



PARSHAS
HA'AZINU
SUKKOS

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SHALOSH SEUDAH
TORAH

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Sukkos

Protected in the Sukkah

The Shechina (Divine presence) hovers upon the Sechach which covers the Sukkah. This is described in Parshas Ha'azinu, where the Shechina is compared to, "כנשר יעיר קנו על גוזליו ירחף", an eagle which awakens its nest, hovering above its hatchlings.

Upon entering the Sukkah we recite a prayer asking Hashem, "להקיף אותם מזיו כבודך הקדוש והטהור נטוי על ראשיהם מלמעלה כנשר יעיר קנו" (surround them (the Jewish people) with the radiance of your holy, pure glory, spread over their heads like an eagle as it awakens its nest).

The flimsy branches of Sechach cannot protect us from the elements. We are meant to reflect on this and realize that nothing physical is worthy of our trust; only Hashem can support and protect us. When we realize this we will be able to feel safe and secure even under the primitive roof of the Sukkah.

The Sukkah teaches us that we are ensconced beneath the protective wings of the Shechina. We can continue to draw protection from the mitzvah of Sukkah for the entire year. Given the extremely dangerous state of the world today, we should put a strong emphasis on properly fulfilling it.

Prophet Yeshaya describes Hashem's protection as "וְסִכָּה תְהִיָּה לְצֵל יוֹמָם מִחֹרֵב וְלַמַּחְסָה וְלַמַּחְסָה וְלַמַּחְסָה וְלַמַּחְסָה" a Sukkah which shields from dryness during the day, and protects and shields against flood and rain. כנשר, an eagle, is gematria לצל תהיה, it will be a shield (they both equal 570). Like the eagle hovering protectively over its young, the Shechina protects those who fulfill the mitzvah of Sukkah from any lurking dangers.

Freedom in the Sukkah

Upon settling Eretz Yisrael, the Jews were commanded to observe every fiftieth year as a year of Yovel. During this year, all sold land reverted to its original owner and all enslaved Jews were set free. Yovel is a sublime spiritual power which emancipates and returns everything to its roots, where it belongs.¹

The courts would proclaim the year as Yovel by blowing the Shofar on Yom Kippur. The Shofar was blown specifically on Yom Kippur because it is a day of Yovel - return. Through the repentance of Yom Kippur, Jewish souls are relieved from subjugation to the evil forces and are returned to their source – G-d Himself.

In addition to the biblical command to blow the Shofar on Rosh Hashana, it is customary to blow the Shofar at the end of Yom Kippur, in commemoration of the courts' Yovel blasts.

The shofar blast of Rosh Hashana, which inspired repentance, is also connected to the spheres of Yovel. However, the Tanya teaches that the shofar blast which concludes the service of Yom Kippur has its roots in even loftier spheres than that of Rosh Hashana. It is rooted in the mighty blast which Hashem will blow to herald

¹ The concept of Yovel was explained more comprehensively in Parshas Matos.

Mashiach. This Shofar blast will inspire every Jew to return to Hashem and afterwards Mashiach will come and return every Jew to Eretz Yisrael - the ultimate Yovel.

In a way, Sukkos is a continuation of Yom Kippur. Within the Sukkah, the atmosphere of Yovel reigns.² The Zohar³ teaches that we merit freedom for ourselves and our children by sitting in the Sukkah. כנשר is gematria "יובל הוא תהיה לכם", it is Yovel, it shall be for you (they both equal 570). The Sukkah, upon which the Shechina hovers over like an eagle, is filled with vibrations of Yovel.

A Sukkah is only for the Free

The Mishna¹ relates that Tavi, the non-Jewish slave of the Rabbi Gamliel, slept under the bed in the Sukkah, thereby ensuring that he would not fulfill the mitzvah of Sukkah which requires being directly beneath the Sechach. R' Gamliel praised Tavi because his act demonstrated that he knew that slaves are exempt from being in the Sukkah, since they are obligated to fulfill all non-time-bound mitzvos only, and the mitzvah of Sukkah is time-bound.

However, slaves can fulfill the mitzvah of Sukkah even though they are exempt. Women are also exempt from time-bound mitzvos nevertheless sit in the Sukkah.³

However, knowing that in the Sukkah an atmosphere of Yovel - freedom - prevails, we can understand why it would be incongruent for a slave to enter the Sukkah. Rabbi Gamliel praised Tavi for his perception in realizing that he had no connection to the Yovel which reigns in the Sukkah.

Furthermore, Tavi was a reincarnation of Cham⁴, the son of Noach who was cursed with everlasting slavehood because he violated Hashem's command that the inhabitants of the Teivah (ark) separate from their spouses.

The Sukkah and Teivah are remarkably similar. As the Sukkah provides protection, מזרם ומטר, the Teivah also protected from the raging waters of the Mabul (deluge). Like the Sukkah, the protection of the Teivah was divine in nature. Could planks of wood smeared with tar halt the raging, boiling waters of the Mabul?

Just as we have halachos (laws) how to build a Sukkah, and if not followed, a Sukkah is nothing more than a flimsy shack, so too did Hashem instruct Noach precisely how to build the Teivah. Each Halacha is a holy name of Hashem (as explained in the essay on Mikvah). It was not the physical edifice that blocked the waters, but the holy names of Hashem.

Tavi, who was once Cham, understood that he specifically had no place in the Sukkah, since he had violated the holiness of the Teivah.⁴

Proper Conduct in the Sukkah

² The walls of the sukkah are referred to as מקיפין דבינה, encirclements of Binah. Binah and Yovel are synonymous, as was explained in Parshas Matos.

³ Tosfos proposes an answer by quoting the Gemara Yerushalmi which says that the sukkah was crowded. However, the Gemara Bavli's omission indicates that there was another consideration.

⁴ Cham continued to sin on their exit from the Teivah by publicizing the fact that Noach had become uncovered. By sinning in the area of lack of covering, he deepened the disconnect between him and the Teivah/Sukkah which is a holy covering (see note 1).

Sefarim teach that the Sukkah contains the holiness of Yerushalayim and the Bais HaMikdash. This is reflected in the prayer recited before entering the Sukkah on the first night, where we ask that in the merit of the mitzvah of Sukkah, we be able to live in the Holy land for many years.

קנו כנשר יעיר is gematria מעון ביתך אהבתי, I love the place of your dwelling (i.e. the Bais HaMikdash) and also, חיבת ירושלים, the love of Yerushalayim (they each equal 1016). In the Sukkah, over which Hashem hovers like an eagle over its nest, is the atmosphere of the Bais HaMikdash and Yerushalayim.

Due to its holiness, one should be careful not to chatter idly when sitting in the Sukkah. Of course, we have to be aware of our family's emotional needs and individualize this according to each family's situation. Some families can discuss the halachos of Sukkah, some the significance of the Mitzvah, others can say stories of tzaddikim and sing, but the atmosphere in the Sukkah is elevated, and the topic of conversation should reflect that.

The Lulav Proclaims Victory

On Sukkos we hold the Lulav high as a symbol of having emerged victorious from the judgment of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, just as soldiers returning triumphantly from battle hold their swords aloft. How do we know that we were vindicated in judgment? It would seem that we would have to wait for the year to pass first.

The Midrash tells of a tailor who went to buy a fish to fulfill the mitzvah of eating a meal on the eve of Yom Kippur. When he arrived at the marketplace there was only one fish left and the servant of a noble wanted to purchase it for his master who loved to eat fish. They bid on the fish until the price reached a ridiculously high amount and the servant withdrew and the tailor purchased the fish.

The nobleman asked his servant why he returned empty-handed. He explained what happened saying, "A tailor up-bid the price and I knew you would not want me to pay such an ostentatious price for a simple fish." The noble summoned the tailor, "Why did you raise the price so high?"

"We have one day in the year when G-d pardons our sins and I needed the fish for my meal to celebrate the forgiveness of my sins."

The noble responded, "You have proved your point, so you are excused."

How did the tailor prove that Yom Kippur is a day of forgiveness by purchasing the fish at such an astronomical price? Also, nobles spent inordinate amounts of money on gratifying their various desires, how was the servant so sure that his master would be unwilling to spend so much money on a fish which he would enjoy eating?

The reason why the servant was so sure that his master would not want to spend an extravagant sum on the fish was because of a psychological rule, (which is rooted in arrogance): no one wants to feel taken advantage of. Do not use me! A rich man will not be willing to spend ten dollars on a toothpick even though he could well afford it. Even he will only purchase a product at the most reasonable price he could find.

The nobleman would not want to over-spend on a fish because he would feel taken advantage of. The tailor, on the other hand, did not care about his rights at all. He loved Hashem so much, he would spend whatever necessary for the mitzvah of eating a meal on the eve of Yom Kippur.

When the tailor said that on Yom Kippur Hashem forgives the sins of the Jewish people, the nobleman believed him because feelings tend to be mutual. If the tailor loved Hashem so much that he did not mind being taken advantage of and overspending so outrageously, then certainly Hashem loved him too and "על כל פשעים תכסה אהבה" love obscures all faults.

By being willing to overspend so outrageously for the love of a mitzvah, the tailor exhibited his tremendous love for Hashem which shows the overwhelming love of Hashem for him, thus proving that Yom Kippur is a day when Hashem pardons all Jewish sins.

If one would ask a fruit vendor how much an Esrog is worth, he would say, "If a lemon is four for a dollar, an Esrog should be six for a dollar." A florist would include a lulav for free with every bouquet. To spend \$200-\$300 on a set of the four species is outrageous from the perspective of a fair price.

However, in our overwhelming love for Hashem, Jews are willing to spend whatever price is demanded for the most beautiful Lulav and Esrog available and do not regard our natural feeling of not wanting to be taken advantage of. This guarantees Hashem's great reciprocal love for the Jewish people by which He surely forgave our sins and granted us a favorable verdict.

Side-Benefits of the Mitzvah of Sukkah

In Parshas Ha'azinu, Hashem says, מחצתי ואני ארפא, I have stricken and I will heal. Seforim teach that מחצתי refers to the מחיצות, walls, of the Sukkah. Thus the verse reveals that sitting in the sukka can affect a complete cure.

The Mitzvah of Sukkah is also auspicious for raising virtuous children, as the Torah tells us that we should sit in Sukkos in order that, "למען ידעו דורותיכם", your generations should know that the Jews sat in Sukkos when they left Egypt.

The Gemara teaches "המצטער פטור מן הסוכה", one who is suffering because of his sitting in the Sukkah [e.g. it is raining] is relieved of the obligation of Sukkah. The Tiferes Shlomo sees salvation in these words, המצטער, one who is suffering, פטור – can relieve himself of his suffering, מן הסוכה – through the mitzvah of Sukkah. A Jew can rid himself of his troubles in the Sukkah because therein is Yovel, which brings freedom and redemption.⁵

We are now entering the year of תשע"ג which is gematria היובל (they both equal 773). This year, may we all return to our roots in Eretz Yisrael and to Hashem himself.

⁵ לכל יושבי (תהלים כז:ה) "כי יצפנו בסוכה", for He will hide us in a Sukkah (to protect us) is gematria ליקרא כה:י) (ויקרא כה:י), [Yovel frees] all her [Eretz Yisrael's] residents (they both equal 403).

^א ישעיה' ד:ך

^ב פ' אמור

^ג ויקרא כה:י

^ד סוכה דף כ' ע"ב

^ה גלגולי נשמות לרמ"ע מפאנו

^ו משלי ו:יב

^ז ויקרא כג:מג

^ח סוכה דף כ"ה ע"ב