

The Nature of the Sukkah

By Elad Jeselson (Maimonides '18)

There is a famous *machloket* (Sukkah 11b) between R' Akiva and R' Eliezer regarding the nature of the sukkah. R' Akiva says that Hashem is referring to literal sukkot while R' Eliezer says that Hashem is not telling us what b'nei Yisrael used as shelter in the desert, but rather the word "sukkot" refers to the *ananei hakavod* (the clouds of glory) that surrounded and guarded b'nei Yisrael throughout their journey in the wilderness.

In the first *siman* and *se'if* (625:1) in dealing with the laws of sukkah, the Shulchan Aruch and the Tur do something very interesting and noteworthy: they write down the reason for the mitzvah of sukkah. This is something that they very seldom do, because after all they are halachic works, not books about *ta'amei hamitzvot*.

Before understanding why the Shulchan Aruch and the Tur do this, it is important to understand what the difference is between the explanation of the word "sukkot" according to R' Akiva and R' Eliezer. Besides for a different explanation of the *peshat* of the passuk, there are a few other crucial differences: The passuk (above) says that we should sit in the sukkah so that we should remember that Hashem settled us in "סוכות" when we left Egypt. The Taz explains that according to R' Akiva, who says that this just means that *b'nei Yisrael* dwelled in huts in the desert, there is no special thing by which we are remembering Hashem. There is nothing supernatural about living in temporary dwellings that will remind us of Hashem by remembering that b'nei Yisrael lived in them. Rather, explains the Taz, according to R' Akiva, the sole purpose of the mitzvah of sukkah is to remember Yetziat Mizrayim, just as the passuk ends with. By sitting in the sukkah, we'll be reminded of what b'nei Yisrael did when they left Mizrayim. And even though we left Egypt in the month of Nissan, the Taz explains in the name of the Tur that we want to go outside when the weather starts to become not so great, in order to show that we are really going out into the sukkah to fulfill the mitzvah, and not just because it is pleasant outside.

In contrast to R' Akiva, the Taz continues, according to R' Eliezer, when we fulfill the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah, we are not remembering the exodus from Egypt. The mitzvah of dwelling in a temporary house has no connection whatsoever to Yetziat Mizrayim. Rather, according to R' Eliezer we are meant to remember a completely different miracle - the *neis* of the

ananei hakavod. The reason why the passuk mentions Yetziat Mizrayim is the same reason that by many other mitzvot as well, Hashem mentions Yetziat Mizrayim even though it seemingly has no connection to the mitzvah. As the Tur explains, the episode of the Exodus from Mizrayim is something in which all of B'nei Yisrael witnessed the mighty hand of Hashem and it is a testification to the irrefutable power of Hashem, and this therefore obligates us to do the mitzvot of Hashem.

The point of contention between R' Akiva and R' Eliezer is not only what the word "sukkot" is referring to (literal huts or the *ananei hakavod*), but also what the passuk is referring to when it says, "... so that the future generations shall know..." Are we, the future generations, supposed to remember the *neis* of Yetziat Mizrayim by sitting in the sukkah like the passuk concludes? Or maybe "... so that the future generations shall know/ remember..." is referring the section which says, "that I (Hashem) sat the Jews in sukkot," and therefore means that we are supposed to remember the *neis* of the sukkot in the *midbar*, when we ourselves sit in the sukkah? The Taz holds that



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according to R' Akiva, the phrase "...so that the future generations shall know/ remember..." is referring to the latter part of the passuk - to remember the *neis* of Yetziat Mitzrayim, because after all, according to R' Akiva's position on what the word "sukkot" refers to, there was no *neis* involved with the huts that the Jews used as shelter in the *midbar*. However, according to R' Eliezer, the phrase, "... so that the future generations shall know/ remember..." is referring to the part of the passuk directly afterward, which, according to R' Eliezer, refers to the *ananei hakavod*.

The Bach, in his explanation of the Tur (siman 625), however, has a dissenting view about the views of R' Akiva and R' Eliezer. The Bach contends that according to R' Akiva, the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah is not supposed to remind us of the *neis* of Yetziat Mitzrayim, because in what way does sitting in a sukkah remind us of leaving Mitzrayim? The Jews were not sitting in temporary huts on their way out of Mitzrayim (On their way out, they were walking!) They only sat in sukkot in the *midbar* after they had already left Mitzrayim. Rather, according to R' Akiva, by sitting in a sukkah on sukkot, we are simply remembering how the Jews lived in the *midbar*. Therefore, according to R' Akiva, "... so that the future generations shall know/ remember..." is referring to "that I (Hashem) sat the Jews in sukkot."

According to R' Eliezer, however, the Bach asserts, when we are performing the mitzvah of sukkah, we are doing double duty. We have to remember both (a) the *neis* of the *ananei hakavod* and (b) the *neis* of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Therefore, according to R' Eliezer, "... so that the future generations shall know/remember..." is referring to "that I (Hashem) sat the Jews in *sukkot*", and to the conclusion of the passuk, "...when I (Hashem) took them out of Egypt".

Yet, the Bach asks a fundamental question: according to R' Eliezer, how does sitting in a sukkah serve to remind us of the *ananei hakavod* and Yetziat Mitzrayim?

The Bach answers by saying that one of the most fundamental laws regarding the *s'chach* is that it must provide more shade than sunlight (Masechet Sukkah 1:1). This halacha serves as a clear reminder of the *ananei hakavod* which protected b'nei Yisrael from the heat of the sun in the *midbar*. The fact that the sukkah reminds us of *ananei hakavod* is in of itself a reminder of the *neis* of Yetziat Mitzrayim because Hashem started protecting us with *ananei hakavod* on the 15th of Nissan - the day that we left Mitzrayim - just like the Torah says when it speaks about the Jews leaving Mitzrayim (Shemot 13:21): "Va'Hashem holeich lifneihem yoman b'amud anan lanchosam haderech."

Interestingly, both the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch (siman 625) follow the opinion of R' Eliezer (that the word "sukkot" in the passuk refers to *ananei hakavod*) over R' Akiva, even though we have a rule that whenever R'

Akiva has an argument with another Tanna, we follow R' Akiva. The Bach attributes this phenomenon to the fact that Onkelos translates the word of "sukkot" from this passuk as referring to *ananei hakavod* ("במטלת ענני") - just as R' Eliezer.

The fact that we hold like R' Eliezer and translate the word "sukkot" as referring to the *ananei hakavod* is of big significance. According to the translation of R' Eliezer according to the Bach, Hashem (in Vayikra 23: 42-42) is commanding us to sit in the sukkah for seven days in order that the future generations should remember the *neis* of the *ananei hakavod* and to remember the *neis* of Yetziat Mitzrayim. Remembering these two nissim is therefore an integral part in the performance of the mitzvah of dwelling in a sukkah. For this reason, the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch tell us the reason behind the mitzvah of sukkah - to teach us that unlike with almost all other mitzvos, when performing the mitzvah of sukkah, in order to truly perform this very unique mitzvah in its entirety, we must have special kavanah that Hashem commanded us to dwell in the sukkah in order to remember the two nissim of *ananei hakavod* and of Yetziat Mitzrayim (based on Bach and Mishna Berura 625:1).

May we all be *zoche* to a Chag Sameach and be able to fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah in its fullest sense!

Sleeping Through Sukkot

by Aaron Brooks (DAT '18)

Jews generally associate the mitzvah of *yeshiva b'sukkah* with three specific actions. Indeed, the Rambam himself makes all three of these associations in his list of halachot involved with this mitzva. In Hilchot Sukkah (6:6), the Rambam states "[We] eat, drink, and sleep in the Sukkah for all seven days [of Sukkot] in the evening and in the daytime." However, the Rambam then lists several differences between the three aspects, mainly between that of consumption and that of sleeping. He states "It is forbidden to eat a meal outside of the Sukkah for all seven days, unless one eats a *temporary* meal...and it is forbidden to sleep outside of the Sukkah, even in a *temporary* state." An almost identical formulation is found in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 639:2). At first, this variation in the halachot of these two actions seems startling. Why is it permissible to eat temporarily outside of the Sukkah, but forbidden to sleep outside of the Sukkah in the same manner?

The Gemara in Masechet Sukkah (26a) deals with this issue explicitly, and offers two alternate explanations. Rav Ashi states that the reason for forbidding temporary sleep outside of the Sukkah is due to "גזירה שמא ירדם." This means that although temporary sleep is not forbidden in its own nature, due to the fear that one might fall into a deep slumber, temporary sleep was also forbidden. Rava offers another explanation for this anomaly. He says that temporary naps must also be inside of the Sukkah because of the concept of "*ein keva lisheina*," literally meaning "there is no permanence

for sleep”. Rashi offers an explanation for this peculiar statement. He says that in certain instances, because very little sleep is enough for a person to stay awake, a little bit of sleep carries the same weight as sleep of a longer duration. Therefore it is equally forbidden to sleep temporarily outside of the Sukkah as it is to sleep permanently, as they both serve the same overall purpose.

Although this argument between Rav Ashi and Rava regarding sleeping in the Sukkah seems to focus merely on a small detail, perhaps it can be applied to the mitzva of sleeping in the Sukkah on a more expansive level as well. In the first interpretation, Rav Ashi argues that sleeping in the Sukkah is virtually identical to eating in the Sukkah. Only a small detail relating to sleep, which is not present with regard to eating, sets them apart: the fear of continuing to sleep in a permanent fashion. However, Rava argues that sleeping in the Sukkah is of a completely different nature than that of eating.

Both the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch list eating, drinking and sleeping together, seemingly implying that they are similar in their essence. Therefore, it is necessary to inquire into the reason that Rava seems to hold that the mitzva of sleeping in the Sukkah is of a completely different nature than that of eating. The question is also reinforced because many authoritative Halachic sources quote Rava’s reason as the ultimate rationale (See Beit Yosef Orach Chaim 639:2, Kesef Mishna Hilchot Sukkah 6:6, Mishna Berura 639:11, and Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 639:5)!

Perhaps it can be suggested that sleep differs from eating and drinking in its demonstration of dependence on Hashem to protect the individual from any calamity that might befall him in his vulnerability. There is a certain degree of human control exercised while eating and drinking that is not present while one is asleep. With regard to eating, one has free choice to choose what to eat, and, for that matter, to eat at all. In contrast, sleep is unavoidable and inevitable. Eventually the individual will be physically forced to fall asleep, and thus yield himself to Hashem’s protection. It is therefore appropriate that in the holiday when we celebrate Hashem’s protection of the Jewish people as they traveled through the desert, sleeping, and its resultant increased reliance on Hashem, carries more weight than actions such as eating and drinking that represent a lesser dependence. May we all merit to realize Hashem’s role in each of our lives, and appreciate His persistent, protective influence.

The Singularity of the Eighth Day

by Yael Stochel (Maayanot ‘17)

After weeks of maintaining an elevated spiritual state during the holidays of Tishrei, Shemini Atzeret, as an additional day of celebration following Sukkot, seems redundant. Rashi famously explains that Shemini Atzeret is

an expression of Hashem’s reluctance to part with His nation. However, contrary to Rashi’s implication that Shemini Atzeret is inextricably linked to Sukkot through Hashem’s motivation for creating the *chag*, the Gemara in Taanit (20b-31a) insists that Shemini Atzeret is an entirely separate holiday.

The dual nature of Shemini Atzeret, as both a separate *chag*, and the continuation of Sukkot, can be reconciled by considering its status as the eighth day of Sukkot. Traditionally, while the number seven connotes completion, the number eight implies a certain overabundance and metaphysicality, as evidenced by the eight days of Chanukkah and the transparency of the divine intervention associated with that miracle. In his commentary on Vayikra 23:35, Ramban notes that this theme is apparent in several Jewish holidays. Shavuot, the holiday of ultimate spiritual ascension, is in the eighth week from Pesach, with the days of the Omer acting as a glorified Chol Hamoed. Similar to the relationship between Shavuot and Pesach, Shemini Atzeret and Sukkot are separate holidays that remain linked through temporal proximity. Sukkot, Pesach, and Shavuot comprise the *Shalosh Regalim*, the three holidays on which Bnei Yisrael would journey to Yerushalayim. Shemini Atzeret’s association with these sacred *chagim* implies that it deserves to be afforded more consideration than a mere afterthought.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch discerns a pattern that accounts for the relationship between these *chagim*. On Sukkot and Pesach, the physical needs of the Jewish people were met, as Hashem sheltered Bnei Yisrael in tents and redeemed His nation from slavery. On Shavuot, Bnei Yisrael received the Torah, our guide to spiritual fulfillment. Shemini Atzeret offers a similar spiritual service through its connection to Simchat Torah, since in Israel they share the same day. Shemini Atzeret is also the day on which we begin to say the blessing for rain. Water is the most basic form of physical sustenance, yet Judaism views water both in its comparison to Torah, which grants vital spiritual significance, or in the context of rain, which also holds sacred value. Rain is often used to maintain our connection with Hashem through its association with the heavens. This is most evident in the distinction Ramban draws between Mitzrayim and Eretz Yisrael in his commentary on Devarim (11:10). While Egyptians must look down to the Nile for their source of water, the Ramban says, Jews in Eretz Yisrael look up towards Hashem. The rain needed for prosperity is dependent upon serving Hashem with complete devotion. Though water, and rain in particular, may seem on the surface to belong only in the physical realm, the Torah places it firmly in the spiritual sphere. Therefore, the spiritual salvation present on Shemini Atzeret may be attributed both to its connection with Simchat Torah and the recitation of the blessing for rain. These two reasons for Shemini Atzeret’s spiritual relevance are related through the Torah’s comparison to water due to the necessity

of both for life. Both the Torah and rain have a certain supernatural quality – by virtue of the Torah’s status as a gift from Hashem and rain’s unseen origins – that render Shemini Atzeret worthy of the number eight’s trademark spiritual profusion.

Shemini Atzeret’s binary identity as the eighth day of Sukkot and a separate *chag* may be resolved by reflecting on its distinct spiritual status. Shemini Atzeret is definitively differentiated from the rest of Sukkot due to the contrasting natures of the two *chagim*, with Sukkot having an emphasis on physical redemption and Shemini Atzeret’s celebrating spiritual elevation. Nevertheless, Shemini Atzeret’s identity as the eighth day of Sukkot lends the holiday additional religious weight, as evidenced by the blessing for rain and the renewal of the Torah-reading cycle. Though Shemini Atzeret can often seem unnecessarily repetitive after the succession of holidays celebrated during Tishrei, it is imperative to keep in mind the enhanced opportunity that such a *chag* offers, and especially appreciate the parting gift of the blessing for rain that Hashem imparts on this last day of religious intimacy.

The Ge’ula of Sukkot

by Yosef Solomon (TABC ‘17)

Immediately after commanding the Jewish People to dwell in Sukkot for seven days each year, the Torah gives us the reason for the commandment. It tells us that we must celebrate the holiday of Sukkot in order “that your generations may know that I made Bnei Yisrael dwell in Sukkot when I brought them out of the land of Mitzrayim” (Vayikra 23:43-44). Commenting on this passuk, Chazal write that this teaches us that a Sukkah is also a remembrance to Yetziat Mitzrayim. Chazal take this idea so far that they even entertain a thought in Toras Kohanim that Matzah on Pesach must be eaten in a Sukkah, since both Matzah and Sukkah are signs of remembrance of Yetziat Mitzrayim. If it is truly the case that Sukkot commemorates Yetziat Mitzrayim in some form, then why is the Chag of Sukkot celebrated starting on the 15th of Tishrei? It would have made much more sense to celebrate it closer to Pesach.

The answer to our question may stem from a better understanding of what Ge’ulah, redemption, truly is. Ge’ulah from Mitzrayim meant leaving physical enslavement in Mitzrayim and entering into our absolute servitude to Hashem. We left the *Rish’ut* (evil) of Mitzrayim and entered into the *Reshut* (property) of Hashem.

As is written in the first perek of Mesillat Yesharim, there are two types of Nisayonot (tests) which Hashem gives us: there is the Nisayon of terrible *yissurim* – the test of being destitute and mistreated – and there is also the Nisayon of wealth and tranquility. This second type of Nisayon, although less obviously a test than the first type, is learned from the passuk in Mishlei (30:9) which correlates one’s being satisfied with his propensity to reject Hashem. Now, the entire

purpose of Yetziat Mitzrayim was to bring the Jewish people to their sole purpose in this world, which is *deveikut* (clinging) to Hashem. The entire time Klal Yisrael was in Mitzrayim, they were under tremendous physical pain – they were poor, overworked, and their kids were slaughtered.

On Pesach, we celebrate that Klal Yisrael was taken out of this horrid situation, and we remember our previous state of destitution by eating Matzah, the “*Lechom Oni*.” This was the Ge’ulah of Pesach, the redemption from physical *yissurim*. This Ge’ulah, although necessary, was not sufficient. There is another type of Ge’ulah which was necessary for Klal Yisrael, and this is the Ge’ulah from the second set of Nisayonot – the Nisayon of prosperity and success. This form of Nisayon is just as bad, if not worse, than the first form. Jews were persecuted for millennia across Europe, bruised and battered by the gentiles, but they stayed loyal to Hashem and His Torah. But many left the path of truth when given more freedom without persecution.

The Chag of Sukkot serves to help us with this second set of Nisayonot. Sukkot takes place when all of the crops and grains are being gathered (Chag HaAsif), which is a time of significant wealth and fortune for the Jewish people. It is specifically during this time period that we need to realize that all of our wealth and success comes from Hashem (see Malbim to Vayikra perek 23). This is additionally why Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur immediately precede Sukkot. During the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah, Klal Yisrael experiences a time of tremendous closeness to Hashem. (The Gemara in Rosh HaShanah 18a learns that the Pasuk “Dirshu Hashem BeHimatze’o” refers to the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah.) During this time period, Klal Yisrael undergoes both *Kapara* and *Taharah*. This is all a necessary prerequisite for Sukkot, in which we are taught the lesson of surviving the Nisayonot of wealth and happiness. On Sukkot, we seek to apply the lesson that the only thing that is important is following Hashem’s will and becoming closer to Him.

The Nature of Yeshiva b’Sukkah on Shaar Yimei haChag

by Tani Finkelstein (MTA ‘17)

The Torah tells us in parshat Emor (Vayikra 23:42) that “*ba’sukkos teshvu shivas yomim*,” that we shall dwell in sukkot for seven days. At first glance, the Torah seems to be quite explicit that there is a continual obligation to sit in the sukkah for all seven days of Sukkot, but after taking a quick look into the *Torah she’bal peh*, that assumption becomes a bit murky. The Mishna in Sukkah (27a) brings a *machlokes* between Rebbe Eliezer and the Chochamim on this matter. According to Rebbe Eliezer, one is obligated to have fourteen total meals in the Sukkah, one during the day and one at night for each day of Sukkot. The Chochamim, however, disagree, and hold that only on the first night of Sukkot is there a real obligation

to eat in the Sukkah, which is how we pasken. The Gemara there goes on to explain the basis for the psak of the Chochamim - a gezera shava with Pesach. Just like on the 15th of Nissan (Pesach), only on the first night is it obligatory to eat matza (see Shemot 12:18, “*b’erev tochlū matzot*”), and from then on, purely a *reshus*, optional, so too on the 15th of Tishrei (Sukkot) it is obligatory to sit in the Sukkah, and for the rest of the days of the chag, merely a *reshus*. As the Gemara goes on to explain, there is a principle established (see Braisa on 28b) that *teshvu k’ein taduru*, that we dwell in the sukkah as we would in our homes. Just like at home, we eat when we so desire, so too during the rest of the days of the Chag, if you want to eat, you must eat in the sukkah, but if not, there is no such chiyuv. However, the question naturally becomes, what is the nature and status of our *yeshiva b’sukkah* on these other days of Sukkot?

The Minchas Chinuch (Mitzvah 325) famously takes the approach that *yeshiva b’sukkah* on the rest of the days of Sukkot is a *mitzvah kiyumis*, a mitzvah, much like tzitzit, which one fulfills by performing, but is not obligated to put himself into a situation where he has to perform the mitzvah, as one must on the first night. At first glance, this idea would appear to make a lot of sense, and fit in with the language of the Gemara, that “*ee bae achil, ee bae lo achil*,” that if you want to eat, you must eat in the sukkah, but if not, there is no obligation to do so. However, not everyone agrees with the Minchas Chinuch’s position.

Rav Yosef Engel, in his sefer *Asvan Deoraysa* (klal 11), takes issue with the understanding of the Minchas Chinuch. He posits that really, there is a continually robust obligation of *yeshiva b’sukkah* throughout all days of Sukkot, based on the aforementioned principle of *teshvu k’ein taduru*, of dwelling in the sukkah as we would in our homes. This principle, Rav Engel maintains, dictates that one continually throughout Sukkot is required to dwell in the sukkah as if it were your home, in whatever way that happens to be.

Some point out that this position may find its roots as early as in a teshuva of the Rashba (chelek 3, siman 287), in which he explains why, based on *teshvu k’ein taduru*, one can make a bracha on *yeshiva b’sukkah* throughout all days of Sukkot, as opposed to on the rest of Pesach, during which one may not make a bracha on the eating of matza. This bracha issue, however, would not be a problem for the Minchas Chinuch’s position unless he held that matza was also a *mitzvah kiyumis* (though apparently the Vilna Gaon took this position). Interestingly, the Baal HaMaor (Rif Pesachim 27a) gives a more practical, yet somewhat extreme, answer to the Rashba’s question, that, as the Gemara in Nedarim 15a says, it is impossible to go three days without sleep, so therefore the mitzvah of *yeshiva b’sukkah* actually becomes *chiyuvis*, which allows one to make a bracha. (See, however, Tashbetz chelek 1, siman 100, who gets around the

sleep issue.)

If it true that there is a continual chiyuv of *teshvu k’ein taduru*, then how does the obligation on the first night differ in nature from the rest? Perhaps we can explain that based on the gezera shava with Pesach, there is a unique obligation on the first night to specifically *eat* in the sukkah, as opposed to on the rest of Sukkot, when there is only a continual obligation to treat the sukkah as your home, but no obligation to specifically eat (unless you feel like eating). And perhaps this explains why the Rema paskens (Orach Chaim 639:3) that one should not eat from midday and onwards before the first night of Sukkot, so that one enters into the holiday with an appetite, just like the Mishna (Pesachim 99b) says one should do before Pesach, in order to have an appetite for the matza. This halacha that one should retain their appetite obviously only applies to specific eating obligations in nature. In fact, the Tosafot Rid (Pesachim 99b) explains that there is no such halacha on Erev Shabbos to save your appetite for the Kiddush wine because, as opposed to the obligation of matza, which its essence is the consumption of the matza, the essence of the obligation of Kiddush is not to drink the wine, but rather to make the bracha of Kiddush. Similar to matza, perhaps the first night of Sukkot has a unique *din* of *achila*, of eating in the sukkah, and that’s what makes it different from the rest.

However, Rav Chaim Brisker was of the opinion that the essence of the obligation on the first night of Sukkot is not the *achila b’sukkah*, but rather that the gezera shava with Pesach tells us that specifically *through* eating in sukkah, we will fulfill our obligation of *yeshiva b’sukkah*, which, according to Rav Chaim, is the essence of the obligation on the first night. Perhaps this is another way to explain why, according to Rav Yosef Engel’s approach, the first night differs in nature from the rest of the days of Sukkot.

The Futility of Desire

by Chaim Alper (DRS’17)

During the joyful period of Sukkot, as we celebrate Hashem’s forgiveness after the *Aseret Yimei HaTeshuva* and the blessings He has and will endow to us, we read a certain book that seemingly serves as a sobering intrusion to the holiday’s euphoria.

This reading is Kohelet, whose immense influence on Western culture and Judaic philosophy has been apparent throughout the generations. In addition to being held in high regard as a staple of how a Jew should view his or her life, it has been commonly quoted by such men as Abraham Lincoln, William Shakespeare, Leo Tolstoy, and Thomas Wolfe.

The reason for the effect this book has had is inherent in its grounding message, which is that one of the only unarguable truths in life is the inevitability of death. For all of

our chasing of luxuries and material enjoyments, it all comes to nothing when we die (the Pharaohs were trying to get around that).

This is the primary claim of Kohelet: That all our chasing of pleasure is in vain. It will never be enough to satisfy us, nor will it last in any way beyond death.

Knowing the basic tenets of Kohelet, we must now ask why we read it at this time?

The Abudraham, a 14th century scholar, wrote that Shlomo HaMelech, the author of Kohelet, read it to Bnei Yisrael during the Sukkot celebrations as a way to keep the celebrators from getting carried away in their festivities. It would certainly seem to serve this function, considering that Shlomo repeatedly writes in Kohelet, "All is futile!" Most people would surely feel slightly deflated when hearing such words from the wisest king in the world, who himself had all there was when it came to riches.

But despite Kohelet's apparent agenda of pessimism, this is not necessarily the reason for its reading, nor its true message. Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe, also known as the Levush, took the stance that Kohelet is read to *enhance* our joy on Sukkot. Instead of looking at Kohelet as a denouncement of life itself, one should view it as a warning against greed and desire. While some may view Sukkot as a time to splurge in luxuries we wish we had throughout the year, Kohelet serves as a reminder that true happiness is only attainable when we admit to ourselves that no amount of money or gifts can make us happy. Rather, serving Hashem and doing what is right should be our focus in life. Kohelet periodically adds that finding happiness in our daily activities, eating, learning, working, and serving Hashem, is the path to a satisfying life. And this is what is done on Sukkot, regaling in the wondrous creations of Hashem and His kindness to those who serve Him. In a way, perhaps Kohelet is read to praise those who have gathered to serve Hashem, instead of chasing the material pleasures of the world.

The Ramban combines these two opinions in his elaborations on Kohelet, in which he points out three simple themes:

- 1 - The worthlessness of the pleasures we seek in this world.
- 2 - The importance of our souls in the divine ordinances of Hashem.
- 3- The limitations of human understanding when it comes to Hashem's plans.

Ultimately, the Ramban holds Kohelet to be a grim guidebook on what our priorities ought to be, especially apt

for this time of year as we look past the intensities of the *Aseret Yimei HaTeshuva* and forward to the coming year.

Regardless of whether Kohelet is pessimistic, optimistic, or a hybrid, there is one reminder we should definitely take away from it: our lives are on a timer and are too valuable to squander.

The Nature of the Exemption of the *Mitztaer*

by Akiva Finkelstein (CYHSB '19)

There's a well known exception to having to eat in the sukkah on Sukkot known as *mitztaer*, one who is in pain. What is the source for this exemption, and what is the reason behind it?

The Gemara in Sukkah 26a tells us that Rava allowed Rav Acha bar Ada to sleep outside of the Sukkah because of the bad smell of plaster in the sukkah. The Gemara explains that Rava did this because he held that a *mitztaer* is exempt from the mitzvah of Sukkah.

Tosafos explains that one who is in pain is exempt from the Sukkah because of the principle of *teshvu k'ein taduru*, that we should sit in the sukkah as we would live regularly in our homes, and a person wouldn't live in a place where he was in pain. The Meiri and several other Rishonim bring down this reason for the *petur* of *mitztaer*. However, the Maharik brings a different reason for this *petur*. He says that when it comes to the mitzvah of sukkah, we require that you have *kavana* that you are performing the mitzvah of sukkah. You have to really know you are there, and it is forbidden to be distracted from this mindset. Therefore, he says, a *mitztaer* is patur since he is lacking this concentration needed due to the pain he is in.

The question is, isn't someone in pain still conscious of the basic fact that he is in a sukkah? The fact that he's hot or getting rained on shouldn't affect his knowledge of being there. Because of this difficulty, the Bach explains that there is something unique to the mitzvah of sukkah, that one is not yotze without the kavanah of **why** he is doing this mitzvah, because there is a passuk (Vayikra 23:43) regarding the mitzvah of sukkah which says, "*Ima'an yedu dorossai chem ki basukkos hoshavti es bnei yisrael,*" in order that your generations should know that I caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell in sukkot. One has to know why he is sitting in the sukkah, and a *mitztaer* will be lacking in this special *kavana* needed.

One important *nafka mina*, or practical ramification, pointed out by the Tzitz Eliezer, between these two opinions is whether or not one who is *mitztaer* is allowed to leave the sukkah when his pain is not coming from the sukkah. The Rema paskens that a *mitztaer* is only patur from sitting in the sukkah when the pain comes from the sukkah. This is based on

the Gemara on 25b which says that Rava only says a mitztaer is patur where it is a *tzaar d'mimeila*, that the sukkah is causing him pain, as Rashi explains it. However, when one's pain does not come as a result of sitting outside in the sukkah, then one would have to stay in the sukkah according to this position. This psak makes sense with the position of Tosafos, that the source of the petur of a *mitztaer* is the principle of *teshvu ke'ein taduru*, as a someone in pain would continue living in his home if his home was not what was causing him the pain. However, according to the Maharik, even when the *tzaar* is not from being in the sukkah, a mitztaer is always patur from sukkah because he cannot achieve the right level of *kavana*.

Even though *lihalacha* we pasken like the position of Tosafos that the whole reason for a mitztaer being patur from the mitzvah of sukkah is because of the drasha of *teshvu k'ein taduru*, I think the idea of the Maharik is very important for our performance of the mitzvah of Sukkah. So often we get distracted by different things, whether it be the grandiose of the decorations or the taste of the food, and we may forget why we are really doing this mitzvah of *yeshiva b'sukkah*. We must remember the passuk of "*I'maan yedu doroseichem*" - which, according to Bach, would cause us to not be yotzei on the first night without this level of understanding - and realize why we are sitting in the Sukkah. If we do this, our holiday will be much more meaningful.

The Connection between Kohelet and Sukkot

by Shmuel Perl (Kohelet '18)

Although to most inhabitants of Lower Merion, Pennsylvania, my hometown, the name Kohelet conjures thoughts of the local yeshiva high school, it is actually the name of a very important, albeit overlooked, book in Tanach.

The average shul-going Jew probably thinks of megillat Kohelet as simply the reason for why davening on Shabbat Chol HaMoed Sukkot takes such a frustratingly long time. In all likelihood, many of us have probably never even taken little more than a quick glance at this astoundingly complex work of biblical literature. However, people's ignorance may be justified, as Rav Yehudah, son of Rav Shmuel bar Shilat, says in Rav's name in Masechet Shabbat (30b) that "the Sages wished to hide the Book of Kohelet, because its words are self-contradictory."

If that is indeed true, then why is Kohelet part of Tanach, and furthermore, why do we read it on Sukkot every year? One classic interpretation of why we read Kohelet, which is brought down by Rashi, is that Kohelet, which comes from the *shoresh* , ש.ה.ל. meaning to gather, was read by Shlomo HaMelech on Sukkot in conjunction with the mitzvah of *Hakel*, and therefore we continue this tradition throughout the generations. The Abudraham, quoting the Ibn Yarchi, writes a similar opinion in his 14th century siddur,

adding that it was intended as a rebuke for the people.

However, there is perhaps a deeper and more profound connection between the holiday of Sukkot and sefer Kohelet which both justifies its reading on Sukkot and its inclusion in Tanach. But, before we can understand this answer, we must take a step back and look a little bit more broadly at the book of Kohelet as a whole.

Perhaps the best way to describe Kohelet is as a conversation, an internal dialogue between four characters existing in the mind of its author. These four, who take turns expressing their diverse views on life, are the *Chacham* (philosopher), *Neheneh* (hedonist), *Amal* (legacy builder) and the *Yarei* (God-fearer). Each one of these unique personalities sees a different meaning in life: the *Chacham* views the acquisition of knowledge as the ultimate purpose, the *Neheneh* believes in no defined purpose and seeks to live as pleasurable a life as possible, the *Amal* believes only in creating a name for himself, while the *Yarei* takes a more religious approach and believes connection to Hashem as man's reason for living. Ultimately, the author rejects every view but that of the *Yarei*, as Kohelet's penultimate verse teaches (Kohelet, 12:13):

"כֹּהֵלֶת דְּבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע אֶת־הֶאֱלֹהִים יֵרָא וְאֶת־מַצְוֹתָיו שְׂמֹר כִּי־יָהָה כָּל־הָאָדָם:"

Although seeming to have absolutely nothing to do with sitting in booths and shaking palm fronds, the message of Kohelet is actually very much in line with that of the Sukkot. In his commentary on Vayikra (23:42), Rabbi Joseph Hertz quotes the Rambam who says the reason we sit in the sukkah on Sukkot is because "Man ought to remember his evil days in his days of prosperity. He will thereby be induced to than lead a modest and humble life." Hertz juxtaposes this comment with his own annotation that "The Book of Ecclesiastes is aptly set aside for special reading on Sukkot." It appears that Hertz is drawing a common theme between the holiday of Sukkot and the book of Kohelet; by going into the sukkah, we reject all worldly pleasures and shift our focus to Hashem, just as in sefer Kohelet, Shlomo rejected the ideas of the Amal , the Chacham , and the Neheneh , and chose the life of the Yarei .

The Sefer HaMagid makes a similar comment. "In Kohelet, there are times when he criticizes joy and times when he praises it," he says, "but the resolution is that that he criticizes being joyful to engage in acts of evil or in eating and drinking. However, the joy in performing mitzvot and serving Hashem is good. Therefore, we read Kohelet so that we don't think that we should rejoice before Hashem for seven days with frivolity, eating and drinking, rather with the joy of observing mitzvot."

While even Kohelet acknowledges that there are inherent values in some physical pleasures, it is important to note that our main focus should be on Hashem, Torah, and

Mitzvot. But Kohelet, unlike many other Sifrei Tanach, also acknowledges the internal struggle that often accompanies leading this particularly challenging lifestyle. The author of Kohelet understands the temptations of philosophy, hedonism, and legacy-building, yet still manages to choose to live a God-fearing life. This struggle is another parallel to Sukkot, where our connection to Hashem is not necessarily easy to achieve.

But we must recognize, that on Sukkot, we have the unique opportunity to put all of our worldly distractions behind us and really reconnect with Hashem. We leave the comfort of our homes and yield ourselves to Hashem's protection in nature. By exposing ourselves, and creating this discomfort, we can experience a connection with Hashem like no other. So this Sukkot, let's try to view the sukkah as more than just a silly ritual, but as an opportunity to achieve a level of spiritual closeness that is unlike any pleasure that the physical world can provide.

Chukat Olam: A Mysterious Phrase

By Nechama Novick (Bruriah '17)

When describing Sukkot, the Torah writes (Vayikra 23:41): "*vichagotem oto chag lasHashem...chukat olam li'doroteichem ba'chodesh hashevii tachogu oto.*"

The phrase "*chukat olam*" seems extraneous since every mitzvah is a "law forever," so why is it necessary to include this phrase? In fact, this phrase is used several times throughout Chumash, and we know the Torah does not use any extra words, so what does it actually imply and why is it written to describe Sukkot?

Rashi writes concerning the words "*chukat olam*" in Shemot (28:43) that "every place that it says '*chukat olam*,' it is an immediate decree and for generations to be held to it." However, Rashi's explanation is not an adequate answer to our question, but rather a reinforcement, since nearly every mitzvah commanded is immediate and binding to every generation.

The Ohr HaChayim provides a different explanation of this phrase, but does not state that his explanation is applicable in all cases. In Vayikra (16:29), in describing Yom Kippur, the Torah writes: "*v'hayta lachem l'chukat olam...taanu et nafshoteichem.*"

The Or HaChayim explains that one might think that the mitzvah of "ועניתם את נפשותיכם" is contingent upon his or her own sinfulness, and therefore in Olam Haba, where one will not sin, then the mitzvah will not apply. However, it says "*chukat olam*" to extend the mitzvah to Olam Haba.

While this is certainly a fascinating explanation of these words, it does not necessarily carry over to the passuk about Sukkot. On a less esoteric note, the Sforno writes on "chukat olam" in Vayikra 16:28 "even though there is a

Mikdash for avodah, in any case it is necessary to keep *inui* and *she'visa*, and on Vayikra 16:31 that "also in the times that there is no Beit Hamikdash, guard *she'visa* and *inui*." It is possible that "chukat olam" in the pasuk of Sukkot is meant to instruct us to keep Sukkot in any case, not only when we have a Mikdash, but even now, in galut. The Alshich seems to take that approach here, explaining that "chukat olam" in the context of Sukkot means to say even after the time of the Mikdash.

In the Gemara Menachot (19a) and Zevachim (18a), the words "chukat olam" are used in a *שקילה* to extrapolate halachot of several mitzvot where "chukat olam" is written, however the Gemarot do not mention the use of "chukat olam" in the parsha of Sukkot.

The first time the phrase "chukat olam" is used in Tanakh is actually in a passuk extremely similar to our passuk on Sukkot. In Shemot 12:14, when describing Pesach, the passuk says: "*vichagotem oto chag laHashem li'doroseichem chukat olam tachogu.*"

Rashi writes that "chukat olam" is written to point out that this mitzvah is applicable to all generations, in case one were to think it would only apply to a few generations. This is reasonable, despite the seeming obviousness of Pesach's eternal applicability, since the commandment of Pesach preceded the giving of the Torah and perhaps Bnei Yisrael were unaware that mitzvot apply forever. This explanation, however, would not be valid concerning Sukkot in Vayikra since Bnei Yisrael were definitely aware of the eternity of mitzvot by that point. The Ohr HaChayim, in the context of Pesach, writes (Shemot 12:14) that "chukat olam" warns anyone from saying that the mitzvah only applies when we are free and not under the control of the nations of the world. Since the pesukim are so similar and both are in the context of shalosh regalim, it's possible that the explanations of Shemot 12:14 apply to Vayikra 23:41, however the Ohr HaChayim's explanation may not be relevant by Sukkot, when we are not really celebrating our freedom, but rather the shelter of Hashem in the desert.

In conclusion, the phrase "chukat olam" is mostly unexplained by the meforshim in Vayikra 23:41 when describing Sukkot. There are several possible explanations of the phrase in other pesukim that are interesting and meaningful, but ultimately "chukat olam" still remains mysterious.

Sukkot: A Time to Mourn or a Time to Dance?

Eric Risch (SAR '18)

By the time Shabbat of Chol Hamoed Sukkot comes around, the serious atmosphere of the high holidays is far behind us, and we are well into the joyous and festive mood of

Sukkot. And then we are hit with Megillat Kohelet. The apparent interpretation of Kohelet is one of pessimism and depression - a sad outlook on life. This is cited by many as the very reason why we read it on Sukkot -- to tone down the mirth and materialism brought about by the end of the harvest season. But on a closer reading, there may be a more optimistic understanding of Kohelet.

The midrash in Kohelet Rabba states that the Rabbis originally wished to exclude Kohelet from Tanach. David Zinberg, in an article for the *Jewish Standard*, posits that the reason why it was eventually included is that Kohelet needs to be read holistically in order to really recognize the underlying values. This complete understanding of the megillah is best demonstrated in an analysis by Rav David Nativ in which he shows that there is a gradual ideological transition from the beginning of the book to the end. He does this by making a word and phrase count of the main themes throughout the book, such as *tachat hashemesh* (under the sun), *ani* (I), *tov vara* (good and evil), and *hevel* (vanity).

The beginning of Kohelet exhibits an egocentric perspective, that the world revolves around the self, and that life is an attempt to experience all the worldly pleasures. This is seen by the numerous uses of the words “under the sun” and “I,” while there is very little mention of good and evil. The middle chapters act as a turning point, with the focus shifting slightly away from “I”, with an increase in contemplation of good and evil. Finally, the last chapters present a new perspective, one in which the self is almost completely absent, along with the feelings of vanity and toil. The second to last passuk epitomizes this changed outlook:

יג: "סוף דבר, הפל נשמע: את-הַאֱלֹהִים יְרָא וְאֶת-מְצֹתָיו שְׁמֹר, כִּי-זֶה כָּל-הָאָדָם."

The focus is completely on Hashem, with man’s purpose in life explained as worshipping Hashem with all his heart. To put this idea into perspective, the megillah repeats the theme of death and the house of mourning. In the seventh perek, he writes:

ב: "טוב ללכת אל-בית-אבל, מלכת אל-בית משתה."

The Metzudat Dovid comments on this passuk, believing that to go to a house of mourning “induces in the visitor a consciousness of life’s brevity and frailty,” as opposed to “the frivolity which pervades a place of feasting.” The place of mourning introduces a sobering fact: because our lives are so brief, it is impossible that the world exists for each of us as individuals and that it revolves around us. Consequently, Hashem must be the focal point of the universe.

But life’s pleasures aren’t thrust aside completely. As Mr. Zinberg writes, if we approach Megillat Kohelet holistically, we realize that in the end, “wisdom, joy, work, possessions, and pleasure [are] God’s gifts to be embraced and enjoyed.” According to Rav Nativ, on Sukkot, we move out of the permanence of our homes and into nature, leading us to

contemplate the quality of our permanence. “Both our sukkah and our life on Earth are temporary, but we should not relate to them as fleeting and meaningless.” We need to treat both our lives and the sukkah with a sense of permanence despite the apparent temporariness. Amid the joy and festivities of the culmination of the harvest season, Kohelet leaves us with a bittersweet note: life is short, and therefore we must savor its delights and pleasures while they last, but through a lens of constant focus on and devotion to Hashem.

The Connection Between Shabbos and Yom Tov

by Etan Ohevshalom (RTMA '17)

On the first and second day of Sukkot, we read part of Parshat Emor. Within that reading, in the context of discussing the *Moadim*, the Torah says (Vayikra 23: 2-3):

(ג) שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלֶאכֶה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְתוֹן מְקַרְא־קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מְלֶאכֶה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבַּת הוּא לְיִקְוֹק בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם:"

Rashi asks an amazing question on this passuk. He asks why Shabbos, which is designated by Hashem, is placed here next to the festivals, which are designated by the Sanhedrin. Rashi answers that it is to teach us that whoever desecrates the Yomim Tovim is considered to have transgressed as severely as if he had desecrated Shabbos. The opposite is true as well. If someone fulfills the mitzvos of the Yomim Tovim, it is as if he has fulfilled Shabbos.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, in his sefer *Darash Moshe*, gives an amazing explanation of this Rashi. He says the aim of Shabbos is to remember the miracle of Creation; therefore, one who desecrates Shabbos is judged as if he denies the Creation. The Yomim Tovim represent the belief that Hashem directs the world by Himself and controls nature, consequently safeguarding Bnei Yisrael. When He redeemed us from Egypt, performed miracles for us, enveloped us in the Clouds of Glory, sustained and supported us in the desert, and bestowed upon us Torah and mitzvos, to guide us in life. Half a faith is of no use. For example, one who believes that Hashem created the world but has delegated its direction to others, such as angels, or believes that the forces of nature are independent of His will, is considered as one who does not believe in Creation. If one believes that the world is controlled by other forces, there is no need to keep Hashem’s Torah.

Rav Moshe quotes the Rambam from the beginning of Hilchos Avodah Zarah, where it is explained that this was the error of Enosh and others, who believed that control of the world was delegated to heavenly bodies who were to be worshipped as servants of Hashem. The outcome of such a belief is that one forgets Hashem altogether. Therefore, when one desecrates the Yomim Tovim, which testify to Hashem’s

active direction and control of the world, it is as if he has desecrated Shabbos. Likewise, if one believes that Hashem controls the world, but does not believe that He created it, or he believes that it was created long before the Torah says it was, his belief in Divine Providence is meaningless. It is for this reason that the mitzvah of Shabbos is juxtaposed to that of the Yomim Tovim, because these fundamentals of faith are intertwined with one another.

The Torah tells us that we observe Sukkot (Vayikra 23:43) *“I’maan yedu doroseichem ki va’Sukkos hoshavti es bnei Yisrael,”* so that all of the generations will know that Hashem gave us shelter in the desert. This idea must always be on our mind as we sit in our sukkot. In fact, the Gemara in Sukkah (2a) uses this reason to explain why the maximum height of a sukkah is 20 amot. If it was higher, the Gemara says, a person would not know he was in a sukkah; in other words, he would not have this essential *yediah* that Hashem sustained and sheltered us in the desert in sukkot.

May we merit to always have these fundamentals of faith ingrained in our psyches, and hopefully we will be able to see Mashiach come speedily in our days.

The Significance of the Ushpizin

by Miriam Mayor and Cindy Yankovich (Shulamith '17)

The *ushpizin* are seven of the most influential characters in Jewish history. We welcome these symbolic guests into our Sukkah with each one getting their own individual night. Why is having guests so important? Why does one guest “lead” all the others each night? And what is so special about these seven characters, besides for them being the “founding fathers” of *Am Yisrael*, that we choose to celebrate Sukkot with them and not anyone else in our history?

The Rambam writes in Hilchot Yom Tov (6:17-18) that “one who drinks and eats must also feed the stranger, the widow, and the paupers. But one who locks the door of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and wife and not the poor is not experiencing the joy of a mitzvah, but rather is experiencing the joy of his stomach”. From this quote we can assume that the joy of a mitzvah is a joy that needs to be shared with others. Thus, the only way we can experience true joy and fulfill the mitzvah of *“v’samachta b’chagecha”* on Sukkot is if we have guests, or the Ushpizin. However, since the Ushpizin are only symbolic, there is a custom of inviting seven real-life guests to parallel the seven Ushpizin.

According to the Sefas Emes, Sukkot is a holiday that represents us Jews working together and interacting with each other to improve the world. The seven Ushpizin that come to our Sukkah help us fulfill this job that we have. How, you may ask, do the Ushpizin help us do this?

The answer is that each guest corresponds to one sefirah,

one of God’s divine attributes in Kabbalah. Once the Ushpizin enter our Sukkah, they illuminate the sefirah for us, and empower us with their specific attribute. These attributes will strengthen us and help us fulfill our purpose in life. Every night, since one guest is singled out, their sefirah is also. Therefore, we focus on one sefirah per night, in hope that it will help us fulfill our purpose in this world. That is why these qualities are called sefirot; sefirah comes from the word *“sapi”* which means sapphire. Just as a sapphire is illuminating and bright, so too a sefirah brings light and illuminates our purpose as a Jewish nation.

The seven sefirot mentioned above are *chesed, gevurah, tiferet, netzach, hod, yesod, and malchut*. Avraham, the first guest, corresponds to *chesed*, or love and kindness. *Gevurah*, or restraint and discipline, is represented by Yitzchak, our second guest. Yaakov brings beauty, harmony and truth, called *tiferet* as our third guest. The fourth guest, Moshe, stands for *netzach*, or victory and endurance. The fifth sefirah of *hod*, personified by Aharon, is loosely translated as splendor, glory, and humility. On the sixth day of Sukkot, we welcome Yosef, who is the personification of *yesod*, connection to Hashem. Our last guest is Dovid, who represents *malchut* and the sovereignty and leadership of Hashem. That is why these seven leaders are called the “shepherds of Israel,” because just as a shepherd feeds his flock and cares for it, so too these leaders give us our spiritual essence and strength.

On Sukkot, these seven Ushpizin have a greater presence in our lives. By bringing them into our home, we are connecting ourselves to the seven sefirot, and are emulating Hashem. May we merit to see the coming of the *mashiach* and the revival of the Ushpizin quickly within our days. *

*Information gathered from *Chabad.org*

The Connection between Simchas Torah and Shavuos

by Yonatan Olshin (North Shore '17)

A common question is raised: why do we need two separate holidays – Simchas Torah and Shavuos – to celebrate the Torah? In order to answer this question, we must first study the parallels between the two holidays.

On each night of Sukkos, we invite seven ushpizin, or guests, to join us. The Kabbalists teach us that each guest represents a certain sefirah. For example, Avraham represents the sefirah of Chesed. Therefore, on the first day of Sukkos, when Avraham leads the other ushpizin, the theme is Chesed. We invite these seven ushpizin over for the seven days preceding Simchas Torah. Similarly, in Sefiras HaOmer, we count seven weeks until Shavuos, and each week represents a certain sefirah. For example, the theme of the first week of the Omer is similarly Chesed. Additionally, both holidays have the name Atzeres; Simchas Torah is on Shemini Atzeres and Shavuos is called Chag HaAtzeres. Thus, a parallel between

Simchas Torah and Shavuot clearly exists. It appears that Simchas Torah and Shavuot are almost “twin holidays” with their great similarities.

But why is it so significant that the two holidays are “twins”? The Lubavitcher Rebbe gives an astounding answer. Shavuot can be compared to the first set of Luchos and Simchas Torah to the second. After Yetzias Mitzrayim, on our way to Har Sinai, we gradually went up level by level in purity until we ultimately attained the status of tzaddikim. This explains why we have a sefirah for each week in the Omer. Throughout the Omer, we need to individually improve on each of our internal sefiros, week by week, in preparation for Shavuot. After all, we were given the Torah in a high state of purity. However, our high level of purity did not last. We soon thereafter committed the Chet HaEgel, and as a result, the Luchos were broken. Consequently, we had to do teshuva. On Yom Kippur, Hashem forgave us, and we received the second set of Luchos – the Torah of the ba’al teshuva. We had restored our closeness with Hashem, and that is what we celebrate on Simchas Torah. The seven days before Simchas Torah is a shortened version of the Omer. We have these seven days to improve our internal sefiros before Simchas Torah, the holiday when we celebrate the Torah, which represents our successful journey back to Hashem and a renewed relationship with Him.

An inspiring story is told in the book *Small Miracles of the Holocaust*. In 1944, in Auschwitz, a group of fifty boys were stripped of their possessions and sent to the gas chambers knowing they were going to die. One of the boys suddenly jumped up and announced to the others that the day was Simchas Torah, and since they did not have a sefer Torah, they should dance with Hashem Himself before He would take their souls up to Olam Haba. The boys became inspired and started dancing and singing *Ashreinu Mah Tov Chelkeinu*. A Nazi guard heard all this and asked one of the boys what was going on. The boy, who was so overjoyed that he overcame fear of the Nazi, told the guard that they were celebrating their departure from the evil Nazis in this world and were excited to reunite with their parents in heaven. The Nazi was furious at hearing this. He ordered that the boys be taken out of the gas chamber to receive a more torturous death – done by chopping parts of their bodies off until they died. In the meantime, they were to be put in a barrack overnight. The next day, a Nazi officer from another camp came over in search of more labor for his camp. The Nazi officer was looking through the camp when he happened upon the barrack where the boys were being detained. He decided that he would take these boys to his labor camp. It is reported that all fifty boys survived the Holocaust. These boys were stripped of everything, yet they still found a way to celebrate with Hashem in the most desperate of times, and consequently, they merited Hashem’s salvation. This

powerful story is similarly to our case on Simchas Torah, where we celebrate a restoration of our relationship with Hashem that Bnei Yisrael merited through their teshuva.

The Juxtaposition of Yom Kippur and Sukkot

by Noah Hyman (YULA ‘18)

Everything in Judaism, down to the order of the holidays, is done for a reason. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, why is the holiday of Sukkot immediately after Yom Kippur? What about this day of judgment warrants us to leave our homes and live outside in huts?

The Yalkut Shimoni writes in parshat Emor that if a gezerah of galus, or decree of exile, for the following year happened to be given to us on Yom Kippur, we would fulfill this gezerah by leaving our homes on Sukkot, albeit in a less extreme exile.

Rav Dessler expounds upon the idea of the Yalkut Shemoni. He says that jealousy is a common problem among Jews, and when we see what everyone else possesses and where they live, it leads to envy. This very *middah ra’ah* - that of envy - leads to *sinat chinam*. And as we know, the *churban* of the second Beit HaMikdash was caused by *sinat chinam*. However, when we leave the comfort of our luxurious homes, and enter the simplicity of the Sukkah, we are all on a level playing field. Everyone’s dwelling places are essentially equal and jealousy or *sinat chinam* is no more. The gezerah of galus, therefore, is no longer required.

In fact, an interesting parallel can be drawn between the Sukkah and the Beit HaMikdash. The Mahari Kara, in his *perush* on Amos, explains that the “*Sukkat Dovid haNofales*,” the fallen house of David (Amos 9:11), refers to the Beit HaMikdash. The Vilna Gaon (*perush* to Shir HaShirim 1:4) explains that the reason Sukkot takes place in Tishrei, as opposed to in Nissan, when we left Mitzrayim and the *ananei hakavod* began to protect us, is in order to coincide with the beginning of the construction of the Mishkan.

Much of the davening on Yom Kippur revolves around the Beit Hamikdash and the Avodah within it. After saying all of these Yom Kippur prayers, we now take the lessons and apply them to our own lives, using them to build our own personal Mikdash.

Clearly, there is great significance to the juxtaposition of Yom Kippur and Sukkot. We eradicate the envy among us and thereby remove any decree of exile given to us. We use the prayers said from several days before on Yom Kippur to build our own Mikdash and live in the midst of the *Shechinah*.



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This publication contains Torah matter and should be treated accordingly.