BILVAVI

AFTER THE HOLYDAYS

COLLECTION OF DRASHAS FROM THE AUTHOR OF BILVAVI MISHKAN EVNEH

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Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh

BILVAVI BOOKS
POB 34192,
Jerusalem, Israel 9134100
Tel. +972.52.763.8588
Fax + 972.3.548.0529
www.bilvavi.net
bilvavi231@gmail.com

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SIFREI ABRAMOVITCH
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03.578.2270
books2270@gmail.com

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Tel. 718-871-8652
Fax 718-871-8412
sales@shirahdist.com

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Internalizing Sukkos For the Rest of the Year

Carrying Over the Yom Tov into the Year

In the *Shemoneh Esrei* of the *Shalosh Regalim* (the Three Festivals of *Sukkos*, *Pesach* and Shavuos), we pray, "And lift us, Hashem our G-d, the blessings of Your festival, for life and peace, happiness and gladdening."

This prayer has been interpreted by some commentators[1] to mean that we are asking Hashem to let the blessings of Yom Tov carry over into the rest of the year. The Hebrew word for "Blessing", berachah, comes from word beraicha – a pool. According to this interpretation, these words mean we want Hashem's elevation to be pooled on us[2], essentially ensuring the special power of the Yom Tov can be collected for access during the rest of the year as well.

Yom Tov is an opportunity for immense holiness and growth. Even Chol HaMoed is a holy time during which Chazal forbade certain activities in order to free us to rejoice in festivity and additional Torah learning.[3] (Note that the restriction on materialism and work is only partial as certain labors are still permitted on Chol HaMoed). When a person is busy with various matters other than Avodas Hashem and learning Torah, his soul is less open to receive holiness. In contrast, Yom Tov disconnects us from materialism and thus opens us up to be able to acquire more spirituality, Avodas Hashem and Torah. This extra free and relaxed time give us the opportunity to calm our souls and focus more on serving the Creator.

However, this opportunity need not be limited to Yom Tov. We can receive a heightened spiritual experience similar to that gained on Yom Tov by regularly practicing a form of disconnecting with the material world throughout the year. In this way, we will benefit from our increased Avodas Hashem and our Torah learning all year long.

Accessing the State of Yom Tov Even During The Year

Yom Tov is supposed to imbue us with a burst of heightened spiritual energy which can then be sustained until the next Yom Tov. These limited days of Yom Tov are thus vital and precious, nourishing us with holiness for the whole rest of the year.

Let's explore this idea of Yom Tov

[1] *Bad Kodesh on Moadim (Rav Baruch Dov Povarski), p.416. See also Birchas Moadecha (of Rav Margolin) on Tishrei.*

[2] *See Rabbeinu Bachye, Parshas Eikev, 8:10.*

[3] *Yerushalmi Moed Kattan, 9a.*

fueling our souls for the rest of the year on a practical level. On Yom Tov, most people feel comparatively more relaxed than during the year. Even on Chol HaMoed, we buy only food that we will need for Yom Tov, and not more than that. We are frugal and satisfied when our immediate needs are met. We avoid many types of work on Chol HaMoed, unless it will cause us a loss. Most stores are closed. (Note that we are not discussing here those who abuse the relaxed state of Chol HaMoed for simple frivolity or time-wasting, chas v'shalom.)

It seems almost impossible to live this way in a physical sense during the rest of the year. When Yom Tov ends, most of us usually return to our prospective jobs. Even a Kolel avreich has his responsibilities that lie outside his Torah learning. He has to make sure that his wife and kids have a roof over their heads; that they have food, clothing, doctor visits, etc.

However, it is possible to retain the emotional and spiritual state of inner calmness we gained on Yom Tov throughout the year. How? If we view the time period between one Yom Tov and the next as being one long "chol hamoed"! The Ramban writes that Sefiras HaOmer is like Chol HaMoed, and that Shavuos is like the Shemini Atzeres (of Pesach). Perhaps we can extrapolate this idea to the period between Shavuos and Sukkos – and between *Sukkos* and *Pesach* so that all these days are internally viewed as one big Chol HaMoed. Instead of being chol, These days simply function as a bridge connecting one Yom Tov to another. In this way, the heightened spirituality of Chol HaMoed extends all year.

In Between Yomim Tovim

Yom Tov can be considered like a Shabbos. For instance, Pesach is called "Shabbos"[4] and Yom Kippur is called "Shabbos Shabboson."[5]Yom Tov and Shabbos are both considered zecher l'yetzias mitzrayim – a remembrance of our redemption from Egypt and thus they can be compared to each other. In contrast, the rest of the year can be compared to the six days of the week.

The six days of the week are blessed by Shabbos.[6] The days in between each Yom Tov are arguably sustained by the blessings of the Yom Tov. Just like there are certain "in-between" time periods, for instance the afternoon[7] and "bein hashemashos"[8] (twilight) that serve to connect different times, so too the days in between Yomim Tovim can be considered a connecting bridge between the Yom Tovim. This connecting bridge

4 *Menachos 65b*

5 *Vayikra 16: 31*

6 Zohar II, Yisro, 88a

7 *Rashi, Shemos 12: 6*

8 *Avos 5: 6*

consisting of the days between the Yom Tovim may in a sense be deemed a Yom Tov of its own.

Thus, the days of the rest of the year are not like Yom Tov itself, but may be compared to Chol HaMoed, [functioning as a connecting bridge linking the three parts of Yom Tov throughout the year.] Just as Chol HaMoed is part of Yom Tov but is less holy than the first and final days, so too the rest of the year can be considered a part of Yom Tov, albeit a less holy part of the three main festivals.

Support for this idea may be found from the *Gemara*[9] which teaches that when Haman wanted to [choose an appropriate date to kill the Jews], he pointed out to Achashveirosh that the Jews are always busy keeping Yom Tov; "today is Shabbos, today is Pesach." This supports the idea that the Jewish people are always in a state of "Yom Tov" – either the actual Yom Tov itself, or a lower level of "Chol HaMoed" where they are preparing for the next Yom Tov.

What We Can Learn From Yom Tov For The Rest of the Year

Just like the world stands on three pillars[10], the Jewish people stand on three things – the three Yomim Tovim[11]! The Yomim Tovim help the Jewish people survive, representing a guide as to how to live our lives during the rest of the year.

Our deep soul connection with the Creator that we achieve on Yom Tov need not be limited to those three special times of Yomim Tovim. Rather, they can seep into the rest of the year and elevate us each day. Each aspect of Yom Tov teaches us something significant. For example, the restriction on Chol HaMoed to purchase only items are necessary for Yom Tov[12] teaches us to be more frugal and have emuna in Hashem that He will provide all that we need in the future. By reducing materialism via limiting our spending only to those items which are truly necessary, we learn to be freer to focus on spirituality.

In the Shemoneh Esrei of Yom Tov we daven "You chose us from all the nations", and mention how Yom Tov is zecher l'yetzias mitzrayim. This reminds us that only the Jewish people merited to be redeemed from Egypt. The other nations did not merit this special event. Yom Tov represents Hashem choosing us as His people and forming us into His nation. This message of appreciation for Hashem freeing us and for our special Jewish status can be retained throughout the year.

9 *Rashi, Megillah 13b*

10 *Avos 1:2 and 1:17*

11 *These are called Shalosh Regalim, the "Three Festivals": Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos.*

12 *Tur, Orach Chaim, 130.*

Yom Tov – Our Meeting With Hashem

Yom Tov is called moed, which comes from the word vaad (meeting). In the times of the Beit Hamikdash, on the Yom Tov of the Shalosh Regalim the whole of the Jewish people would congregate there to meet with Hashem. They met up with the Shechinah.

What does this mean? It means that they experienced a deep connection with Hashem in their hearts so that they had a true and complete awareness of His existence. It was called "aliyah l'regel," (ascending on Yom Tov") because one would ascend spiritually during Yom Tov and then remain at that high level, maintaining it rather than falling back to his previous state.

We would derive vitality from these three meetings for the rest of the year. The possuk, "Who will ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who will stand in His holy place"[13] praises those who gain from the holy spiritual elevation of Yom Tov and manage to maintain level throughout the rest of the year.

We express our loss of these precious meetings in the Shemoneh Esrei of Yom Tov, "And because of our sins, we have been exiled from our land, and we have been distanced from our earth." A question arises as to why we say we have been exiled when we are able to stand in Eretz Yisrael today? The answer is that though we can physically live in the land, when we lost the Beit Hamikdash, we lost the incredible holiness of Eretz Yisrael. (Note that there is a debate as to whether the land of Eretz Yisrael still maintains its sanctity even though we have no Beis Hamikdash.[14])

Thus, this tefillah has a deeper meaning. We are mourning [our spiritual exile and the loss of] the great spiritual revelations we experienced on Yom Tov at the time of the Beis Hamikdash. This spiritual light used to illuminate the entire Eretz Yisrael. Though we can still reach internal, spiritual highs, such revelations are not exposed openly in the world in the absence of the Beit Hamikdash. Though many Jews physically live in Eretz Yisrael, they are also still in exile from the spiritual revelations [and the kedusha] experienced at the time of the Beit Hamikdash.

Yom Tov- The Shechinah Within

In the Shemoneh Esrei of Yom Tov, we daven "V'hasieinu es birkas moedecha" – ("And carry over the blessings of Your festivals…"). We beseech Hashem to let the holiness of Yom Tov carry into the rest of the year, despite the lack of open revelation of the Shechinah in our current time.

The Torah and the wisdom it imparts is eternal. Similarly, the elevation of spirituality and the open revelation of the Shechinah apparent in the times of the Beis Hamikdash is also eternal.

[13] *Tehillim 24:3*

[14] *See Megillah 6a and Rambam Hilchos Beis HaBechirah 6: 16*

Thus, even in the absence of the Beis Hamikdash, we can experience some measure of this internal "aliyah l'regel" every Yom Tov. [15] The Alshich explains that the possuk "And I will dwell amongst them" [16] refers to the fact that Hashem dwells in the heart of each Jew. We can still access the Shechinah in our hearts.

However, in order for this to spiritual elevation to occur we need to know the true essence of Yom Tov. The inner avodah of Yom Tov is to connect to Hashem in our hearts. By experiencing a stronger recognition of Hashem's existence on Yom Tov, a person's Torah learning [and deveikus to Hashem] during the rest of the year will become more internalized in his mind and heart.

Experience the Elation of Yom Tov and Then Seek To Maintain It

First, a person has to make sure that he has spiritually gained from Yom Tov in the first place. Reaching a spiritual high and connection to Hashem on Yom Tov is immensely valuable. Even a small improvement is beneficial as it provides one with a starting point. For instance, on Simchas Torah a person's [*avodah*] will be to increase his love of the Torah and closeness to Hashem.

Then, it is our avodah to enable this growth to spill into the rest of the year. Those with clear gain and growth can extend such inspiration to the rest of the year. Conversely, a failure to grow from Yom Tov and obtain a stronger relationship with Hashem during Yom Tov will be less likely to result in heightened spirituality during the rest of the year.

One question is how do we know if we have obtained a greater closeness to Hashem after Yom Tov? We can check whether we feel reluctant to part from Hashem after such a period of closeness, just as Hashem finds it hard to leave us at the end of Sukkos , begging us to "remain with Me one more day." [17]

The Custom In Kelm of "Asiri Kodesh"

Practically speaking, how we can hold onto our gains from Yom Tov and enable them to spill over into the rest of the year?

Every Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos and *Simchas* Torah we repeatedly make resolutions, and reach a spiritual high on the Yom Tovim, – with the help of Hashem. But what is the point if we just fall back down again, losing all we have gained chas v'shalom, as the year goes on? Do we just begin again from scratch next year?

In Kelm, there was a custom called "Asiri Kodesh." [18] Every ten consecutive

[15] *Yom Tov here refers uniquely to the Three Festivals of Pesach, Shavuos and Sukkos.*

[16] *Shemos 25: 8*

[17] *See Rashi, Vayikra 23: 36*

[18] *lit. "Tenth Day Is Holy".*

days following Yom Kippur, the people of Kelm would create a "mini Yom Kippur" by checking to see if they had met their Yom Kippur's resolutions. This custom began because it is human nature to slip and most people are only able to hold onto their inspiration during Yomim Noraim. A few rare individuals may be inspired a little longer, perhaps maintaining their resolutions until after Sukkos or so. Asiri Kodesh forced people to [undertake a regular cheshbon nefesh, repeatedly review their actions] to ensure they maintained their level they reached and the goals they set on Yomim Noraim.

This practice can teach us how to hold onto our gains from Yom Tov. In order to heighten our level of spirituality during the year, we need to consciously set aside time to regularly review our closeness to Hashem. We can use this time to review whether we are maintaining the spiritual bond with Hashem we managed to achieve during these holy days and how to continue to maintain it. It will enable us to clearly see where we are holding and the direction we are travelling so we can re-direct and stay on the course as set out by our resolutions of the Yomim Noraim.

The Advice of the Ramchal

One reason many people do not keep their resolutions for the new year is because they fail to believe in themselves enough. [They did not have a strong enough ratzon] or belief that they were able to keep to what they took upon themselves. However, this lack of self-belief represents a denial of the words of Chazal. Chazal established in Shemoneh Esrei the tefillah of "V'hasieinu", Thus, it must be possible to maintain our goals and improve our spiritual connection with Hashem. Even if we cannot keep all our resolutions completely perfectly, we can still grow and maintain a level higher than the previous year.

However, it is pointless to try to keep resolutions if we fail to seek advice on how to do this in practice. The Ramchal (author of Mesillas Yesharim)'s advise in sefer Derech Eitz Chaim is as follows[19]:

'**It** is therefore a duty upon each person to reflect with himself. If he doesn't reflect and think, wisdom will not come after him…a person, for many years of his life, thinks a lot about his various responsibilities, which are only his temporary responsibilities. Why can't he think for an hour about the things that really matter, such as: Who am I? Why did I come onto this world? What does Hashem want from me? What will be with my end?

"**This** (an hour of self-introspection every day) is the greatest remedy once can have against his evil inclination. It is easy, yet it does so much. It bears many results.

[19] *This has been loosely translated and is fairly literal to the text.*

Every day, a person should reflect for at least an hour a day, and empty himself from the rest of his thoughts so that he can only think about just this (what he have said).

"**And** he should ask himself in his heart: "What did the forefathers do, whom Hashem found desirable? What did Moshe Rabbeinu do? What did Dovid HaMelech do? What did all the great leaders before me do?

"**And** he should realize in his mind how good it is to do this for all his life."

The Ramchal is advising us to undertake this process of introspection for the entire year, not just inspiration for Elul. If we are really truthful with ourselves, and if we really want to gain from Yomim Noraim for the rest of the year, then we must put in regular avodah to ensure we protect what we have gained from Yomim Noraim.[20]

Make A Self Accounting

The Ramchal teaches that the most essential tool we need in order to maximize our potential and our connection to Hashem is to set aside time for self-introspection. Ideally, this self-reflection should be conducted on a daily basis. However, [these days it is unusual for people to consistently achieve this level]. Thus, realistically, such a self-accounting may be conducted every week or ten days. [But in order to be effective, such a process must be done regularly.] During this time, we can make a self-accounting {akin to the following]: "On Rosh Hashanah, I made a resolution to do X. At the peak of the Yom Tovim I also reached a certain spiritual level. Have I succeeded in keeping my resolutions and retaining an elevated level compared to last year? If not, what can I do to make sure I maintain this level and keep my resolutions?"

On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem decrees each person's fate for the coming year. However, our responsibility is to keep our word. Realistically, we must face the fact that we will face responsibilities, challenges, and difficulties in the coming year. It will definitely not be simple to maintain the level we reached on Yomim Noraim throughout the rest of the year. But at least by [putting in place regular practices to maximize our chances of success, we are showing ourselves and Hashem that we are trying to succeed.]

During this time, we must stop and think about the purpose of life. We must be truthful with ourselves, recalling our resolutions and good intentions we set for ourselves and what we promised Hashem we would try to achieve on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

One practical method to achieve this process is to write down our resolutions. Then, we can take out the paper and review it during our reflection time. This process will reveal whether we are really keeping our word, and where we need

[20] *See also Kedushas Levi: Shavuos, and also Ramban: Emunah UBitachon, chap. 19*

further work. If we are not fulfilling our resolutions, we can ask ourselves: "How will I face Hashem next Rosh Hashanah…?

In summary, in order to maximize our chances of the spiritual high gained on Yom Tov spilling into the rest of the year, we must designate regular times of quiet during which we can make a self-accounting. We all have the free will to decide whether or not we want to put in the effort to increase our chances of experiencing our Yom Tov blessings throughout rest of the year.

How To Avoid The Sleepiness of the Winter

Though we can achieve our own personal greatest levels of spirituality on Aseres Y'mei Teshuvah and the Yom Tovim[21], this spirituality of Yomim Noraim can enable us to reach our maximum potential for the rest of the year. [However, the greatness of the Yomim Noraim can only function this way if we practice regular avodah in the way we outlined above.]

[There are numerous sefarim with different words advice on how to meet and maintain our good resolutions throughout the whole year.] Some of this advice may differ from that of the *Ramchal*. Nevertheless, those who fail to keep the *Ramchal's* advice or carry out some form of similar, regular self-accounting practice will be unlikely to achieve their resolutions made during Yomim Noraim. In contrast, those who follow the *Ramchal's* advice and set aside regular time to reflect and conduct a self-accounting will most certainly see results.

These words are not meant to be simply an inspiring lecture. Inspiration is appropriate for Elul and Yomim Noraim but does not usually translate to the winter when we become sleepier and more lethargic. If we want to avoid becoming spiritually sleep-like during the winter, we need to undertake a regular maintenance practice throughout the year.

Deep down we all know that regular reflection and self-accounting is necessary. These words are simple and true. They emanate from the words of our great teachers. Nothing has been added here to their advice.

May Hashem merit us to have the energy, time and ratzon to set aside time to think about the purpose of life[22]. May the spiritual high of the Yomim Noraim and Yom Tovim extend into the rest of the year, enabling us to maintain our appropriate level and grow to achieve our maximum potential. May we not simply fall back down and wait passively until the next Elul in order to become inspired and rise again. [*This chapter published in english sefer, Bilvavi on the HolyDays]*

[21] *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim: 203*

[22] *For more specific guidance on how to make a cheshbon hanefesh, see Bilvavi Vol. IV, chapters*

Drawing Menuchas Hanefesh from Consistency

Don't Wait For Yom Tov

When Yom Tov comes, people feel chiyus (vitality) from it, which they do not usually feel during the rest of the year. A person looks forward to Yom Tov so he can feel more alive from it, while the rest of the year seems boring. Indeed, our holy sefarim call the winter a "time for sleep."

It is nice to look forward to Yom Tov, but we must realize that there is a different attitude we can have. There is a way for us to derive even more vitality from the ordinary days of the year than from Yom Tov!

Of course, Yom Tov is the holiest time of the year, both from a halachic viewpoint and from an emotional viewpoint. Yet, there is a rule, which our holy sefarim teach, that states everything is contained in its opposite. This means that if Yom Tov is holier than the rest of the year, then there is way to see how the rest of the year can be holier than Yom Tov.

If a person only feels vitality from Yom Tov, he is only full of life sometimes. He feels elated on Shabbos and Yom Tov, but daily life is boring to him. However, if a person learns how to derive vitality from the rest of the year, he can always feel alive.

After Yom Tov Ends

There is a concept that a person can carry over the holiness of Yom Tov to the rest of the year as well. Indeed, this is what we ask for in the Yom Tov prayer, "And lift us up, Hashem our G-d, with the blessings of Your festivals." We are asking that Hashem should carry over the holiness of Yom Tov into the rest of the year as well. However, the reality is that most people do not succeed in doing this except for a short amount of time.

The holiness of Yom Tov can actually be an impediment to one's growth in his avodas Hashem. This is similar to what Chazal say about the change of a woman's menstrual period, which is preceded by stomachaches.[23] All changes, even changes for the good, are somewhat harmful. Even when a person becomes more spiritual, he is in danger, because he has gone through a change. All changes are dangerous to a person!

For example, the sons of Yaakov were afraid that if their father found out that Yosef was still alive, that he would die from the good news. Why were they afraid of this? Could anything have been better for their father to hear?? It is because an extreme emotion is harmful, even if it is about something good.

[23] *Kesubos 110b*

When Yom Tov comes, a non-feeling person doesn't feel any changes from the Yom Tov. But a person who takes Yom Tov seriously and prepares for it, is someone who receives vitality and elation from it. When Yom Tov is over, he is apt to fall from his plateau.

If a person falls from a chair, it hurts. If a person falls from a table, it hurts even more, and if he falls from a higher place than this, the pain increases. The same goes for spirituality. When a person reaches a spiritual high, his fall will be harder when he falls. Although Yom Tov is holy, a person's soul can't always handle the holiness and he falls soon after.

If we want to gain from Yom Tov, we first need to feel alive from the ordinary days of the year and see what is contained in them, then we will be able to receive the holiness of Yom Tov without losing it afterwards.

Two Different Abilities in the Soul

Every person's soul has two abilities: the ability to become inspired and grow, and the ability to stabilize oneself and remain in his place. These are two opposite forces in one's soul. Usually, when a person uses one of these abilities he loses the other. For example, when a person feels spiritual growth, he is apt to lose his inner peace. Whereas, when a person feels at peace with himself, he becomes complacent and doesn't strive for growth.

What should a person do? It's a problem. When a person has growth, he often loses his calmness. He might be happy, but he isn't calm. On the other hand, if a person feels calm, he often becomes lethargic and doesn't seek to improve himself. (If a person doesn't know how to calm himself down, there are solutions for this such as thinking about the ocean waves or something relaxing). A person has the power of inner calm, but if it doesn't come from a deep place in his soul, this power just makes a person sleepy and lethargic.

There is a story about Rav Shmuel Wosner shlit"a, that depicts calmness. One time he went to the Chazon Ish to ask him something. When he came, he found the Chazon Ish with closed eyes. He seemed to be sleeping.

Rav Wosner stood there and waited until the Chazon Ish opened his eyes. Suddenly, the Chazon Ish opened his eyes and asked, "Why didn't you ask your question?"

Rav Wosner responded, "I saw the Rov was sleeping…"

The Chazon Ish answered, "No. I was not sleeping."

Why did the Chazon Ish look like he was sleeping? It could be because of his great connection he felt with Hashem. However, a simpler understanding of his behavior is that his soul was very

calm, but this did not make him sleepy.

The Calm Place In The Soul

When a person is only calm in a superficial way, he becomes lethargic. From a superficial perspective, a person is able to fall asleep when he is less busy, thus calmer. But the inner perspective of this power is that a person is calm when he reaches an inner silence. Just like Creation was silent during the giving of the Torah, so does a person have within his soul the power to have a deep silence. This is not a sleepiness, but a quietness that calms down one's excitement.

A person is only excited by something he doesn't usually have. When a person sees a new kind of food he has never tasted before, he gets excited, and if he is a more materialistic kind of person, he is even more excited. But if he eats it again and again, he loses passion for it. When a person has something on a constant basis, he doesn't get excited from it. If we have something consistently, we wouldn't need new things to get us excited.

Consistency and Renewal

Hashem is unchanging. He "was, will be, and will always be." He is constant and never changes. Hashem renews creation every day, but He Himself is never renewed. We need to learn how to develop a power in our soul that is constantly in existence and doesn't require us to change. This is the depth of life, to live in a silence that stays the same and doesn't get renewed.

There are people who misuse this power of the soul and become lethargic. However, others know how to connect to this power from an inner silence in their soul.

A more internal kind of person knows how to derive vitality from the regular days of the year, no less than what they get from Yom Tov. It's like eating and drinking; we need both in order to survive. Our soul needs Yom Tov, but it also needs the rest of the year.

We have two forces in our soul. One is the ability to find renewal. The other force is the ability to live without renewal. If a person only gets his vitality from renewal, he needs new things to feel alive. He feels alive from Yom Tov and from buying new clothes, because now he has something he didn't have yesterday, vitality. There is, however, another source of vitality a person can have. This foundation is Hashem, who is unchanging – the very source of life.

The Need For Renewal Comes From Being Superficial

A superficial kind of person always looks for new things. There are people who are always exchanging their items for a new one, because they need new things to live. If a person is only connected to renewal, he isn't connected

to Hashem, Who is consistent and never changes.

The Jewish people are compared to the moon, which renews itself every thirty days. However, this was a curse that came to the moon after it was created. Before Creation, the plan was for the moon to remain consistently of equal size to the sun. When a person derives vitality from consistency, and he doesn't need renewal to survive, he is connected to the state that existed before Creation, which is the more desirable state to be in.

The Dangers To Both Ways

Each Yom Tov, a person derives new vitality. Hoewver, there is another source of vitality. When a person feels vitality from consistency, which does not involve anything new. Without this kind of vitality, a person might gain from Yom Tov, only to fall from his level after Yom Tov is over. In between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, he is growing spiritually, but after Yom Kippur, he stops growing.

If a person accesses the inner silence in his soul, he is able to derive vitality from the consistent reality of Hashem. Yom Tov becomes another kind of vitality to him, but he doesn't depend on it, because he already has vitality. Such a person feels alive during the year, so he doesn't need Yom Tov to revive him. But when someone doesn't feel alive during the year, he feels kind of dead, and he needs Yom Tov to bring him back to life.

However, there is also a danger to someone who gets his vitality from consistency. It is possible that for him when Yom Tov comes, he might derive so much vitality from the renewed feeling of Yom Tov that he will lose his vitality from consistency. Therefore, a person must learn how to balance these two abilities. This takes a lot of wisdom.

Feeling the Constant Changes

Practically speaking, we always live with renewal. Every person goes through changes in life, some big and some small. The entire Creation is moving every second as well. We are always changing to some extent. All of Creation is like one big noise.

If a person doesn't know how to connect to the power of consistency, he will suffer from changes. This can be compared to a tree that gets blown by the wind. If there is a firm root, the tree will be able to withstand strong winds. If we have consistency and we don't need renewal in order to live, we are connected to a firm root to withstand changes.

We usually don't feel our constant changes, but when something extreme happens, like a happy or sad occasion, we feel a change. When a person gets vitality from changes, his life becomes

extreme. Such people aren't satisfied with just having food. Rather, they need something exotic in their food, and they need new things to feel like they're alive. Such people seek changes that become more and more extreme, because the regular things that they are used to become boring. They seek new things and look for a change to their routine, and the more they seek vitality, the more extreme the things become that they seek.

Others have the opposite problem by being too grounded. They never seek anything new, not because they feel alive from a consistent lifestyle, rather, because they are lethargic and devoid of life.

If a person is balanced, he derives vitality from consistency and from changes that are small or big. A person can only derive vitality from changes when he mainly derives his vitality from the ordinary days of the year, which are without renewal.

Lethargy and Depression

If a person isn't balanced and never derives vitality from changes, he has lost his sense of feeling alive. He slowly begins to become lethargic and disconnected from everything around him.

Sometimes a person becomes so lethargic that he begins to feel an inner emptiness and he is filled with all kinds of terrible thoughts that he can't escape. He might try to find himself and go to strange places in the world to do this, and this is all because he doesn't understand how life works. As soon as he encounters a problem, he is full of inner turmoil.

See Life As One Continuous Path

A person needs to be aware that life is one continuous path! If a person falls asleep in middle of a shiur that he cannot understand it is because he doesn't see how all the details connect. A person can't wake up in the middle of his life and try to understand where he went wrong. One needs to see how every experience in his life up until this very moment is all part of a big picture.

If a person would know himself well and understand that all his experiences in life are all part of one big picture, he wouldn't have problems.

For example, there are people who complain that their children misbehave. Such people think that if not for this problem, everything else is alright. But really, a child who misbehaves is not just having a behavior problem. If a person looks deeper, he will see that there is more behind the problem. The problem isn't that the child is misbehaving. That's just part of the picture.

If a person doesn't know what causes the child to want to misbehave, he cannot solve his child's misbehavior. A

person needs to become aware of what's going around him, in his life, in order to deal with any problem. He needs to look what happened before the problem and see what caused it. Otherwise, a person will be very shocked every time he has a problem.

In order to understand life, a person needs to see how life is one continuous path. To do this, a person needs to pay attention to what's happening. A person can only pay attention to his life when he is living life, when he is experiencing it. A waiter pays attention to those seated at the table, because his job depends on this; if a person realizes that his life depends on this, he will pay attention to what's going on.

When a person experiences life and pays attention to everything that's going on, he won't fall apart as soon as he encounters a problem, because he will know how to deal with it. However, if a person isn't paying attention, he will not know how to deal with problems.

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The Joy of Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah

Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah: Two Different Aspects of Joy

Shemini Atzeres is called by two names: Shemini Atzeres, and Simchas Torah. They represent two different kinds of joy.

One kind of joy is the joy of "Atzeres". "Atzeres" means to "remain". This is hinting to the Midrash that says that Hashem desired to remain with the Jewish people even after Sukkos ends, saying to them, "Remain with me one more day."

What exactly is this joy? It is the joy that one can have just in being attached to Hashem, to simply feel with Him in a sense of companionship.

Simchas Torah offers a different kind of joy. It is the joy one has in being attached to the Torah, and thus we make a celebration that we have completed the Torah.

Joy Within Nature and Joy Above Nature

A chosson and kallah have a certain joy; and it lasts for 7 days. The joy of Shemini Atzeres is a joy found on the "eighth day", hinting to the fact that it is a joy that is connected with the number "8"

In other words, the regular kind of joy is represented by the number 7, whereas the higher joy is represented by the number 8. We always find how the number 7 corresponds with nature, such as that there are 7 days of the week. The joy of a chosson and kallah, which lasts for 7 days, represents the natural joy; the joy is that two natures are fusing together. Such joy is a joy within the bounds of nature.

But there is a higher kind of joy, the joy of Shemini Atzeres. It is a joy that is above nature, for "8" is above "7." Let us explain what it is.

Above Nature

It is the custom that when we finish the Torah, we immediately begin with Beraishis. The reason behind this is because the Torah is unlimited and endless, and we want to show that it has no end.

The last letter of the Torah is ל, and the first letter of the Torah is ב, which forms the word לב (heart). The heart is king of the body; a king is above his people. A king is allowed to break fences, and no one can protest him.[24] A king – or the heart of a person – is not bound to the regular rules.

This is the joy of Simchas Torah; it represents the heart of a person, which is

[24] *Pesachim 110a*

above the regular limits, for it is "king" over the body. The joy of Simchas Torah is thus a joy that is above the natural kind of joy. It is the unlimited joy one can have in the Torah.

The same is true for the joy of Shemini Atzeres. Our avodah during the seven days of Sukkos is to realize how all of the world and nature is futile, to erase our attachment to this world (see the chapter before)[25].

After a person has hopefully nullified his attachment to this world – and there are seven traits inherent in nature[26] – he is now able to connect totally to Hashem, a state of being that is essentially above nature; that is the joy of Shemini Atzeres.

Within The Struggles, and Above the Struggles

The word "simcha" (שמחה) comes from word someach (שמח), and if we rearrange the letters, we get the word chamesh (חמש). Chamesh can mean two different things:

It can mean the number "five."

Chamesh is also from the word "chamushim", which means "armies"; we find this when the Jewish people left Egypt, that they left in "armies."[27] Rashi states that these armies were unarmed with any weapons. From here we see that the word "chamesh" normally refers to weapons of war.

The words "Simcha" (שמח) and "chamesh" (חמש) have the same root letters (ח, מ, ש); there is a rule in the sefarim hakedoshim that whenever there is a root word[28], there are two opposite meanings to it. In our case, this will apply as follows.

Simcha (שמחה) is when a person ends his wars, representing a level that is above nature. He has left the level of "Seven times a righteous person falls and gets up", and he is above the regular ups and downs. He is above "seven" – and he is now on the level of "eight". He no longer has the normal, natural struggles he used to deal with.

Chamesh חמש represents the lower kind of joy – when one is happy upon overcoming challenges. He wages war with the seven "nations" inside him – the seven primary bad middos. He still hasn't completely overcome them yet – he's still within the normal fights of nature, fighting with his natural abilities.

After Yom Tov Is Over

When Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah is over, what does a person remain with? The higher joy of "8" reached on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah has now gone; what does a person have left from Yom Tov?

[25] *Hence, we read Koheles on Sukkos, which talks about how futile this physical world is.*

[26] *the seven middos: chessed, gevurah, tiferes, netach, hod, yesod, malchu.*

[27] *Shemos 13: 18*

[28] *shoresh*

Simcha is when a person is happy with something has become added onto his existence. We see that people don't find happiness in the fact that they merely exist; people are naturally unhappy. (There is a kind of happiness that a person can have in just being happy with what he has, but no one is happy with their mere existence.) Simcha is only present when a person receives something, which adds on something to his existence.

If a person would take something he gets and make it a part of his essence, he would no longer be happy with what he has gotten, because now it's part of who he is – and he needs something more than what he is in order to be happy.

Yet, this is actually our avodah: we need to take what we have gained so far, and make it into a part of our essence, even though this will no longer provide us with a feeling of simcha.

Our avodah on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah is to find joy in Hashem and in His Torah – a joy that is above nature. After a person merits this joy, he has to take it and make it a part of who he is. One needs to feel a total connection with Hashem that transcends nature, and an attachment with Torah that transcends nature.

When a person takes the happiness of being attached to Hashem and the Torah (and this happiness can be reached on the Yom Tov) and he makes into a part of himself, the simcha goes away with this, because now there is nothing "more" to be happy about, for it is now part of the person.

For this reason, there is no simcha after Yom Tov ends. There can't be. It is not because the great spirituality of Yom Tov has gone. It is because if we have succeeded in our avodah on Yom Tov, that means we have transformed the spirituality of Yom Tov into a part of our essence. It has gone from being something great that surrounded us into something that has been absorbed into our being.[29] With this attainment, our simcha has to go away with it, but the gain is far worth it.

What is the avodah now, as we start the rest of the year? It is now upon us to aspire for an even higher level than what we gained until now – and from there we will derive our next upgrade to our simcha next year.

[*This chapter is adapted from Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Vol. V, p.284-286.*]

[29] *In the Hebrew sefer, the author calls this "going from the "ohr makif" ("surrounding light") to an "ohr penimi" (inner light).*