish people and with the Davidic dynasty – they have been blown around and knocked down by the vicissitudes of history, but they are rebuilt.

The rebuilt country of Israel in the Land of Israel is not a new entity, but rather a continuation of the previous "*sukkah*" that stood here. So too, when the Gemara (Sanhedrin 96b) says the verse in Amos is referencing the Mashiach, it will not be a new dynasty, but a restoration of the same Davidic dynasty.

The inclusion of this request based on the verse from Amos specifically on Sukkot may be related to its immediately following Yom Kippur. The Davidic dynasty endures because King David – unlike King Shaul – was able to admit he sinned and repented. Having just come through Yom Kippur, we as a nation are saying to G-d that we can emulate King David in that regard, and therefore are deserving to have his dynasty, the *Sukkat David*, and the Temple, restored in our renewed country.

---

1 A term of which only one instance of use is recorded.

2 For example, the 11th-century Machzor Vitry, when mentioning Tisha B'Av, invokes this optimistic verse from Amos. Similarly, the 15th century Leket Yosher concludes his introduction with this verse of optimism.

Rabbi Ari Z. Zivotofsky is a Professor of Neuroscience and a tour guide in Ir David.

Rabbi Johnny Solomon

Renewing our Faith

Sukkot is the festival of faith, and by leaving our homes and dwelling in a *sukkah* under the natural *s'chach*, we demonstrate our faith in G-d. In fact, the Zohar (Emor 103a) actually refers to the *s'chach's* shade as צילא דמהימנותא – the protective shade of faith. With this in mind, I would like to explore one of the *halachot* of the *s'chach*, and thereby consider how we should relate to our faith.

The Mishna (Sukkot 1:1, 9a) presents a disagreement regarding the halachic validity of a *sukkah yeshana* (literally, an old *sukkah*) – a *sukkah* on which *s'chach* has sat for over 30 days and which had not expressly been placed there for the sake of the upcoming Sukkot festival. According to Beit Shammai, this 'old' *s'chach* is invalid and must be renewed, while Beit Hillel permits the use of 'old' *s'chach*.

However, while we follow the position of Beit Hillel, the Yerushalmi (Sukkah 1:2, 4b) stipulates that some minor act of הִתְחַדְּשׁוּת (renewal) must still be performed on a small section of the 'old' *s'chach*.

Admittedly, this requirement is not evident from the conclusion in the Gemara, and hence the Rambam and the Rif make no reference to performing any renewal act on 'old' *s'chach*. However, there are other authorities[1] who state that the Yerushalmi's demand לְחַדֵּשׁ בָּהּ דָּבָר – to renew an element of [the *s'chach*] – is an absolute requirement.

Finally, there is an opinion[2] that while a renewal act should, *lechatchila*, be performed on 'old' *s'chach* to demonstrate the intentionality of using it for the *mitzvah*, this is not an absolute requirement. In light of this debate, common practice is to shake or momentarily lift a small section of 'old' *s'chach* as an act of renewal.

While *s'chach* – which reminds us of how G-d protected *Bnei Yisrael* as they journeyed through the wilderness, and whose shade represents the protective shade of faith – can technically fulfill its function as a reminder of faith even if it has been sitting on a *sukkah* for more than 30 days, its long-term presence can often mean we forget its core message. Consequently, we are required (according to some), and strongly encouraged (according to others), to perform a renewal act on the *s'chach* to ensure we haven't forgotten what the *s'chach* is meant to teach us spiritually.

Just as 'old' *s'chach* needs a renewal act to help us remember its function and message, so people of faith can at times forget what it means to have faith, because anything perpetually present in our lives runs the risk of us taking it for granted and forgetting its core message.

So, while we shake or momentarily lift up a small part of the *s'chach* as an act of renewal, what sort of renewal act should we be performing on our own faith?

Faith, like *s'chach*, is often fragile. Faith, like *s'chach*, is always porous. The mistake we sometimes make is viewing faith as if it was a solid concrete building with a watertight roof. But this is a misnomer. Faith is not comparable to a solid house, and faith is not 'watertight.' Instead, faith is like a *sukkah* whose test of strength is whether it can stay standing in response to a רוּחַ מְצוּיָה (literally, 'a typical wind,' but which also translates as 'the current spirit of the times'),[3] and whose roof – which represents the protective shade of faith – can protect its inhabitants notwithstanding the fact it is both fragile and porous to the elements.

Just like the *s'chach* is shaken or momentarily lifted as an act of renewal, our faith can be renewed either when we have undergone a challenging experience that has 'shaken' us, or been through an experience that has 'lifted' us. And why? Because by having either of these experiences, we are reminded that faith is not something that is fixed but is, instead, something that can be moved and renewed.

And this is why, if your *sukkah* has had *s'chach* on its roof for over 30 days, you need to move it. By doing so, it will remind you that true faith must be something that moves you too.

---

1 Rav Yehudai Gaon (as cited in the Shibolei HaLeket Ch. 337), Tosfot (Sukkah 9a), Rosh (Sukkah 1:13), Tur (Orach Chaim 636), Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 636:1).

2 Meiri (on Sukkah 9a), Ran (on Sukkah 9a), Ritva (Sukkah 2a), Magen Avraham (OC 636:1), Mishna Berura (OC 636:4).

3 Sukkah 24b.

Rav Johnny Solomon teaches at seminaries in Yerushalayim and writes Jewish educational content for schools and organizations around the world.

Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel

From a Place of Purity to a Place of Peace

Anyone who has ever been to Jerusalem in the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot will testify to a unique energy in the air. The city is abuzz. The excitement is palpable, as people fill the streets and flood the markets, buying the *Arba Minim*, supplies for their *sukkot*, and food for the holiday.

Many have the custom to begin building their *sukkah* immediately after Yom Kippur. After fasting and praying all day, they eat something and get right to work – going from one *mitzvah* to the next – not delaying or missing the opportunity. It's a labor of love, which expresses the desire to translate the inspiration of the past 25 hours into action. There is something magical that takes place on these moonlit Jerusalem rooftops and balconies. It's an intense ending to an intense day.

Curiously, the custom to begin building one's *sukkah* immediately following Yom Kippur is cited by the Rema twice: once in the last section of the *Laws of Yom Kippur*, and then again in the first section of the *Laws of Sukkot*.

Why does the Rema – always meticulous in his comments – cite this custom twice? And what is the reason for this practice? Can't the *sukkah* wait till tomorrow?

The first time the Rema records the *minhag*, he mentions "those scrupulous in observance (*hamedakdikim*) begin building immediately..." The Mishnah Berurah interprets this to imply that everyone else begins the next day. That is why the custom is mentioned twice. Once for those who begin at night, and once for those who begin the next day. However, that answer is difficult to accept because the Maharil (*Minhagim, Hil. Sukkot*) writes that immediately following Yom Kippur "every individual" should be involved in building the *sukkah*. Every individual – not just those scrupulous in their observance!

Perhaps there is a deeper answer.

By building the *sukkah* immediately after Yom Kippur, we recognize the intimate connection between Sukkot and the days that immediately precede it. By mentioning the custom in both the *Laws of Yom Kippur* and again in the *Laws of Sukkot*, the Rema stresses this connection.

According to Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (*Chochmat Shlomo, Orach Chayim* 625:1), we begin building the *sukkah* right after Yom Kippur, as G-d, so to speak, covers our sins on Yom Kippur and on Sukkot He covers us with His *sukkah*.

The intimate connection between the Days of Awe and Sukkot is also deeply rooted in our historical experience. According to one opinion, the *sukkah* represents the Clouds of Glory, which protected the Jewish people in the wilderness. But after the Sin of the Golden Calf, the Clouds of Glory were removed. On Yom Kippur, the Jewish people were forgiven for the Sin of the Golden Calf, and the Clouds of Glory returned.

The Vilna Gaon writes that Sukkot commemorates the return of the Clouds of Glory and with them, the Divine Presence. This is why Sukkot is celebrated at this time of year, immediately following Yom Kippur.

Once Sukkot begins, we are surrounded by *mitzvot* – an expression of our closeness to G-d. We carry the *lulav* through the streets, raised like a banner, expressing confidence that we were victorious in judgment just a few days ago.

And while we are required to rejoice during every festival, Sukkot is especially joyous. In fact, Sukkot is called the "time of our rejoicing." It is the very paradigm of joyful celebration – *the* "*Chag*." That joy is a result of the closeness we feel to G-d, achieved during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

As we sit in the *sukkah*, the Divine Presence surrounds us. In Chassidic thought, it is a symbol of G-d's love. The Sefat Emet compares the *sukkah* to a *chuppa*, a wedding canopy. It is the canopy under which the Jewish nation is wed to G-d. The *sukkah* is also an embrace. According to *halacha*, the *sukkah* must have at least two walls and a handbreadth of a third. The two walls and a handbreadth are imagined as an arm providing a great big Divine hug.

And after having gone through the Days of Awe – isn't that all we need?

Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel lives and teaches in Jerusalem, where he serves as Mara D'atra of Har Nof's Kehilat Zichron Yosef.

Rabbi Benzion Scheinfeld

Celebrating Now and Then:

THE CONTRASTING MESSAGES OF SUKKOT AND PESACH

Why is it that Pesach – rather than Sukkot – is known as the holiday when Jews relive and recreate their past? On Sukkot, we are commanded to take our furniture out of our house and eat and sleep for seven days in a hut covered only by *s'chach*, braving the elements, just as our ancestors did in the desert. The *beraita* in Masechet Sukkah elaborates and says we must do all of our activities in the *sukkah*. The obligation to reenact on Sukkot is more encompassing in both time (seven days vs. one for most Pesach *mitzvot*) and scope (all of life's activities vs. just eating). If observed correctly, Sukkot seems to be a far more intense recreation of our past history than Pesach. So why all the fanfare for Pesach?

Perhaps the answer can be found by solving another apparent mystery that separates the two *chagim*. Concerning Pesach, the Mishna states: "On this night one is obligated to imagine themselves as if they were personally leaving Egypt." On Seder Night, one must also bring one's imagination in addition to all the required physical items (Pesach, Matzah and Maror). Just eating *matzah* and *maror*, even *LeShem Mitzvah*, would not fulfill one's obligation. Rather, one must use one's imaginative faculties to actually envision oneself as if I personally was leaving Egypt.

In contrast, despite the intense demands of "living 24/7 in the *sukkah*," we are not asked to use our imagination. Eating and sleeping in the *sukkah* without imagining you are in a hut in the Sinai Desert having just left Egypt is just fine. Why then, if the Torah goes to such lengths to recreate the Sukkot experience of the *midbar*, does it leave out the clincher? Namely, our obligation to imagine we are part of *Klal Yisrael* journeying through the desert, as we are obligated to envisage on Pesach?

Pesach and Sukkot evoke very different internal narratives and emphasize very different types of spiritual growth. Pesach is a holiday that emphasizes a one-time event that cannot and will not ever be duplicated. The *ahava* between *Klal Yisrael* and G-d expressed on the night of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* was so intense and powerful that it echoes through time. Once a year, the Torah demands we try our best to "remember" that special night using physical activities to arouse our imagination and connect with this moment. We are obligated to do our best to escape our present reality and go back to a time many years ago. By going back and touching that distant moment – albeit in our imagination – we are fulfilling the *Avodat HaYom* (the duty of the day) of feeling the echoes of that incomparable event.

On Sukkot, however, we are not asked to leave our present reality at all. The powerful recreations of Sukkot are not meant to jar our imagination and transfer us to a distant past. Sukkot does not demand זְכִירָה, remembrance, but יְדִיעָה, knowledge. In fact, the recreations of Sukkot are not reenactments at all. They are so real they are actually reality.

We do not have to imagine our past to feel the internal messages of Sukkot. We are asked to simply be sensitive to our present reality. For sitting in a *sukkah* circa 2020 is just the same as sitting in a *sukkah* circa 3300 BCE. Both cases involve sitting in a flimsy temporary shelter (דִּירַת עֲרַאי) open to the elements, aware of our tenuous physical existence in עוֹלָם הַזֶּה, in this world, which is ultimately an עוֹלַם עֲרַאי, a transient world dependent upon G-d. There is no need for imagination or connecting to a borrowed experience from our collective past.

All that is necessary for Sukkot is openhearted existential awareness of the present. It is through that openness we are to connect to G-d by embracing our present and the ever-present connection to *Hashem* built into the fabric of life. Sukkot represents the timelessness of our connection to G-d while Pesach is all about a moment in time.

LeZecher Nishmat Mrs. Esther Scheinfeld z"l, a woman whose personality and love of Torah and Eretz Yisrael touched and inspired so many lives. Niftara Rosh Chodesh Elul 5780, August 21, 2020.

Rabbi Benzion Scheinfeld is Director of Camp Kanfei Nesharim and a high school educator.

Rabbi Shalom Rosner

The Gift the Angels Don't Have

The Gemara (Shabbat) tells us that when Moshe Rabbeinu went up to *Har Sinai*, the *malachim* (angels) confronted him, complaining that G-d was giving the Torah to Moshe and not to them. Moshe responds, "It says in Your Torah, 'I am the L-rd your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt.' Angels, were you taken out of Egypt? It says in Your Torah don't worship other gods. Angels, do you ever have a desire to worship other gods? It says in the Torah 'honor your father and your mother.' Angels, do you have parents? It says in the Torah 'don't kill, don't steal, don't covet.' Angels. Do these apply to you?"

The Gemara says the angels recognized the truth of Moshe's argument and gave the Torah to him with no complaints. They even gave him gifts on his way down.

Many commentaries ask, what were the *malachim* thinking? They knew what it said in the Torah, they knew who it was for and yet they still wanted it. Why?

Some commentaries suggest the *malachim* knew the Torah existed on many different levels. פַּרְדֵּס stands for פְּשַׁט, רֶמֶז, דְּרַשׁ וְסוֹד. Four different levels of interpretation, from the simple to the mystically sublime. The angels recognized that the pshat, the simple interpretation, didn't apply to them. But they wanted to have the Torah in order to appreciate the deeper ideas. The Gemara answers that, yes, the deeper ideas and all the different levels are significant, but only if you live by the Torah. If you live by the pshat of the Torah – like human beings do – you can appreciate even the deeper levels.

The angels, who do not live by the Torah, cannot change their appreciation level.

> **"As we take a step back from that Gemara, let us look to Simchat Torah, when we essentially celebrate the many different levels of understanding and appreciating the Torah.**

As we take a step back from that Gemara, let us look to Simchat Torah, when we essentially celebrate the many different levels of understanding and appreciating the Torah.

The Gemara (Menachot 30) describes a *machloket tannaim* regarding the author of the last eight verses of the Torah that describe Moshe Rabbeinu's death. One opinion says Moshe Rabbeinu wrote them בְּדָמַע – in tears. How could Moshe have written them? Can one describe one's own death after the fact? What does that mean? The second opinion holds that Yehoshua bin Nun wrote the last eight verses. That sounds a little strange too, but it is certainly more logical than Moshe Rabbeinu writing about his own demise.

The Vilna Gaon suggests a fascinating idea. דָּמַע can mean tears, but it could also come from the word מְדוּמָע, mixed up. The Ramban tells us that on a deeper level, the entire Torah spells out the names of G-d. When Moshe Rabbeinu received the Torah from G-d, he received it in a decoded fashion. It didn't spell out the names of G-d anymore. The Torah was spelled out in a way mere mortals could understand. The Vilna Gaon suggests that the last eight verses of the Torah were given to Moshe בְּדָמַע – as a mixture – in its pristine, original, coded and 'mixed-up' state. It did not say וַיָּמָת שָׁם מֹשֶׁה (and Moshe died there). It said the name of G-d on a hidden, deeper level. After Moshe died, G-d decoded it for Yehoshua bin Nun to spell out the exact verses.

As we celebrate Simchat Torah, the end of the festive cycle, both of the *Yamim Noraim* and the *Shalosh Regalim*, let us recognize the unique gift of Torah. Let us try to live it on a *pshat* level and as we grow level by level, may we be *zoche* to appreciate it even more and plunge the Divine depths of its wisdom.

Rabbi Shalom Rosner is a Rebbe at Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh and Rabbi of the Nofei HaShemesh community.

Rabbi Stewart Weiss

All Wrapped Up in Mitzvot

"Like an eagle protecting its nest, G-d spreads His wings over us..."
(The song of Ha'azinu).

In this crazy-busy world of ours – forget about so-called "time-saving" devices, we're busier now than our previous generations ever were! – we struggle to find a "safe space" (sorry for using those overused buzz-words) to just be calm and peaceful. A place to let our minds roam free as we pause and think – just plain think – about the magnificent, multi-dimensional world around us, our place in it, and G-d.

I once asked Rav Shlomo Carlebach – a man who was perpetually on the move and surrounded by fans and friends – where he goes when he wants "private time." Where is his "escape room" where he can be alone with his thoughts? He pondered for a moment and said, "My one and only refuge from this all-too invasive and intrusive world is when I am completely wrapped up in my *tallit*!"

The *tallit* is one of four *mitzvot* that completely surround us from all sides so that, in a sense, we are "swallowed up" by the *mitzvah*. There is the *mikvah* too, of course, in which we immerse our whole body, and the *sukkah*, which also totally envelops us, and is the closest thing we can experience to the *Ananei Kavod*, the Clouds of Glory, the impenetrable, Heavenly wall that kept *Bnei Yisrael* safe in the desert.

In my *sukkah*, I am the Prince of my Castle (G-d, of course, remains the King!). Cozy (I prefer that to small) and constructed by our own hands, we can sit in the great outdoors, under the stars, and contemplate nature, escaping from the rush-rush-rush of 'normal' everyday existence. The decibel level has dropped, the spiritual level has risen, and somehow – despite its temporary structure – I feel safe there. I feel that G-d is squeezed right in here with me.

The fourth *mitzvah* in which we can be completely immersed is living in *Eretz Yisrael*. The moment we fulfill this glorious, foundational commandment and come to Israel, its *Kedusha* encircles us as if G-d is whispering, "You are home. You are safe in your *Sukkat Shalom*!"

Ironically, the *sukkah* was once a symbol of our national homelessness, as we moved from place to place through the desert on our epic journey to the Holy Land. We quickly assembled and disassembled our makeshift quarters, and headed to the next stop on the map, wandering and wondering when that long voyage would come to an end. Historically, it would continue for a long, long time throughout the Diaspora.

But now we are home, finally and forever. Wrapped in my *tallit,* sitting comfortably in my *sukkah* in the *re-Jew-venated* State of Israel, I can close my eyes as the *mitzvot* wash over me and I rhetorically ask, "Could it get any better than this?!"

Rabbi Stewart Weiss is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana.

Rabbi Jesse Horn

What is Special about Simcha on Sukkot?

While two of the three pilgrimage holidays have a special and distinctive theme, Sukkot, seemingly, does not. Pesach's is *cherut* (freedom) and Shavuot's is *Matan Torah* (the giving of the Torah), each of which defines the holiday and articulates their distinctiveness. Yet Sukkot's theme is *simcha* (happiness), which is an element also found on the other holidays. Why does Sukkot not receive its own unique motif?

Perhaps one may suggest that Sukkot has quantitatively more *simcha*. Although there is nothing unique to Sukkot, it does have more *simcha* than the other holidays. As the Rambam says, Sukkot has "excess happiness" (Lulav 8:12).

Alternatively, the *simcha* on Sukkot could be qualitatively different from the *simcha* on the other holidays. In other words, there are two models of *simcha*. One is the classic model, contained within Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, and the other is a singular model unique to Sukkot, similar to the way *cherut* characterizes Pesach and *Matan Torah* Shavuot.

What are these two models? Perhaps examining the different *halachot* of each can help us develop a theory to explain Sukkot's '*simchatic*' uniqueness.

How does one fulfill the *mitzvah* of *simcha* on Jewish holidays? For men, it's drinking wine and eating meat; for women, it's buying new clothing, etc. Each person should be involved with what they themselves enjoy (Pesachim 109a). The goal seems to be to increase people's happiness through engaging in activities that give them joy.

By contrast, the *simcha* of Sukkot is accomplished differently. Taking the *lulav* in the Beit HaMikdash is described by the Torah as ושמחתם, and be happy (Vayikra 23:40). Moreover, the *Simchat Beit HaShoeva* (Sukkot water-drawing festival) took place in the Beit HaMikdash as well.

The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 324) claims that this time of year is a time when people are naturally happy. After all, it's the harvest season, when farmers rejoice with the fruits of a year's hard work. Furthermore, being spiritually cleansed after Yom Kippur adds to that feeling of joy.

The goal of Sukkot is to take that happiness and channel it towards G-d, wherever we are. We raise a *lulav* in all locations on the first day, and specifically in the Beit HaMikdash, where we raise it on all seven days (on a Biblical level). The *arba minim*, plants that embody the successful harvest, are used in religious practice – to serve G-d.

While the goal of the classic *simcha* (the one existent in all three holidays), is to generate personal and national happiness and rejoice in expansive fashion, Sukkot's *simcha* is fundamentally different. Because the *chag* itself carries a preexisting *simcha*, the Torah aims at now raising that *simcha* to a higher level and focusing it towards G-d.

We express our innate happiness in an appropriate spiritual way, through sincere religious experience.

This lesson is not just important for Sukkot, but for life in general. One should direct and elevate one's natural emotions and feelings in a way that can better serve G-d and bring us closer to Him. And that, in turn, leads to even greater *simcha*.

Rabbi Jesse Horn is a Senior Ra"m (Rosh Metivta) at Yeshivat Hakotel and director of the Mizrachi/Yeshivat Hakotel Mechanchim program.

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Our Protective Fortress

The *sukkah* we live in during Sukkot is by definition a temporary dwelling. The Sages ruled that a very tall structure, over 10 meters high, is invalid as a *sukkah* because it is a permanent structure. On the other hand, an exposed hut consisting of only two walls and a handbreadth for the third is perfectly acceptable.

This rickety booth is our protective fortress. As King David said, "You protect them in a *sukkah* from the strife of tongues" (Tehillim 31:21). Why should such a flimsy structure be a paradigm of protection and safety?

The Sukkot of the Great Assembly

To better understand the metaphor of the *sukkah*, we should examine a remarkable Talmudic passage. In Nechemiah 8:17, it states that the Jewish people had not dwelt in *sukkot* from the time of Yehoshua until the *mitzvah* was reinstated after their return from the Babylonian exile. How could this *mitzvah* have been neglected for so many centuries?

The Talmud (Arachin 32b) explains that the Jewish people always performed the *mitzvah* of dwelling in a *sukkah*. However, the *sukkot* erected by the Great Assembly in the time of Nechemiah were special *sukkot*, possessing a protective quality that had not existed since the days of Yehoshua bin Nun. According to the Talmud, these were not even physical *sukkot*, but rather a unique spiritual act of Ezra and the Great Assembly: "They prayed and abolished the passion for idolatry, and this merit protected them like a *sukkah*."

The Ultimate Fortress

Clearly, the protective aspect of the *sukkah* is of a spiritual nature. The eternal truth is that the *sukkah* — purposely defined as a structure so flimsy it cannot even be called a proper dwelling — is a fortress that protects us from all adversaries and foes. What is it that transforms the exposed *sukkah* into a shelter and stronghold? Certainly not any of its physical properties. Rather, its source of inner strength is none other than G-d's word. The *sukkah* protects us by virtue of the Torah law that declares this structure to be our shelter during the holiday of Sukkot.

This is an important message for all times, especially in our generation. We need great courage to return to the Land of our fathers and rebuild our national home. Where can we find the moral and spiritual resolve to withstand the challenges of those who oppose our return and deny our right to a homeland in *Eretz Yisrael*? Like the *sukkah* dwelling, our national home is based on the spiritual strength of G-d's eternal word. The most advanced weapons may be able to penetrate the thickest walls, but they cannot prevail over the stronghold of G-d's word.

This is our fortress, our ultimate shelter of security. G-d's eternal promise that the Jewish people will return to their Land and the House of Israel will be built once again.

The protective *sukkah* of the Great Assembly was the merit provided by their spiritual efforts to abolish the desire for idolatry. Similarly, our right to the Land of Israel is based not on our military prowess but on the moral strength of our eternal covenant with G-d and the merit of the Torah's *mitzvot*.

Beautifying the Law

However, we should not be satisfied with keeping only the minimum requirements of Torah law. The Sages taught that Jerusalem was destroyed because the judges ruled according to the strict letter of the law. They failed to take into account the spirit of the law and seek a ruling both just and compassionate — *lifnim mishurat ha-din* (Baba Metzia 30b).

The *mitzvah* of *sukkah* is based on Divine law, but there is an ancient custom to adorn the *sukkah* with decorated fabrics, fruits, and grains (Sukkah 10a). We should similarly seek to "adorn" the Torah law. We should go beyond minimum requirements and aspire to the highest level of G-d's word, in its purest ethical form. Then we will merit that "David's fallen *sukkah*" (Amos 9:11), the prophet's metaphor for Jewish sovereignty, will rise again, speedily in our days.

From Silver from the Land of Israel and adapted from Ma'amarei HaReaya vol. I, pp. 149-150.

Rabbi Chanan Morrison is the author of several books on Rav Kook's writings.

David Curwin

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן, פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים, וַעֲנַף עֵץ־עָבֹת, וְעַרְבֵי־נָחַל

"On the first day, you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook..." (Vayikra 23:40)

It is interesting to note that despite the Biblical origin of the commandment, we don't use the words found in the verse. Let's look at how the words have changed.

The verse says we should "take" the Four Species, using the verb לָקַח. However, the blessing we say is עַל נְטִילַת לוּלָב, using the verb נָטַל. Why did the Rabbis change the verb?

The linguist Yechezkel Kutscher offers the following answer (which he heard from a high school student of his, who we now know as the famous Rabbi Mordechai Breuer): while in Biblical Hebrew לָקַח meant "to take," by the time the Rabbis coined the blessing, the verb meant only "to buy." And the *halacha* is that one need not buy the *lulav* – it can come from *hefker* (i.e. have no previous owner) or be received as a gift. So נְטִילָה was substituted, which only meant "taking."

The first species mentioned is פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר, which we today call an אֶתְרוֹג. The word *etrog* is of Persian origin, where it was known as *turung*. A related word in Persian is *naranga,* meaning "fragrant fruit." This word eventually made its way to English as the word "orange." The original form of the word is hinted at in a story in Kiddushin 70a, describing a dialogue between Rav Nachman and Rav Yehuda. Rav Nachman insisted on using fancier words, instead of the more commonly used ones. A number of examples of such speech are given. In one case, Rav Nachman used the word *etronga*. Rav Yehuda said calling it an *etronga* is a sign of snobbery, and it should be called either *etrog* or the Aramaic *etroga.* While the use of *etrog* is universal today, Rav Nachman's *etronga* was closer to the Persian *turung.*[1]

The second species listed is כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים – "branches of palm trees." We refer to the palm branch with the post-biblical word לוּלָב. In Rabbinic Hebrew, *lulav* can also mean the more general "shoots, sprouts," and derives from the root לָבְלַב as in Yoma 81b, where it says "the grapevine shoots [*lulavim*] sprouted [*livlevu*]." The root לָבְלַב is parallel to the Biblical נָצָה, both meaning "to blossom."[2] Both of these roots are related to words meaning "to shine, to burn" (נָצַץ and לָבָה) since the blossoming of a plant radiates like the shine of a fire.

The third species is the "boughs of leafy trees [עֵץ־עָבֹת]." We refer to this species as הֲדַסִּים. Unlike the previous two species, *hadas* is a Biblical word, appearing in the books of Yeshayahu, Zechariah, and Nechemiah. The verse in Nechemiah is interesting because it mentions both *etz avot* and *hadas*. Ezra tells the people to study the Torah, and the people find the laws of Sukkot. They then order that throughout the Land everyone must.

צְאוּ הָהָר וְהָבִיאוּ עֲלֵי־זַיִת וַעֲלֵי־עֵץ שֶׁמֶן וַעֲלֵי הֲדַס וַעֲלֵי תְמָרִים וַעֲלֵי עֵץ עָבֹת לַעֲשֹׂת סֻכֹּת כַּכָּתוּב.

"... go out to the mountains and bring leafy branches of olive trees, pine trees, myrtles [*hadas*], palms and [other] leafy trees [*etz avot*] to make booths, as it is written" (Nechemiah 8:15).

The Rabbis[3] say that these are referring to two different kinds of myrtle branches. The *hadas* mentioned in this verse is referring to a "wild" type of myrtle, which is appropriate for the roof of the *sukkah*, and the *etz avot* is our *hadas*, which is used for the Four Species.

The fourth species mentioned is the "willows of the brook" – עַרְבֵי־נָחַל. The Talmud (Sukkah 33b) says while the verse is referring to willows that grow by the brook, any willow branches are acceptable for fulfilling the commandment. The word appears five times in the Bible, always in the plural form – *aravim*. The singular *arava* first appears in the Mishnah, which also refers to the plural as *aravot* (as we do today). Why not the Biblical *aravim*?

This may be part of a trend where words that appeared in Biblical Hebrew with the suffix *-im*, have the suffix *-ot* in Rabbinic Hebrew.

---

1 In the Jerusalem Talmud, Gittin 12a, the word *turunga* itself is used for *etrog*.

2 See Bereshit 40:10 and Targum Onkelos on that verse.

3 See Sukkah 12a and 32b.

David Curwin is a writer living in Efrat, and the author of the Balashon blog, balashon.com.

David M. Weinberg

Aliyah Anniversary Reflections

When my wife and I moved to Jerusalem 30 years ago this summer, TV ads were for drinking milk and eating oranges, not for 40" flat TV screens and "Fauda." Shimon Peres was on the right-wing of the Labor Party. English was the country's second language, not Russian.

Pesach and Sukkot vacations were for hiking the streams, mountains, and flower fields of the Galilee, not for shop-till-you-drop excursions in air-conditioned mega-malls or for flights out to the casinos of Greece. We danced the *hora*, not trance.

Zionism was considered the country's heroic and defining ideology, not a chauvinist and politically incorrect prejudice. Draft dodgers were people who closed their front doors when the evening breeze started. "Settlement" was not a dirty word.

"Withdrawal" was a financial term (something you did with money at the bank), and disengagement meant breaking someone's lovesick heart. Even the intellectuals were unabashedly patriotic.

The Western Wall was where Jews went to pray, not protest. The Law of Return brought Jews to Israel. The Chief Rabbinate sought to build bridges for religion with secular Israelis. The Supreme Court dealt with legal issues and left it to you and me and the Knesset to decide what is "reasonable."

Indeed, Israel has dramatically changed in recent decades, in both encouraging and disconcerting ways. But overall, my ledger is positive and forward-looking.

Israel is nine million people strong, a poignant riposte to Hitler's Holocaust. The birthrate is well above the Western average, and Israel remains a family-oriented society. Against many expectations, religious tradition (with unique Israeli flavors) and values-education are making healthy comebacks. 1.5 million immigrants have moved to Israel since 1990, boosting the country in every way.

According to all polls, Israelis are overwhelmingly proud and happy to live in this country, even if many are hurting now because of the corona crisis and they feel the government is not functioning well.

The economy is fundamentally healthy, and fortunately, interest rates are the lowest ever. Israeli hi-tech and biotech are benefiting billions of people around the world. And despite severe underfunding, medical care in Israeli hospitals is second to none.

Israel's leadership ranks are no longer a White-Ashkenazi-Labor-Socialist preserve, but more representative of the diverse population. Many youths still want to serve their country in the best and most difficult military units, and their determination to fix the social-economic ills of the country is stirring.

Israel's universities and yeshivas are first-class, with tens of thousands of students. The good L-rd has granted this country major natural gas offshore deposits, with Israel soon to become a net energy exporter. Israel is a world leader in desalination, which (along with this past winter's abundant rains) has largely solved the country's water problems.

In the grand strategic perspective, the regional security architecture is moving in directions that strengthen this country, where Israel is a linchpin of stability for the West and an ally for the Arabs in combating radical Islam. Only Iran and Turkey threaten Israel, and their comeuppance is coming. Israel's diplomatic horizons have never been broader. The American Embassy is finally in Jerusalem!

On a personal level, we arrived in Israel 30 years ago with one baby daughter. Since then, my wife and I have been blessed with five more kids (born in Jerusalem!), several sons-in-law and a daughter-in-law, and beautiful grandchildren. Almost all have studied in yeshiva and graduated university, including PhD and MBA studies, and even post-doctoral fellowships. Three have been senior IDF officers, two are front-line combat medics. They are proud of their long periods of service in defense of Israel.

In retrospect, moving to Israel was one of the best decisions we ever made. We thank G-d for accompanying us along the way. We feel fortunate to be part of a meta-historic, grand drama of Jewish national renewal and redemption. The next 30 years can only be even better.

David M. Weinberg is vice president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, jiss.org.il. His personal site is davidmweinberg.com.

Under Fire

ISRAEL SENDS FIREFIGHTERS TO CALIFORNIA

"You have less than 72 hours to pack the equipment, get your visas and passports in order and fly to California. They need our help."

This was a first for Israel. The first time the small country had sent a firefighting delegation to help its powerful ally, the USA, fight fires on American soil.

10 officers and firefighters from Israel's Fire and Rescue Services, rescue and forest fire experts, and a Foreign Ministry representative, recently returned to Israel from Sacramento, California, where they assisted local forces in battling a wave of wildfires sweeping through the area.

Since the beginning of the year, there have been nearly 7,900 wildfires in California, burning over 3.3 million acres. Since August 15, when California's fires increased, there have been 25 fatalities and over 4,200 structures destroyed. With no significant precipitation in sight, California remains dry and ripe for wildfires.

Straight into the fires they went, after quickly learning procedure and strategy from the Cal-Fire (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection) team. They gathered all their equipment and joined the battle. Due to COVID-19, the Israeli delegation joined a capsule of Cal-Fire firefighters and they worked side by side in 24-hour shifts over the next 12 days.

"We really felt the importance of our Jewish identity in California," said Edgar Blum, one of the Israeli firefighters. "The Jewish Agency and the consulate ensured we had kosher food, we recited *kiddush* on Friday night and met with the Jewish mayor of Sacramento, who thanked us for our efforts. It was certainly a proud-to-be-Jewish/proud-to-be-Israeli moment."

Many of the firefighters left families and young children at home to make this life-saving, property-saving trip. Not only were they putting their lives in danger and away from home for two weeks, they knew that upon their return, they would also have to spend another two weeks in mandatory quarantine. And not just any two weeks, but two weeks of *chagim*. "Now that all of Israel is in lockdown, it's like they're joining us in support, so that makes it feel a bit easier," Blum added.

"While we played just a small role in saving forest lands in Sacramento, it was extremely heartwarming to see firefighters from all around the world – especially Israel and the USA – joining forces and working together to save lives, forests and property. To see the humanity in helping those who needed to be relocated from their homes. This is what people are meant to do. Our most important work is coming together and helping each other." ■

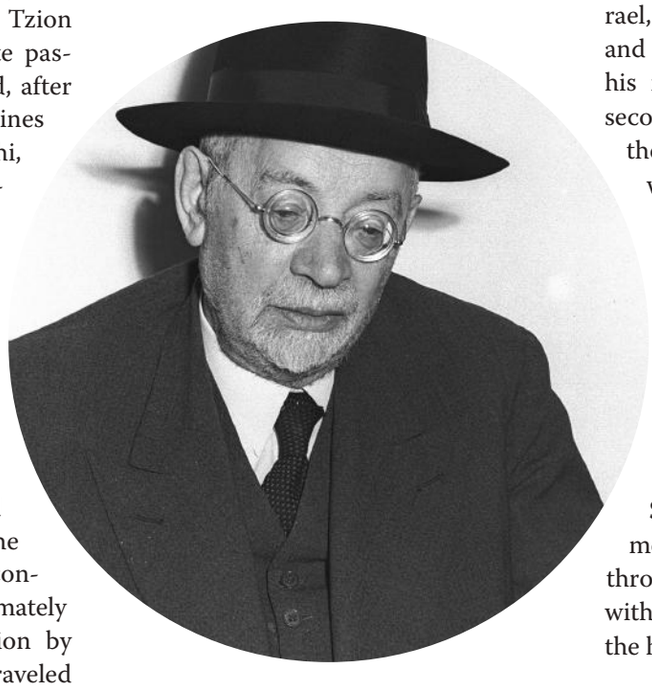
OUR SERIES ON LEADERS WHO HAVE SHAPED RELIGIOUS ZIONISM OVER THE LAST 150 YEARS

Rav Yehuda Leib HaKohen Maimon

Rav Yehuda Leib HaKohen Maimon (born Fishman, 1875-1962) was born in Bessarabia, then part of the Russian Empire. Rav Maimon studied in Lithuanian *yeshivot* and after receiving *semicha* from Rav Yechiel Mechel Epstein, author of the *Aruch HaShulchan*, he served as *maggid* in Marculesti and then as Rabbi of Ungeni (1905-13). He became active in the Chibbat Tzion movement, for whom he wrote passionate pro-*aliyah* material and, after meeting Rav Isaac Jacob Reines (1900), the founder of Mizrachi, he took an active part in Mizrachi's founding conference in Vilna (1902) and in its first world conference in Pressburg, Bratislava.

After making *aliyah* (1913), Rav Maimon was among the founders of Mizrachi's broad educational network in *Eretz Yisrael*. Imprisoned by the Turkish authorities at the outbreak of World War I and condemned to death, he was ultimately freed due to active intervention by Jewish American leaders. He traveled to the United States, where he helped organize and strengthen Mizrachi and, after returning to *Eretz Yisrael* on the first ship to reach its shores after World War I, he and Rav Kook established the institution of the Chief Rabbinate. In 1936, he founded Mossad HaRav Kook, which still publishes religious books. As Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, he was interned by the British on "Black Saturday" in June 1946.

He served as Israel's first Minister of Religion; helped draft Israel's Declaration of Independence and was one of its signatories, and played a pivotal role in promoting Judaism in the new Jewish State. A polymath and prolific author, he was awarded the Israel Prize for his contribution to rabbinic literature (1958).



Rav Maimon was one of many government ministers who, at Ben-Gurion's request, Hebraicized his original, exilic name. Not surprisingly, he did not much care for the name איש דג (the literal translation of Fishman); as he explained it, he chose the name מימון because his family was descended from the Rambam (Maimonides), whom he greatly admired and whose name was Moshe ben Maimon.

Rav Maimon was appointed Minister of Religion and Minister in Charge of War Casualties in both the provisional government and the First Knesset. Elected to the first Knesset in 1949 as a member of the United Religious Front (an alliance of Agudat Yisrael, Poalei Agudat Yisrael, Mizrachi and HaPoel HaMizrachi), he retained his ministerial role in the first and second governments, resigned from the Israeli cabinet over a dispute with Ben-Gurion, ceased his political activities after the death of his wife in 1957 and then devoted himself entirely to literary work.

Rav Maimon played what was unquestionably the dominant role in promoting Judaism in the founding of the new Jewish State and in its nascent governmental institutions, particularly through his remarkable friendship with Ben-Gurion, who held him in the highest regard.

He was instrumental in ensuring that all government institutions, including the army, serve only kosher food, in promoting public Shabbat observance (including by government officials), and in convincing Ben-Gurion to vest the Chief Rabbinate with authority over marriage and divorce matters. He is also credited with the wide acceptance amongst Zionist halachic authorities of reciting *Hallel* on Yom HaAtzmaut. ■

Background illustration of Rav Kook courtesy of www.gedolimcanvas.com

Rabbi Elisha Aviner

Teaching Our Children About Money

Children who are able to work for payment will experience the feeling of earning an honest wage. They worked hard – sometimes very hard – and for long hours, for a measly minimum wage. Nevertheless, they may learn that money does not grow on trees and they are likely to value the money they earned through their own efforts.

Our role is to educate them to become fond of their money and not to waste it. To encourage them to save and to spend it on worthwhile items and causes.

Too much fondness for honestly-earned money can of course lead to miserliness. A miser is someone who loves his money so much he cannot bring himself to part with it. Even if he sleeps with gold coins under his pillow, he himself is likely to live on a minimum and certainly won't give very much charity.

At the other extreme is wastefulness.

As the Rambam writes (Hilchot De'ot 1), there are those who chase money, and whatever they have is never enough, and there are those who make no effort to earn what they need. You have scrooges and savers and spendthrifts and philanthropists. Is there an ideal balance though?

How does that translate into financial education in our times? What do we want to teach our children about money?

1. That it's a means and not an end.

2. To value money earned through hard work and honesty.

3. Not to be too miserly or wasteful, to be wary of spending money in vain and to save and happily spend whenever the need arises.

However, what does "whenever the need arises" mean? What need? Whose need? Who decides what's needed and what's not?

I suggest the answer is a priority list. What's more important in life and what's less important? For example, the relationship between games and books, between cognitive skills games and trendy, fashionable pastimes, and when is there room for *chesed* and *tzedaka*. From the moment a child has his or her own money, one should educate them to give *ma'aser kesafim* (a tenth of their earnings) to charity.

Before children earn their first money, they largely receive it as a gift. Without parental intervention, they could place little value on money because it's so easy to come by.

That's why giving pocket money without an educational context can be very dangerous. Even those parents who give their child a few dollars to "go buy yourself a treat," are risking their youngsters placing little value on money, demanding more, or developing negative and self-destructive attitudes to cash.

In my opinion, our educational function is not solely to lay down the rules. Sure that's one side of the coin (pun intended), but the other is our own personal example. How do we treat our money?

For example, if we tend to express our approval of the wealthy, with a touch of not-so-hidden envy, we are transmitting a strong message that accumulating money is an ideal. Or if we buy gadgets and products because everyone else is buying them – and the neighbors have just bought one too – we are exemplifying the ideal that social status is a priority value and one can buy it through material goods. Or the children see us succumb to social pressure. And if parents fight with their child on every cent he or she asks for, even when it's justified, they are educating towards stinginess.

If Mom and Dad are always arguing about money, or bemoaning their lot and saying "we can't afford it" or are just never happy with what they have, the children absorb all that and could conclude that they just got dealt a bad deal and life sucks.

These are of course negative examples. Act in the opposite way around money and your children will learn how to treat it in a healthy, positive, grateful and generous way.

In short, be thoughtful of how you are behaving and thinking about money, and consider how you want your children to relate to it. Work out the principles you want to teach them and then practice what you preach.

Rabbi Elisha Aviner teaches in yeshivot hesder and founded an organization to help parents with adolescent education.

An Israëli in Dubai

by Michael Granoff

During the ride back to my hotel, I struck up a conversation with the Uber driver, who was from Pakistan, where his family remained. He asked where I was from. "Israel," I replied. He briefly turned around and smiled.

"You're the first person I've met from there!"

"I won't be the last," I promised him, as I imagined how this highly civilized society will react when the Chanukah vacation brings Israeli tourists by the throngs.

As he dropped me off, I said, "Do me a favor. Tell your family in Pakistan they should be next to make peace with us." He held up his hand for me to halt my exit from the car. After a moment of apprehension, I saw he had brought up the video app on his phone. "Here, please tell them yourself!" And so I did.

Of all the unexpected twists of 2020, nothing would have been harder for me to imagine than someone telling me that my next business trip would be to Dubai… direct from Tel Aviv! At the time, I already held tickets for two March visits to the US (trips both canceled by COVID), and the United Arab Emirates showed no signs of abandoning its fidelity to the decades-old Arab boycott of Israel.

Less than two months ago, it was announced that the UAE had agreed to normalize relations with Israel, and since then, through Linkedin requests and various introductions, I've had several worthwhile exchanges with Emiratis over video chat. A few weeks ago, an opportunity to travel to Dubai came about, and I leaped at it.

Never have I returned from two days abroad with a greater sense of optimism or potential. The purpose of the trip was to establish relationships as a basis for future business, and on that count, mission accomplished. But that was the least of it.

What I found was not just a hunger for commerce, but a genuine yearning for friendship between peoples. Each meeting evinced curiosity about Israel, and about Jewish practice, culture and history. That curiosity seemed to be colored by respect, and even affection at times. At moments, a strange sense of déjà vu set in — I guess, after all, we are indeed cousins. The tenor of my interaction with Emiratis was as unexpected as it was uplifting.

As with all life right now, this trip took place against the backdrop of the global COVID crisis. To gain entry into UAE, my Israeli passport was fine, but I also had to bring proof of a recent negative COVID test. In what appeared to be a highly disciplined society, the wearing of masks in closed spaces was virtually universal, and the case rate is low. This is in stark contrast to the situation in Israel, which at the time of my trip had the highest per-capita infection rate in the world. I saw many things Israel can learn from our new friends — management of the virus is certainly one of them.

My short trip was taken up mostly with meetings, but I had time for one brief excursion. With the temperature too high to make anything outdoors manageable, I took an Uber to the Dubai Mall – the world's second-largest with over half a million square meters of retail space. Even in a world in which retail is in a tailspin and COVID remains a threat, the mall – which seemed larger than all of Tel Aviv – had a sense of vibrancy and safety. The architecture was eye-catching, the space immaculate, and it featured seemingly every major global brand under the sun. Incongruously, it also has an indoor ski slope

– complete with an equipment rental section indistinguishable to those on the slopes of Utah. Catching the current outdoor temperature on my watch – 106 Fahrenheit (41 c) – I spent a few minutes watching bundled-up skiers make their way down the hill.

Of course, as impressive as my trip was, UAE lacks some critical features that are taken for granted in Israel and America. Only a minority of residents are Emirati nationals. When one of my interlocutors pointed out a policy change that opened up an opportunity, I probed as to how policy got changed. He seemed almost puzzled by the question, then smiled and just indicated that it's all up to the leaders. When an Israeli journalist asked his guide last week how the people felt about peace with Israel, she responded: "We follow our leaders. Whatever they decide we support, blindly."

Accustomed as so many of us are to enduring the cynicism and hypocrisy with which much of the world treats Israel, I am more reluctant to pass judgment on these bases than I might have been years ago. Bright-eyed idealism has a place, but to condition all relations on a Jeffersonian ideal would be impractical and counterproductive. My instinct, instead, was to build relationships with individuals based on mutual respect, and hope that over time all parties can learn lessons from one other.

The business potential of Israel-UAE relations has staggering ramifications which will become apparent very quickly. Today, commercial tickets for direct flights just weeks from now became available. However, even as I followed the enthusiasm in the press and social media in recent weeks, nothing could have prepared me for the depth and genuineness that repeated across the conversations I had. Or the gutra-clad property owner who enthused about the kosher kitchen they'd installed to accommodate future guests. (In fact, we landed back in Israel to the news that UAE is *insisting* its hotels make kosher food available.)

Another meeting, scheduled for an hour, extended to more than twice that length, with deep discussions on history, religion, philosophy and politics. At one point, my new friend squinted at me and sought assurance that if Joe Biden became President, he would not race to reenter the JCPOA, the so-called Iran nuclear deal which, quite clearly, looks no less dangerous to Emiratis than it does to most Israelis.

Yes, dealing with the mutual urgent threat of Iran undoubtedly helped bring us together, and is an issue on which we are compelled to cooperate. But less than 48-hours on the ground made clear to me that relations between our countries are going to be about more than shared security interests and even more than mutual economic exchange.

Leaders in Abu Dhabi, in Jerusalem and Washington who were courageous enough to pursue the Abraham Accords are worthy of universal commendation, and profound gratitude. The word 'historic' is loosely tossed around – this accomplishment will stand the test of time and prove to be one of the most impactful regional events of the era. One hopes it will pave the way for fruitful relations between Israel and many other countries.

The evening before I departed, I was part of a large group that gathered at a restaurant attached to a luxury hotel. Even though I did not get the full culinary experience (because I keep kosher), it would not surprise me to find the establishment on a list of the world's best restaurants, even based solely on the level of service.

Shortly after came the most memorable moment of the visit when Ahmad with whom I was in conversation, checked his phone and I checked mine. We had both received news alerts from outlets in our respective countries. My alert read "Israel, UAE to sign deal at White House on September 15 — US officials." We raised our mojitos (mine alcoholic, his not) to toast the moment. And history did indeed seem to be in the air.

As we approach the final quarter of 2020, the year itself has already become a punchline of infamy. But life is nothing if not paradoxical. And this week gave me hope that 2020 may also be recalled as the year the promise of peace in the Middle East at long last became a reality. Inshallah.

Michael Granoff emigrated to Israel in 2013 with his wife and four children.

Rabbi Benji Levy

Finding Happiness in Corona Times

THE MOMENTS BETWEEN THE MILESTONES

Milestones and *smachot* have looked very different in recent months. Leading up to these special occasions, many people are disappointed the event will look very different to how it looked in their dreams. And yet after the event, many have shared that it didn't dampen their *simcha* at all. I believe that an ancient ritual commemorated on Sukkot can help us appreciate not just these more modest milestones, but perhaps even the quieter moments we have been experiencing in between.

The Talmud (Sukkah 51a) states: 'whoever did not see the joyous water-drawing celebrations, never saw joy in his life.' While there were elaborate festivities, the essence of this celebration revolved around a ceremony which involved drawing 'from the wells of salvation' (Isaiah 12:3) in the heart of the City of David and bringing these waters to appeal for a bountiful season of rain. While this ceremony appears strange, the question begs as to why it is the ultimate symbol of joy? Surely there are other milestones in one's life where joy is experienced on a deeper level than the libations of the plainest liquid – water? Moreover, if libations are to be celebrated, surely there are more precious liquids such as: 'wine that gladdens the heart of man' or 'oil that makes his face shine…' (Psalms 104:15) Other liquids such as these were used many times in Temple offerings – why is the essence of joy associated with the most basic of liquids?

Life is filled with many milestones. Signposted by events such as birthdays, *bar/bat mitzvahs*, engagements, weddings, graduations, reunions and other festivities, we always celebrate the big moments and are excited by the irregular excitement of such events. However, if our joy is only acknowledged at these times, the humdrum regularity of the majority of life becomes but an intermission between the highlights. The oft-unnoticed periods between are where we spend most of our life and it would be sad to allow these intervals to remain out of focus. Whereas oil and wine are luxuries, water is a necessity. The former are artificial stimuli usually reserved for special occasions, while the latter is part and parcel of every liquid for every living being. Corona has brought this message into greater focus.

The celebration of water during the festival of Sukkot is the 'extraordinarification' of the ordinary – the celebration of the moments between the milestones, slowing down the periods in our life that we often fast-forward. Giving birth is incredible, but this pales in comparison with the potential life to be lived – we should rejoice at a wedding, but even more in the resulting marriage. Perhaps Sukkot is the 'time of our rejoicing' because after the inspiration of the High Holidays it celebrates the simplicity of nature through the Four Species and *sukkot*.

This idea is highlighted in the ultimate collective celebration of the year revolving around the most elementary liquid. Thus perhaps the statement of the Mishnah that: 'whoever did not see the joyous water-drawing celebrations, never saw joy in his life' is to be taken literally. If one only experiences joy on the islands of happy occasions and special events, one will never experience true joy in the mundane yet miraculous ocean of life.

Rabbi Benji Levy is CEO of Mosaic United.

HaMizrachi Family Page

What is Shemini Atzeret?

The holiday of Shemini Atzeret appears twice in the Torah: Vayikra 23:39
and Bamidbar 29:35. The Torah does not say much about it though.
It does not directly give the date of the holiday. Instead, it sets the date of the holiday as
"the eighth day" (Yom haShemini), meaning the eighth day of Sukkot.
It describes the holiday as atzeret, a holiday of assembly, conclusion or stopping.
It states that work is not permitted on this day.
It lists sacrifices to be brought to the Temple in Jerusalem on the holiday.

While Shemini Atzeret is a separate holiday (e.g. in our prayers, it is described
as Shemini Atzeret, not Sukkot and ritual objects used during the
seven days of Sukkot, including the sukkah,
the lulav and the etrog, are not used on Shemini Atzeret),
it is still included in the season called Z'man Simchateinu, the time of our joy.
Starting on Shemini Atzeret (so that we can sit in a dry sukkah throughout Sukkot), we begin
adding the request for rain – from the One who reigns – into our Amidah prayers:
מַשִּׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגָּשֶׁם – "He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall."

Here are some rainy jokes to get your family into the smiling spirit:

What is a king's favorite kind of precipitation? Hail!

When does it rain money? When there is "change" in the weather.

What's the difference between a horse and the weather? One's reined up,the other rains down.

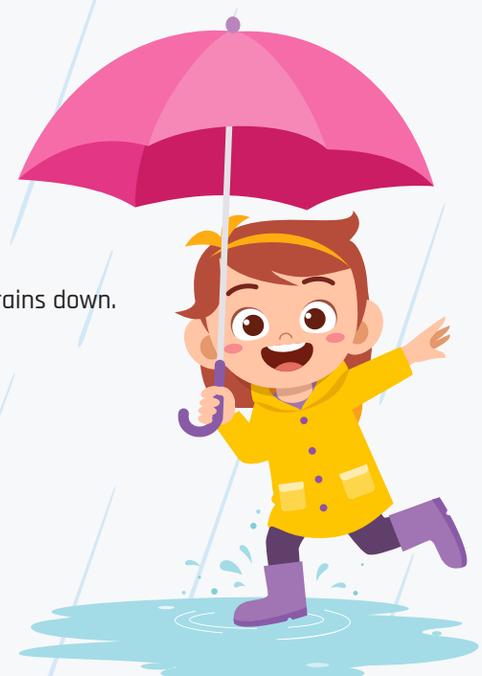
What do you call it when it rains chickens and ducks? Foul (fowl) weather.

What did one raindrop say to the other? Two's company, three's a cloud

What does it do before it rains candy? It sprinkles!

What do you call a wet bear? A drizzly bear

What often falls but never gets hurt? Rain



JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY TZURBA M'RABANAN LEARNING PROGRAM NOW IN ENGLISH!

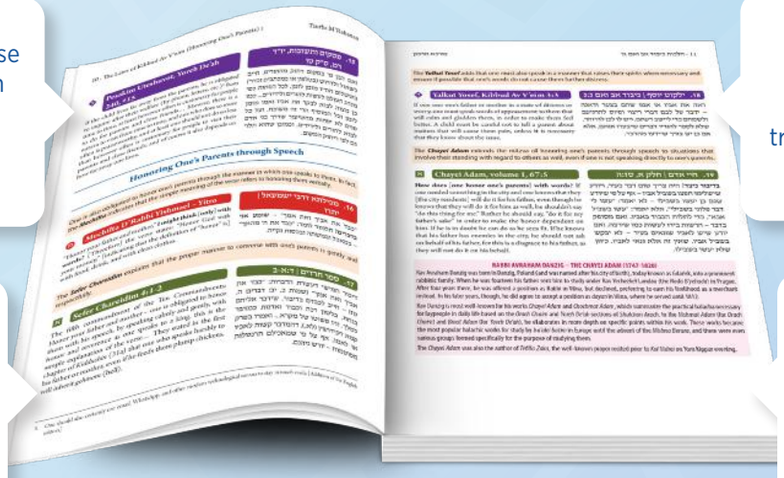
VOLUME 6 AVAILABLE SOON!




OVER 20,000 LEARNERS IN HUNDREDS OF COMMUNITIES ALL OVER THE WORLD

A systematic and concise learning method, from the Talmudic source through modern-day halachic application

Cover 300 major topics in Shulchan Aruch, learning once a week during a four-year cycle



Clear and concise introductions and a modern English translation alongside the original Hebrew text

Color-coded sections, icons and elucidation to guide the learner, in addition to in-depth essays and responsa to complement the learning

TZURBA M'RABANAN צורבא מרבנן

Torah Leadership

MIZRACHI WORLD MOVEMENT

ERETZ HEMDAH Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies Jerusalem

Tzurba M'Rabanan is available as a podcast on all major platforms, including iTunes, Spotify and Google

VISIT WWW.TZURBAOLAMI.COM TO ORDER BOOKS OR TO FIND A LOCAL SHIUR