

1. Time of Meaning

By Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

Transcribed by Rabbi Robert Shur

On *Motzei Yom Kippur*, a *Bat-Kol* calls out to say "לך אכל בשמחה לחמך ושתה בלב" – טוב יינך כי כבר רצה האלקים את מעשיך – "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy works" (Kohelet 9:7) – because we have been judged for life at the close of *Yom Kippur*. For many people, this is the end of the *Yamim Noraim*. However, *Chazal* tell us that the *Yemei HaDin* don't end with the sound of the *Shofar* after *Yom Kippur*, they continue until *Hoshana Raba* – what is that the significance of this, and what exactly does it mean?

In *Tanach*, the name of a person or place is not just a name, but rather the essence of that place or person. The first named place the Jewish people encountered when they came out of Egypt was Sukkot. Additionally, when Yaakov departed from his brother Eisav for the last time, he first came to Sukkot. What is the special significance of this place called Sukkot?

The *Gemara* (*Brachot* 4b) says that one needs to connect mentioning the *geula* in the *Bracha* of *Ga'al Yisrael* to the *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Shacharit*. The *Gemara* asks: Why don't we connect the two directly in *Ma'ariv* as well, rather than inserting the *Bracha* of *Hashkiveinu* in between them? The *Gemara* answers that the *Bracha* of *Hashkiveinu* is considered an extension of the the *Bracha* for *Geula* – it is a *Geula Arichta*. What is the *Gemara* trying to teach us?

Whenever Hashem brings the Jewish people to a position of *Geula*, redemption and freedom, it is always in danger of being lost. Therefore, our need for Hashem's protection does not end once we achieve redemption. We also need the power to maintain that state of *Geula* that we are in. This protection, this power, this *Shemira*, is the *Sukkah*.

The *Sukkah* is a completely open place – it is open to the heavens, and open to visitors. On *Sukkot* we are commanded to leave our secure homes and bring the house to the *Sukkah*. This demonstrates our belief that our protection comes not from the bricks

Sukkot To-Go 5768 / 2007

and wood of the house, but rather directly from Hashem; even in the open, flimsy *Sukkah* we are completely secure.

Looking back at Yaakov Avinu and Bnei Yisrael, we now understand that they went from redemption to Sukkot in order to gain the protection of the *Sukkah* for the new state of *Geula* that they found themselves in. We can now understand the *Gemara's* ruling regarding the *Bracha* of *Hashkiveinu*. In that *Beracha* we say "U'fros Aleinu Sukkat Shlomecha" – 'and spread over us your *Sukkah* of peace" – we ask that Hashem not only grant us *Geula*, but also a *Shemira* for the *Geula* – a *Geula Arichta!*

The covering for the *Sukkah* is called *Schach*. In *Gematria*, *Schach* has a numerical value of one hundred. That is the same as the number of *Brachot* we are required to say every day, and the one hundred *Shofar* blasts we blow on *Rosh Hashana*. The concept of a *Bracha*, a blessing, is *Ribui*, expansion. When we recite a blessing, we expand our perspective on the world and realize that the blessings we have are from Hashem. We are then ourselves expanded and are in a position to bring Hashem into our lives.

The one hundred *Shofar* blasts are also a call to bring Hashem into our lives, as Rambam famously explains, "wake up, sleepers from your slumber!" The message of the *Schach* is the same. It reminds us to wake up and reevaluate everything, and to make sure we are including Hashem in our lives. If we are to be an *Or LaGoyim*, a light unto the nations, we first need to be a light unto ourselves, and to do what we need to ensure that we bring that light into our daily lives.

This concept of gathering strength to be a light unto the nations is particularly appropriate to *Sukkot*. *Sukkot* marks the end of two cycles. It is the last of the three *Regalim*, *Pesach*, *Shavuot* and *Sukkot*. It is also the end of the High Holidays of *Tishrei*, *Rosh Hashana*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot*. *Sukkot* is the time that we sit with Hashem in the protective embrace of the *Sukkah*, but it's also a holiday for the nations of the world, a time when we bring *Korbanot* in the *Beit Hamikdash* for the protection and well-being of all the nations.

The *Shalosh Regalim* are specifically given for the Jewish people to come to Jerusalem and be close with Hashem in His place. However, the *Yamim Noraim* are not just a time of judgment for the Jewish people, but rather for the whole world, as we say "the entire world passes before You like the *Bnei Marom*".¹ *Sukkot* is the time when those two cycles come together, both to strengthen ourselves and our relationship with the rest of the world.

What is our opportunity to strengthen ourselves during *Sukkot*? Maharal points out that the word *Emunah* is mentioned three times in the Torah.² The first time it appears is when Moshe Rabbeinu comes to tell the Jews about the imminent *Geulah*.

1. Time of Meaning

1.

And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had remembered the children of Israel, and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Exodus 4:31

וַיֵּאֱמָן, הָעָם; וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי-פָקַד יְהוָה
אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְכִי רָאָה אֶת-עַנְיֵיהֶם,
וַיִּקְדּוּ, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ.

שמות ד:לא

The second time it appears is at K'riat Yam Suf.

2.

And Israel saw the great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the LORD; and they believed in the LORD, and in His servant Moses.

Exodus 14:31

וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה, אֲשֶׁר
עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, וַיֵּירָאוּ הָעָם,
אֶת-יְהוָה; וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ, בַּיהוָה, וּבַמֹּשֶׁה,
עַבְדּוֹ.

שמות יד:לא

The third time it appears is at Har Sinai, on *Erev Kabbalat HaTorah*, .

3.

And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee for ever.' And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

Exodus 19:9

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָּא
אֵלֶיךָ בְּעָבַיִם, בְּעָבֹר יִשְׁמַע הָעָם
בְּדַבְרֵי עַמְךָ, וְגַם-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעוֹלָם;
וַיְגַד מֹשֶׁה אֶת-דְּבַרֵי הָעָם, אֶל-יְהוָה.

שמות יט:ט

Maharal explains that these three *Emunot* constitute the foundation of Judaism. The first belief, when the Jews are told they will be redeemed, is belief in *Hashgachah Pratit* – the idea that Hashem watches specially over the Jewish people. Hashem remembered and watched over them, even in the depths of bondage in Egypt. The second belief, at the

Sukkot To-Go 5768 / 2007

parting of the Sea of Reeds, is the belief that there is none other than Hashem, Who is all-capable and all-powerful. Hashem showed his mastery over nature and the world when He miraculously split the sea. The third belief, at the giving of the Torah, is the belief that the Torah is from heaven – a gift from God.

These three *Emunot* are manifested in the holidays of *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*. On *Pesach*, the holiday of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and *K'rias Yam Suf*, the *Emunah* of Hashem being all-capable and all-powerful is manifested; on *Shavuot*, the *Emunah* of Torah coming from *Shamayim* is manifested. On *Sukkot*, when millions of people are *Oleh La'Regel* and participate in the *Simchat Beit HaShoevah*, the *Emunah* of *Hashgachah Pratit* is manifested. It is therefore appropriate that we dwell in the *Sukkah*, which commemorates the *Ananei HaKavod*, and symbolizes the *Hashgachah Pratit* that Hashem exercised in watching over the Jews during their travel through the desert. Because of the fundamental beliefs realized and celebrated on *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*, these three *Chagim* are called *Regalim*, legs – the legs on which Judaism stands.

Historically, more people would travel to Jerusalem on *Sukkot* than the other two *Regalim*. It is specifically at this time, when millions of people are spending the *Yom Tov* together, that we reinforce the belief that Hashem's presence and protection rests on every single Jewish person. The *Gemara* says that during the *Simchat Beit Hashoeva* celebrations in the *Beit Hamikdash*, Hillel would say "If I am here, all are here".³ What Hillel said was not an expression of *ga'avah*, haughtiness! Rather these were words of *chizuk* for the nation, reminding them that each person is unique, and the bearer of unique abilities that no one else has. Every single person must discover his uniqueness and share it with the rest of *Klal Yisrael*.

Pesach is considered the moment of the birth of the Jewish nation, and *Shavuot*, when we received the Torah and its mitzvot, is considered the *Bar Mitzvah* of the Jewish nation. Finally, *Sukkot*, when we dwell in the *Sukkah* with Hashem, is the wedding of the Jewish nation with Hashem. That is the time in which we strengthen our relationship with Hashem and His Torah. It is specifically at this time, when our relationship is strongest, that we can realize our potential as an *Or LaGoyim*, an example to the nations of the world. It is our relationship with Hashem and our bond with the Torah that gives us the identity to be a model for others. Without this bond to Hashem and His Torah, we have nothing else to make us the *Or Lagoyim*. That is why *Sukkot* is the appropriate finale to the period of the High Holidays and the judgment of the entire world.

May we all merit feeling Hashem's embrace when we step in the *Sukkah* and as we step out into the world.

1 The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashana* 18a) offers three possible translations: a flock of sheep, people ascending a steep and narrow hill-path, or like soldiers of the house of David, who had written out *Gittin* to their wives before going into battle, so as not to be distracted by thoughts of home while at war.

2 *Gevurot Hashem*, Chapter 47

3 *Gemara Sukkah* 53a