



BILVAVI SUCCOS TALKS

**COLLECTION OF DRASHAS FROM THE
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SUCCOS

01 | Self-Nullification In The Succah¹

Succah: The Integration of the Limited (Man) With The Unlimited (The Creator)

It is said in the name of the Vilna Gaon² that Avraham Avinu kept the *mitzvah* of *succah*, for it is written, **וה' ברך אברהם בכל**, “*And Hashem blessed Avraham in everything*” – he was blessed with “*bakol*”, “everything”, which hints to the concept of *succah*, for regarding *succah* the Torah says the words “*BaSuccos*”, “*Kol*”, and “*Lemaan*”, and the first letters of each of these words stands for the word “*bakol*”.

There is also a statement of *Chazal*³ that Avraham merited “*bakol*”, “in everything”, Yitzchok merited to have “*mikol*” (“from” everything), and Yaakov merited “*kol*”, “everything”. Thus, all of the forefathers merited the blessing that is called “*kol*”, everything. (The *Maharsha*⁴ explains that the word “*bakol*” refers to the World To Come, which is entirely good. Here, we will use a different approach.)

A created being is limited, whereas Hashem is unlimited. Thus, a created being is partial, whereas Hashem is everything, Who cannot contain anything lacking, *chas v'shalom*. Thus, when the Sages state that the forefathers were blessed with “everything”, it means that Hashem shined upon them His own essence, so to speak – in the sense that they received this “everything” aspect from Hashem.

That is why also the *sefarim hakedoshim*⁵ describe man as a being that is “*kol*”, “everything”. According to our approach, it means that man has the ability to connect himself to *Ain Od Milvado*, to the unlimited, for Hashem alone is called “*kol*”, for nothing else besides Him is called “*kol*”. The human aspect in a person is partial and thus limited, and does not contain this title of *kol*. But there is an ability in a person to connect himself to the point of *Ain Od Milvado*, which is called “*kol*” – so to speak, a person can connect himself to the *atzmityus* (essence) of Hashem.

The fact that man is called *kol*, and the fact that the forefathers especially were blessed with this aspect of “*kol*”, is referring to the ability in a person to have *hiskalelus* (integration) with Hashem.

The Vilna Gaon’s words about the connection between Succos and “*bakol*” is thus a hint that the *succah* reveals *Ain Od Milvado* (There is nothing besides Hashem). From a simple perspective, the *succah* is about boundaries – it serves to provide shade [which is bounded] and it is walled. But the secret of the *succah* is that it is *kol*/everything, for *succah* is connected with Avraham Avinu, who was blessed with *bakol*/everything.

The *succah* is the point of integration between the limited and the unlimited. The essence of the *succah* is that it is the true level of unification achieved through the revelation of *Ain Od Milvado* – it combines and integrates together the limited with the unlimited. The depth behind the *succah* is that it is about self-nullification (*bittul*) to Hashem and integration (*hiskalelus*) with Him.

1 סוכות_001_אור וצל 1

2 *Chumash HaGra* (Weinreb edition): *parshas Chayei Sarah*, 24a

3 *Bava Basra* 16b

4 *ibid*

5 *Avodas HaKodesh*, *sisrei Torah* 21; cited in *Shelah: hakdamah l'Asarah maamaros*: 6.

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Certainly a person cannot attain this through his own comprehension, for “no thought can comprehend Him”⁶ - one cannot have any [intellectual] grasp, at all, of Hashem. One’s *daas* (understanding) cannot understand how the limited can become integrated and unified with the limitless. Only through the *succah*, which is called the *tzila d’mehemenusa*, the “shade of faith” - only from the depth of *emunah* in the concept of *Ain Od Milvado* - can a person’s limited and unlimited aspects become integrated.

The spiritual illumination of the *succah*, in its essence, is “*In the shadow of Your wings, take shelter*”,⁷ and “*He sits in the concealed, above*”,⁸ and “*And the succah shall be as a protection and a covering*”. The unlimited [the reality of the Creator] is hidden within the *succah*, and this is the spiritual illumination available in these days of Succos, to the one who dwells in the *succah*.

The Depth of “Leave Your Permanent Dwelling and Enter Into A Temporary Dwelling” The World

The *succah* is both a temporary dwelling and also a permanent dwelling. [It is a temporary dwelling, for the Sages said, “Leave your permanent dwelling, [and enter] into a temporary dwelling.” But one also needs to regard the *succah* as his true dwelling [a spiritual place that is removed from This World], and in that sense, one regards the *succah* as his permanent dwelling.]

The simple understanding of a “temporary dwelling” is that This World of action is only a transient reality, whereas Gan Eden is our permanent dwelling. As *Chazal* state, “Prepare yourself in the corridor, before you enter the palace.”

However, even Gan Eden is temporary. For after Mashiach comes, there will be no more Gan Eden, and, G-d willing, Mashiach will be here before the end of the sixth century. Gan Eden will be a longer period than the average lifespan of man which lasts for 70 years, but it will not be forever. In fact, even the era of reward, the seventh century, will also be temporary, for it will last for a total of 1,000 years. After that will come the eighth century, which will be of an entirely different dimension. In the end, by the tenth century, all created beings will reach a state of total *bittul*, self-nullification, and become integrated with Hashem.⁹ So the reality of created beings is entirely temporary - it will not last forever. Only Hashem is permanent.

Thus, the depth of leaving our permanent dwelling and entering a temporary dwelling on Succos is not simply to leave the materialism of This World, from a physical house into a physical *succah*, but to leave our limits, our own limited wisdom and comprehension, and enter into a “temporary dwelling”, meaning, to enter into the perspective that all created beings are temporary. Then there can be an integration of the limitless and the limited, simultaneously.

When one views himself as a permanent reality, he will not be able to integrate with Hashem. One may be aware that Hashem is the reality, but he also thinks that he, too, is a reality. Since that is the case, his own reality will not be able to become nullified to Hashem. This perspective is really close to heresy. For there cannot be two realities; there is only one reality. Just as we do not understand Hashem, so is it impossible for us to understand how us limited human beings will integrate with Hashem.

Therefore, from the deep perspective, our entire reality on this world is something that is really inconceivable to us! There is only *emunah* (the belief in the reality of the Creator)!

⁶ *Zohar*

⁷ *Tehillim* 36:8

⁸ *Tehillim* 91:1

⁹ *The period of the seventh through tenth centuries are discussed by the Ramchal in sefer Kelalim Reshonim: 9 and in Igros Pischei Chochmah V'Daas:23 (Friedlander edition).*

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When one thinks he is an independent reality from Hashem, he feels as if he is permanent. It will not suffice even if he knows that this feeling is incorrect. Since he feels that his own reality is independent from Hashem's, his perspective is still separating him from Him. The person won't be able to integrate himself into the greater reality, because he is living in his own, false reality, even if he may be intellectually aware that he does not have an independent reality and that everything on this world is temporary.

Rising From Yeish to Ayin, then Returning To Yeish

Going deeper with this, there is really no such thing as anything temporary on this world. It is all permanent – for it is all the permanence of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, which is His reality, of “*Ain Od Milvado*” (There is nothing besides Him)!

When one has the deep perspective that the entire Creation is the really the reality of *Ain Od Milvado*, and that all of the Creation is essentially *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, he is aware of the deep perspective that nothing on this world is temporary - it is rather all the permanent reality of Hashem.

A person begins his worldview from the perspective of *Yeish*, the material, viewing this world from a materialistic lens, where he considers his own reality as independent from the Creator's. When one gains the spiritual viewpoint, which is called *Ayin*, “nothingness”, he becomes aware of the nothingness of This World. He sees that none of this world is reality, and that only Hashem is Reality. After that, he must then return to the view of *Yeish*, seeing the material reality in front of him as an entirely new *Yeish* than before, now that he has integrated *Ayin* into his view.

In the first level, *Yeish*, one views himself as a permanent, independent reality. One is commanded on Succos to leave this view of permanence and enter into a temporary dwelling, meaning, he must view the nothingness and transience of this world, and feel his reality becoming nullified to the greater reality, *Ain Od Milvado*. This is the view of *Ayin*. After that, he can enter into true view of *Yeish*, the state of integrating with Hashem, where he is above the transience of this world, and hence he does not see anything temporary – he only sees permanence: the permanent reality of Hashem, and nothing else.

Entering The Succah On A Deeper Level: Nullifying The Soul

It is said in the name of the *Gra* that there are only two *mitzvos* which a person enters entirely: Eretz Yisrael, and the *succah*. When a person enters entirely into these *mitzvos*, this does not simply mean that he is ‘found; entirely in the *mitzvah*. Rather, it is something deeper: that his entirety becomes non-existent - it isn't here! It does not mean simply that “I am inside the act of this *mitzvah*” – rather, it means that in this act of *mitzvah*, there is no “I”, for “I” am nullified to the G-dliness that is present in this *mitzvah* act. So to speak, the reality of the “*Ain Milvado*” integrates the “I” into Hashem *Yisborach*.

Certainly, we cannot comprehend this concept of integrating with Hashem (*hiskalelus*). There is nothing that can logically explain it. If we could explain it, that means we could have a grasp of it, but we cannot have any grasp of the Creator. So even when we speak of the Creator here, we are not speaking of the Creator Himself, but of how to integrate our existence into the Creator.

This is the secret of the *tzila d'mehemenusa*, the “shade of *emunah*” which is the *succah* – through complete *emunah*, one believes that he is becoming entirely integrated with Hashem, and according to the strength of one's *emunah*, love, and heart in this, a person will become integrated in Hashem, and have less of an “I”.

This is the depth of the 70 bull sacrifices which were offered on Succos, which corresponds to the 70 nations. When one enters the *succah*, he should be offering himself as a *korbon*, to Hashem. The Ramban writes that one who brings a *korbon*

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needs to think that it is he who should be offered as a *korbon*, and instead, Hashem in His kindness allows him to offer an animal in his stead.

Thus, in terms of the soul, the 70 bull-offerings brought on Succos enables on to sacrifice his “I” as a *korbon* to Hashem. To the degree that one integrates himself into the *succah*, that is how much he will “enter” into the *succah*, and, to that extent, that is how much a person succeeds in nullifying all 70 forces of his soul to Hashem. (The 70 nations of the world are the external shell of the 70 forces of the soul.)

Simchas Torah: The Joy of Union With G-d – After Nullifying The Entire Soul

When one nullifies his entire “I”, integrating all the 70 forces of his soul under the *succah* - meaning, he is *miskalel* (integrating his existence) into Hashem’s - he can then arrive at *Simchas Torah*, the day where there is a total union (*yichud*) between him and Hashem.

Simchas Torah is only one day, to show that it is a day when the oneness of Hashem is revealed. This oneness can only be manifest on *Simchas Torah* to a person after he has nullified and integrated all the 70 forces of his soul, throughout the 7 days of Succos.

When one reaches *Simchas Torah* after shedding his entire “I”, there is no greater *simchah* (joy) than this, because it enables him to reach the revelation of *Ain Od Milvado*, in the actual sense.

02 | Sukkah of Nowadays & Future¹⁰

Sukkah - In The Merit of Avraham Avinu

The Sages state in the *Midrash* that because Avraham *Avinu* enabled his guests to sit under the shade of a tree and be shielded from the sun's heat, his descendants (the Jewish nation) merited the *mitzvah* of *succah*, where we sit in the shadow of the *succah*. From these words of our Sages we see that the *mitzvah* of *succah* is rooted in Avraham *Avinu*.¹¹

If we reflect further into this, we find an additional connection between Avraham *Avinu* and *succah*. The Sages state that on the day that Avraham *Avinu* was ill from circumcision, Hashem removed the sun from its sheath, so that Avraham *Avinu* would not be disturbed by guests.¹²

The concept of Hashem removing the sun from its sheath is found elsewhere as well. The Sages teach that in the future, the nations of the world will request that Hashem give them the *mitzvos* so that they can earn reward. Hashem will give the gentiles an easy *mitzvah*, the *mitzvah* of *succah*, and then He will take the sun out of its sheath, where the temperature will become so hot that the gentiles will kick the *succah* and run out of it.¹³

Sukkah and The Sun's Shade

What is the connection between the sun being removed from its sheath, and *sukkah*?

In the future, the righteous will merit to dwell in a *succah* made of the leviathan skin, and the rest of the skin will be spread out over the walls of Yerushalayim, and its light will shine from one end of the world to the other.¹⁴ From this we see that the *succah* of the future will be totally different than the *succah* we have nowadays. The *succah* of the future will be entirely light, whereas the *succah* we have today is required to have more shade in it than sunlight¹⁵. The *succah* of nowadays is all about being in the shadow or shade (*tzeil*) of the *succah*, whereas the *succah* of the future will be entirely light, with no shadow.

Additionally, Rashi¹⁶ states that *succah* is from the word *s'chach*, the mat that covers the *succah*, which is a covering that is made to shield us in the *succah* from the sun.

Let us think into the depth of these concepts.

סוכות 002 – בזכות אברהם | ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה סוכות – עמ' י' – כ"ו 10

Editor's Note: This translation is a summary of the original Hebrew derasha printed in sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh – Succos. The bulk of this adaptation has been taken from pages 10-14 and page 26 of Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh – Succos. The material of this derasha is esoteric, thus it was too difficult to adapt the entire derasha into English; here we have tried to present a summary which discusses the main highlights of the shiur.

11 Beraishis Rabbah 48:10

12 Rashi to Beraishis 18:1; Bava Metzia 86b

13 Avodah Zarah 3a; Tanchuma Shoftim 89

14 Bava Basra 75a

15 Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim 631

16 Rashi to Sukkah 2a

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Sukkah of Nowadays: Dwelling In The 'Shadow' of Emunah

The words of the Zohar¹⁷ are well-known: the *succah* is called the *tzeila d'mehemenusa*, “the shadow of *emunah* (faith)”. There is *emunah*, the faith itself, and there is *tzeil ha'emunah*, the “shadow” of faith. The complete level of *emunah* is called *emunah*, whereas the incomplete level of *emunah* is called *tzeila d'meheimenusa*, or *tzeil emunah*. Thus, the *succah* of nowadays, which is called *tzeila d'meheimenusa*, represents a level of incomplete *emunah*, in contrast to the *succah* of the future, which will reflect the level of complete *emunah*.

Avraham Avinu was the first person to reveal *emunah* onto the world. Avraham is called “*Ezrachi*”, from the word *zerichah* (to shine), because he shined the light of *emunah* upon the world. Thus Avraham Avinu is the one who brought the *tzeila d'meheimenusa* onto the world, and that is why we were given the *mitzvah* of *succah* in Avraham Avinu's merit.

The *succah* of nowadays requires us to sit in its shadow because in the current era, we are only able to enjoy a partial level of *emunah*, and not the complete level. We are only in the “shadow” of *emunah*, not in the *emunah* itself. Only in the future, where the complete level of *emunah* will be revealed, will there be no requirement of *tzeil* shadow in the *succah*. That will be the *succah* of the leviathan, which will be a light that shines stronger than the sun – it will be the reality of *emunah* itself, and not merely in the “shadow” of *emunah*.

The Difference Between Emunah and 'In The Shadow' of Emunah

Now let us try to understand, with *siyata d'shmaya*, the difference between the levels of *tzeil emunah* and *emunah*.

Tzeil emunah is an offshoot of *emunah*, it is a partial revelation of *emunah*, but does not reveal actual *emunah* as it is. This is the level of *succah* we have nowadays, which is entirely about the *tzeil emunah*.

In contrast, the level of actual *emunah*, which will be revealed in the *sukkah* of the future, is described in the words of the Sages: “In the future, Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath, where the righteous will be healed from it, and the wicked will be judged from it”.¹⁸ How will the righteous be healed, and how will the wicked be punished? The *Gemara* says that one who shames a Torah scholar cannot be healed¹⁹; elsewhere, the *Gemara* says that ignoramuses will not be resurrected with the dead²⁰, and the *Gemara* there says that the only way for them to merit rectification is to attach themselves to Torah scholars. The *Yismach Moshe*²¹ explains this in the name of the *Bach* that one who shames a Torah scholar cannot be healed in the sense that he will not be resurrected with the dead, and this is because one who has shamed a Torah scholar is missing *bittul* (self-nullification) to the Torah scholar; only through nullifying oneself to a Torah scholar can one merit resurrection in the future. In contrast, the righteous will be healed in the future from the sun's rays, because they have nullified themselves [to Hashem].

Thus, *bittul* (self-nullification) is the key to recovery from all spiritual maladies. When the soul of a person is not nullified to its higher source, the abilities in the soul remain mixed and unsorted, and this is the root of all spiritual sickness. But when the soul nullifies itself to its higher source, all of the abilities in the soul are then nullified and returned to their root, where no sickness can take hold.

¹⁷ Zohar III Emor 103a

¹⁸ Avodah Zarah 3b

¹⁹ Shabbos 119b

²⁰ Kesubos 111b

²¹ Yismach Moshe, parshas Ki Seitzei

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When Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath in the future, this can be understood on a deeper level as the revelation of the level of total *emunah*, which is above the level of being ‘in the shadow’ of *emunah*. There will be no more ‘shadow’. Each person will react differently to this revelation. The non-Jewish nations will kick the *succah*, as the *Gemara* says, and this includes all of the wicked people in the world; whereas the righteous will nullify themselves to its light.

When Yonah was spit out of the whale, Hashem caused the sun to beat down on him very hard, whereupon he fainted. Yonah said to Hashem that he would rather die than be exposed to this heat.²² This can be understood on two different levels. Either it can be understood as a catalyst for *mesirus nefesh* – giving up one’s soul to Hashem and being prepared to die for Hashem, which is a holy kind of death. Or, it can mean, *chas v’shalom*, an expression of rebellion towards Hashem, as Esav said, “Behold, I am going to die; for what do I need the firstborn rights for?”²³ – where Esav ‘kicked’ at his firstborn status.

When the sun is taken out of its sheath, and there is no shade from the sun, either this will cause a person to nullify himself to Hashem, or it will cause him to kick and rebel, *chas v’shalom*. If one lived a life of *bittul* towards Hashem, he is more in touch with the great spiritual light of the future, and he will be able to achieve a greater level of *bittul* in the future, to the point that he will be able to totally nullify his existence to Hashem. In contrast, one who did not live a life of *bittul* towards Hashem during this current lifetime will not be able to survive the revelation of the future. It will be way above and beyond his perception, so he will kick at it.

When a great spiritual revelation is revealed to a person, either one of two reactions will ensue. Either the person will recognize its exaltedness and he will nullify himself to it, willing to give himself up for it; or he will oppose it and rebel and kick at it.

Based upon the above, we can now understand that righteous will be healed in the future from the sun being removed from its sheath, because since they were used to a life of *bittul*, they will receive a complete healing, whereas the wicked will be judged by this powerful revelation, because since they will not be able to handle its light, they will instead kick at it. They will kick at it because they will feel a tremendous contradiction in their souls, and this is the depth of the punishment that is called “*Kaf HaKela*”.

Our Avodah In The Current Era

In the future there will be no more shade from the sun; there will be no more *tzeil*/shadow. Nowadays, however, the *avodah* of a person involves ‘shadow’. In other words, in our current era, the light of the future is currently hidden; any spiritual ‘light’ that we do have today is on a level of ‘*ohr ganuz*’ (the hidden light). In a similar context, Shabbos is referred to as ‘hidden’ treasure.²⁴ In the future, when it will be revealed “the day that is entirely Shabbos”, the Shabbos will no longer be a ‘hidden’ treasure, for it will be fully revealed.

Thus, the *succah* that we have nowadays is meant for us to reveal the spiritual light precisely through ‘shadow’. Here we learn a deep and profound concept. There are two aspects of our *avodah*: we have an *avodah* to reveal spiritual light onto the world through ‘shadow’, and we have a more inner aspect of our *avodah*, where we reveal spiritual light that has no shadow.

The entire concept of shadow began after Creation, where Hashem created light and darkness and separated them. The heavens were created from the original light that was around before Creation.²⁵ That original light of before Creation is the absolute level of Hashem’s oneness, and it will be revealed in the future.

²² *Yonah* 4:8

²³ *Beraishis* 25:32

²⁴ *Shabbos* 10b

²⁵ *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer* 3, *Nusach Teiman* (mentioned in *Moreh Nevuchim II*: 26)

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But we also remember this original light on some level even in our current era. As an example, there is a *halachah* that when building a *succah*, we must first build the walls and only after that do we place the *s'chach*²⁶; the depth of this is that we first reveal a *succah* where there is entirely sunlight and no shadow, and after that we have a *succah* with *s'chach*, where there is sunlight and shadow.

In Conclusion

The *succah* of the future will essentially be a dwelling of the *Shechinah* (Hashem's Presence) that will fill the entire world, where the entire Creation will achieve unity, bound together by the light of the *Shechinah*. This is the perfected *succah* which we hope, await, and long for. In the future, we will see how even all of the 'darkness' that we see in the world can really be attributed to a source of light, which is where darkness is created from.

It will not just be the 'shadow' of *emunah* – it will be *emunah* itself. It will be the *succah* that is *emunah* itself, and not just a '*tzeila d'meheimunsa*' that it is nowadays. The *succah* of the future will be the *succah* where we will finally see how all 'darkness' really stems from 'light', for ultimately, light and darkness are originally one undivided creation. We will be able to see how darkness itself can be the light of *emunah*, which we cannot understand through human logic.

This will be the *sukkah shleimah*, the perfect *succah*, which we express in the words, "And spread upon us the *succah* of Your completion" (ופרוס עלינו סוכת שלומיך). May we merit from Hashem to have the light of the *succah* of the future to shine upon us, and to merit it on its complete level, may it come speedily in our days.

03 | The Deeper Reality ²⁷

Motzei Yom Kippur – The Rectification of Adam's Sin

The Sages state in the *Midrash* that on *Motzei Yom Kippur*, after Hashem has forgiven the Jewish people from sin, a Heavenly voice calls out, “Go eat, in joy, your bread, for Hashem has already desired your deeds” - for your prayers have been heard.”²⁸

A deeper understanding of these words of the *Midrash* is that *Motzei Yom Kippur* is the time when the sin of Adam is atoned. Adam sinned with eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), where he was told “Do not eat”, and on *Motzei Yom Kippur*, Hashem commands us specifically to eat, which hints to us that not only has Hashem forgiven us for our current sins, but He has forgiven us even for the primordial sin of Creation, the root of all sin. Thus, the fasting and prayer on Yom Kippur rectifies the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as*.

The sin of Adam damaged the entire fabric of Creation, including the very psyche of man. Ever since the first sin, which involved eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as*, man's own power of *da'as* [the mental faculties; the mind] have become distorted, to the point that sometimes he has *da'as* and sometimes he does not have *da'as*.

Da'as Is a Levush/Garment

It would seem that this was a punishment given to mankind. But the deeper way to understand it is that it is the key to rectifying the sin. As the Sages state, “From the wound itself comes the recovery.”²⁹

Da'as is only needed in order to combine the mental faculties of *chochmah* [basic understanding] and *binah* [detailed understanding]. But when there is no need for this union of the mental faculties, there is no need for *da'as*. In the more inner dimension of Creation, *da'as* is not the intrinsic essence of man. It is but a *levush* - a “garment”.

If *da'as* would be the essence of man's soul, it would never fluctuate and change. But because *da'as* can change – as we see from the fact that there are times where man has *da'as* and times where he loses his *da'as* – it must be that *da'as* is not the essence of a person.

The sin with eating from the *Eitz HaDa'as* was about *da'as*. Adam thought *da'as* was his reality, and he thought that reality is entirely a pursuit of knowledge, of *da'as*. This perspective was what led him to partake of the *Eitz HaDa'as*. The way that Adam's sin is rectified is through revealing the perspective that *da'as* is not the essence of reality. *Da'as* is subject to changes, thus it is only regarded as a “garment” (*levush*) and not as something intrinsic.

The sin of Adam was essentially caused by the fact that Adam thought of *da'as* as the intrinsic and ever-constant reality. The way that the sin is rectified is when man perceives *da'as* as being nothing but a garment, and not as an intrinsic point of reality. Garments are changed and removed; “the garment one dons in the morning is not the garment one dons at night.”³⁰

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28 *Koheles Rabbah* 9:7

29 *Shemos Rabbah* 23:3

30 *Tikkunei HaZohar*

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When something is not intrinsic and it is rather a garment, it is not subject to change. The key to rectifying the sin of Adam is to reveal the perspective that *da'as* is not the intrinsic reality; it is a garment.

This was the rectification of Adam's sin: "Go eat your bread joyously, for Hashem is already satisfied with Your actions." Therefore, on a deeper level, the words "Go eat your bread" are saying that after Yom Kippur, a person can reveal this point: that *da'as* is a *levush*/garment, and not the intrinsic reality.

Sukkah – A Mitzvah That Depends on Da'as

Immediately after Yom Kippur, we build the *succah*. It is stated in *Shulchan Aruch*³¹ that one should begin to build the *succah* on *Motzei Yom Kippur*. The simple understanding of this is so that we should immediately do a *mitzvah* after Yom Kippur so that we don't lose the holiness we just gained. But the deeper meaning of this *halachah* is because the *mitzvah* of *succah* is given to us "So that the generations will know that in huts I settled the children of Israel", and the *Bach* explains that the *mitzvah* of *succah* requires one to have *da'as* (awareness) to the reason of the *mitzvah* of *succah*.³²

Whereas other *mitzvos* do not require one to know the reason for the *mitzvah* in order to fulfill the *mitzvah*, the *mitzvah* of *succah* requires one to be aware of its reason, according to the *Bach*. Thus, *succah* requires *da'as*. The *mitzvah* of *sukkah* is a *mitzvah* where *da'as* is an essential part of the *mitzvah*. When it comes to other *mitzvos*, even if one is not aware of the reason for the *mitzvah*, he still fulfills the *mitzvah*, because he has still performed the will of Hashem; but when it comes to the *mitzvah* of *succah*, one must have *da'as* – he must know the reason for the *mitzvah* of *succah*, in order to fulfill this *mitzvah*.

Thus, the concept of "Go eat your bread joyously" on *Motzei Yom Kippur*, and the *halachah* of building the *succah* immediately after Yom Kippur, is the essence of Succos. It is based on the fact that there is a revelation of *da'as* immediately after Yom Kippur, which ushers in Succos. "Go eat your bread" refers to the Torah, which is called "bread".³³ In other words, "Go eat your bread" means to go and connect to your *da'as*, for the spiritual light of "So that the generations will know" has begun to shine, a *mitzvah* which entails *da'as*. (This is the referring to the rectified kind of *da'as*, not impaired *da'as*).

The *sukkah* is a *levush*, a "garment", that envelopes the entire body. There are other³⁴ *mitzvos* as well which serve as garments, such as the garments worn by the Kohen, and *tzitzis*, and *tefillin*. But those garments only cover the person partially. Only the *mitzvah* of *succah* covers the entire body.

This "garment" is essentially the fact that *sukkah* is given to us "So that the generations will know", which is the concept of *da'as*. Thus, *da'as* envelopes the entire person. From this we see that *da'as* is not the intrinsic essence of the person, and it is rather a 'garment; that envelopes the person. Thus, the *mitzvah* of *succah* reveals the holy and rectified kind of *da'as*.

Holy and Unholy Da'as

What is the deep way to understand the difference between the holy, rectified kind of *daas*, and the evil kind of *daas*? Holy *daas* is when the *daas* reveals how the essence of reality is attachment with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. This inner essence of

³¹ *Orach Chaim*: 624

³² *Bach*: *Orach Chaim*: 625

³³ *Beraishis Rabbah* 54a

³⁴ In the *derashah* of אור וצל_001_סוכות, the *Rav* mentions that there are altogether three *mitzvos* which surround the entire body: *sukkah*, *mikveh*, and *Eretz Yisrael*.

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reality is not merely the “garment” over reality [rather, it is the reality itself]. Hashem made for Himself ten “garments”,³⁵ and *daas* is the “garment”, so to speak, that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* dons. By contrast, *daas* on the side of evil is when a person thinks that his “I” is his reality, and that his reality is his *daas*. When one perceives his *daas* as the definition of his reality, he thinks that his reality is defined by his *daas*, and this is evil *daas*.

When one clarifies that his *daas* is but a “garment” atop his actual being, this is the holy kind of *daas*. The *mitzvah* of *succah*, which reveals holy *daas*, which is “*So that the generations will know*”, is therefore the revelation that *daas* is the “garment” that envelops the entire soul. For the truth is that *daas* envelops everything; it is just not the actual essence of reality itself. Thus, *daas* is not everything there is to reality - in spite of the fact that it fills all of reality. It is rather the “garment” (*levush*) that surrounds everything.

This is the holy, rectified power of *daas* that is manifest on Motzei Yom Kippur. Of Motzei Yom Kippur, it is said, “Go eat your bread in joy” – which, on a deeper level, means to go “eat” of *daas*, and *daas* implies an intimate connection. When there is intimate connection, there is *daas*. That is the holy kind of *daas*, and it is where the preparation for the festival of Succos begins.

The Essence of Man Is Integration With Hashem

Regarding the *mitzvah* to take the Four Species on Succos, the Torah writes, “*And you shall take for yourselves, on the first day*”. The Sages expound “the first day” to mean the first day of making an accounting for sin.”³⁶ This reveals the inner dimension where there is no sin.

If Yom Kippur could not help to fix the sin of Adam, and all it could do was to fix the sins of man on a private level, what is this “first day” of accounting for sin, being that the sin of Adam still continues to exist on Yom Kippur and on Motzei Yom Kippur? It must be, then, that it is because the light where there is no sin is allowed to shine, and therefore, from that deeper dimension, the sin of Adam has already been atoned. So the inner meaning of “*And you shall take it for yourselves, on the first day*” is that when there is the true “yourselves”, it can then be the first day of accounting for sin.

“*Daas*” is the “I” itself of the person. When a person thinks that his “I” is his reality, then he really perceives his own reality as a reality of sin [for within *daas*, it is possible to be tempted to sin]. One must know that his very reality is to be integrated (*miskalel*) in Hashem, and that’s it. “*Daas*” is a garment, and the “I” of a person is a “garment” of Hashem, so to speak, which Hashem clothes Himself in. But the reality itself [of the person] is not his “I”. The reality [of a person] is: the existential reality of Hashem! It is just that there is a “garment”, the “I”, which wraps around this reality; specifically, that “garment” is one’s *daas*.

The truth is, that the entire concept of “*and take it for yourselves*” can only exist because a person views his “I” as his very reality, and that is what places him in a realm of sin; hence it allows for “the first day” of accounting for sin....³⁷

“Take It For Yourselves” – The Connection Between Action and Sin

Earlier, we explained that the *succah* is the concept of holy *daas*. Of what relevance does the concept of sin have with this? [Why is Succos called the “first day” of accounting for sin“?]

³⁵ The prayer of “*P’sach Eliyahu*” before *Shacharis*.

³⁶ *Tanchuma: Parshas Emor: 22*

³⁷ *Vayikra 23:40*

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It is because until Succos, there are no physical *mitzvos* to perform, so a person can connect to the reality of “*Ain Od Milvado*” (“there is nothing besides for Hashem”), the point where there is no reality of the “I” and where *daas* is just a garment. But when Succos arrives and there are now physical acts of *mitzvos* to perform, there is a certain test upon man, as follows.

Before the sin of Adam, the world of “action” was above the reach of impure forces, and after the sin, the world of “action” became lowered into the forces of impurity, until where it is today.³⁸ From Yom Kippur until Succos, the perception that “*daas* is a garment” is shining, but it does not reach the realm of “action”, so there are no *mitzvos* during those days to express this concept. When Succos arrives, where “*you shall take it for yourselves*”, there is “*yourselves*” – which is rooted in sin.

Thus there is a deep point contained in this verse of the Torah, “*you shall take it for yourselves.*” The verse is saying that the very reality of sin is called “*yourselves*” (*lachem*), and therefore, it is the “first day” to account for sin! The *succah* comes to rectify this, because the concept of *succah* is so that a person can reveal the inner dimension where there is no sin.

The Depth Behind The Custom of the Arizal To Shake Four Species In The Succah

It is well-known in the name of the *Arizal* that it is proper for a person to shake the four species in the *succah*.³⁹ There are several reasons to explain this, but with regards to our discussion here, it has to do with what we explained, that taking the four species for “*yourselves*” is really stemming from sin. In order to fix that sin, the four species should be taken in the *succah*. In other words, one needs to reveal that the *succah* is but a “garment”. [By taking the four species in the *succah*, it shows that] “to take it for “*yourselves*” is not reflecting reality itself, but the “garment” of reality. When one perceives his “I”, or “*yourselves*” (*lachem*) as being the reality, that itself is sin. This very perspective was also behind the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*, where man viewed *daas*, or his “I”, as reality.

But when one is aware that “for yourselves” is but a garment, and that it is not reality itself, he reveals the perspective that reality is not one’s *daas*. By taking the four species [for “*yourselves*”] in the *succah*, one reveals that *daas* [which is the “I” and which is called “*yourselves*”] is but a garment, and not the reality itself.

Thus, before Succos, where there is no *mitzvah* to shake the four species, although it can also be revealed then that *daas* is but a garment, this point is not able to be shined into our own reality, and therefore during that time, there is no connection to sin. But when Succos arrives, this perspective is shined into our reality, which is the realm of action that has appeared after the sin; on one hand, it is the “first day” of “accounting for sin”, because it is within the realm of action after the sin, but on the other hand, the higher perspective is also shining during this time – the perspective that *daas* is but a garment.

The Depth Behind The Custom In Jerusalem of Old To Hold The Lulav The Entire Day

Along the above lines, we can explain the depth behind what the Gemara says that there was a custom in Jerusalem for the people to hold a *lulav* in their hands the entire day,⁴⁰ wherever they went, and at all times. Simply, this was out of endearment of the *mitzvah*. But the deeper understanding of this can be understood with a different approach, as follows.

38 note: this concept is explained in *Shaar Maamarei Rashbi: parshas Kedoshim*

39 *Shaar HaKavanos: derushei Succos: minhagei hamoed*

40 *Succah 41b*

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The realm of action is represented by the hands [which perform action]. The custom in Jerusalem to take the *lulav* wherever one went was to show that the entire realm of action, which is represented by the hands, can be rectified through taking the *lulav* on Succos. The hands, which perform action, are precisely where we take the four species “for yourselves”. But when we take the four species in the *succah*, it is revealing the perspective that there is really no reality of “yourselves”, and no “hands.” Holding the *lulav* in their hands all day, at all times, was to show that the hands of man are “*yourselves*”, meaning that “*yourselves*” is only the external layer of man, and not the inner essence of man. The hands connect the physical body outward to the rest of the world.

When we understand that “*yourselves*” and the hands come from the same root, we can then perceive that *daas* is only the external reality, and it is not the actual reality of the person. The actual reality of a person is the fact that he is integrated with Hashem, and his “I” is but a garment over this reality. Thus, the “I” of a person is reflective of the hand.

By shaking the *lulav* in all six directions, it is to reveal the perspective that our reality itself is not *daas*. Rather, our very reality is to be integrated (*miskalel*) in Hashem. The concept of the Four Species, represented by the hands which take them, is but a garment of this reality, and not the reality itself. This was what the people of Jerusalem wanted to ingrain in their hearts, by holding the *lulav* in their hands the entire day.

Our Essence Is Above Thought

The *halachah* is that a mourner is prohibited from learning Torah.⁴¹ The depth behind this is because Torah learning is a connection [to Hashem] through one’s [mental faculty of] *daas*. Of the *daas* contained in the *Eitz HaDaas*, it is written, “On the day you eat from it, you shall die”.⁴² There is a rule, “From the wound itself, comes the recovery”, and therefore, *daas* is rectified when the mourner withholds from Torah study. That is also why on *Tishah B’Av*, when it is forbidden to learn Torah, Mashiach is born.⁴³ When *daas* becomes nullified, this is the light of the redemption, where the essence of reality is revealed.

When *daas* is nullified, it is not just a temporary absence of *daas*, but a revelation that *daas* is not the essence of reality. If it would be the essence of reality, it wouldn’t be able to become nullified. A mourner must nullify his *daas*, through withholding from Torah study. This reveals that *daas* is not reality, but a garment of reality.

When it becomes revealed that *daas* is not reality itself, but a garment of reality, this is how *daas* (represented by the sin of man with the *Eitz HaDaas*) is rectified. If *daas* would be reality itself, it would be endangering to the life of the mourner if he wouldn’t study Torah, and then Torah study would override the mourning. But since the laws of mourning override Torah study, it is a sign that *daas* is not the essence of reality itself – rather, it is a “garment” of reality.

The deeper root of the Torah is really above the plane of *daas*. This does not mean that there is a point where a person is severed from the Torah, *chas v’shalom*. There are always 613 *mitzvos* to keep. Rather, this deep point refers to a perspective where we view the Torah from a point above the *daas* contained in the Torah. In other words, a person needs to connect to the “light” of the Torah, to the “*ayin*” aspect of the Torah, which is above the realm of *daas*. That is the inner connection to Torah, above the external garment that is the way of *daas*.

There are three garments to the soul – action, speech, and thought. After the sin, the highest garment of the soul, which is thought, is [initially] perceived by man to be his very essence. But the truth is that thought is a garment of the soul, not

⁴¹ *Yoreh De’ah (Hilchos Talmud Torah): 384.*

⁴² *Beraishis 2:17*

⁴³ *Esther Rabbah, pesichah 11; Eichah Rabbah 1:51, Yerushalmi Berachos 17b*

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the essence of the soul. **The essence of the soul is integration (*hiskalelus*) in Hashem. That is the soul itself** - and there are no “garments” of action, speech, or thought that can hold onto it.

Before the sin, man perceived his essence as an existence that was integrated with Hashem. After the sin, man began to perceive his power of thought as being his essence, failing to see it as a garment of the soul. But before the sin, Adam knew that thought, speech and action were but garments of the soul. Man’s inner task of self-rectification, then, is to perceive his power of thought as his external layer, and not attribute it as his very essence.

Silencing of Thoughts

If a person cannot disconnect for a moment from his ability of thinking, it means that he perceives his thinking as his very essence. He remains on the level of after the sin, not only in the dimension of time, but also in the inner dimension, of his own soul.

But when one reaches the point of “*And my soul is silent*”⁴⁴ – when he can silence his thinking – he can then reach the point of connection to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. He can then integrate his existence with Hashem’s, for he has separated himself from the point after the sin, where a person perceived his *daas* as his very essence. When thought is silenced, it reveals how thought is not the actual essence of the soul of man, and it is but a garment of the soul.

As long as a person cannot separate from thought, he is in a personal exile. Only when he can separate from thought can he reveal how thought is not his actual essence. If thought would be the very essence of a person, then as soon as thought would be silenced, a person would die and cease to exist. But when a person reveals how he can remain existent even after he separates from his thoughts, he reveals new meaning to his reality. He reveals that his very reality, as a created being, is to be integrated into Hashem.

When Daas Is Nullified, “Ain Od Milvado” Is Revealed

This is the secret behind the statement of our Sages, “All of the festivals will cease in the future, except for Purim.”⁴⁵ This does not mean that the other festivals will no longer exist. Rather, they will turn into “garments” of reality, with the exception of Purim, for Purim is the revelation of the plane beyond *daas*. In that point, it is revealed that the essence of the soul is not thought.

This is also the depth behind intoxication on Purim, where “one is obligated to become inebriated on Purim until he does not know”⁴⁶ – the goal is to arrive at the point where one’s *daas* is nullified. When thought is nullified, the essence of reality is revealed – which is, “*Ain Od Milvado*” (there is nothing else other than Hashem).

As is well-known, the exile of Egypt was an exile of our *daas*, hence the redemption from Egypt was a redemption to our *daas*.⁴⁷ The redemption of *daas* is when there is a revelation that *daas* is but a garment, and it is not the essence. In the Egyptian exile, the people were in a state of *katnus mochin* (smallness of mind), and in the redemption from Egypt, they graduated to a state of *gadlus mochin* (expanded mind), an expansion of their *daas*, where they could reveal that their *daas* is only a garment.

⁴⁴ *Tehillim* 131:2

⁴⁵ *Yalkut Shimeoni Mishlei* 9: 944

⁴⁶ *Megillah* 7b

⁴⁷ *Shaar HaKavanos derushei Pesach* 9-10, *Me’ohr V’Shamesh*

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How To Relate To Our Daas As A "Garment" And Not As Our Essence

If a person identifies his *daas* as his very essence, then when he is in a state of *katnus mochin* (smallness of mind), he will feel deficient, lost, and broken, for a part of his "I" is concealed from him. But when one recognizes that his *daas* does not define his essence, and he views *daas* as a garment, he can view his *katnus mochin* as nothing but a garment that is sometimes worn, and sometimes removed. Sometimes he will recognize that he is "wearing" *katnus mochin*, and sometimes he will be "wearing" *gadlus mochin*. But he is aware that his actual essence is not his *daas*.

As a result of this, a person will have a constant attachment to Hashem, in whatever state of mind he is in. His actual essence is integrated with Hashem, and only in the garments of his soul are there differing levels, which are disparate and not integrated with the reality of Hashem. But in the point of his very essence, he is never detached from Hashem.

This is the light that shines [on Succos]. "*Go eat, in joy, your bread, for Hashem has already desired your deeds*" means that there is a return to before the sin, to the essence of man, where *daas* is but a garment, and where man recognizes that his being is integrated with Hashem and taking hold of Him.

Returning To Our Essence

The *avodah* of man, from the point of his inner essence, is to return the point of before the sin. Returning to before the sin means to return to a perception where the reality is nothing but *Ain Od Milvado*. Anything else other than this point (*Ain Od Milvado*) is nothing but a "garment" that wraps around this reality. Hence, all of those garments are never consistent, just as garments are worn and removed.

When one perceives the reality in this way, he can never part from Hashem. Just as a person even after the sin cannot part from his own "I", so can a person never part from being integrated with Hashem. One cannot part from this perspective, because it is reality itself, and we cannot part from reality.

After the sin, a person cannot run away from his own "I", because he perceives his "I" to be his very reality. In the point before the sin, where a person was above his "I" and he viewed his "I" as nothing but a garment, he viewed the reality as nothing but *Ain Od Milvado*, integration with Hashem; where it is impossible to part from Hashem. Just as a part cannot separate from himself, so is it impossible for him to become separate from Hashem. This perspective is the light that is shined [on Succos].

Sleeping In The Succah: Integrating With Hashem

There is a *halachah* to sleep in the *succah*.⁴⁸ We may ask: Why is there a need to sleep in the *succah*? After all, the Torah says that the *mitzvah* of *succah* is "*So that the generations will know*" of the miracle of the Cloud of Glory protecting us in the desert, but when a person is asleep, he has no *daas*, so he has no awareness to the miracle. Therefore, why do we sleep in the *succah*?

There is an amazing insight here. When a person sleeps in the *succah*, it is a revelation of the point where there is no *daas*, because he has no *daas* while he is asleep. If he has no *daas*, he is *miskalel* (integrated) with Hashem. The *succah* becomes his very *daas*!

Sleeping in the *succah* is essentially that a person reveals how without *daas*, he is integrated with Hashem, and his entire *daas* is the *succah*; and that there is no other *daas*. By contrast, when a person is awake, the *succah* to him is an outer

⁴⁸ *Succah* 26a

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wrapping, which reveals a simpler revelation, that *daas* is but a garment. But when a person sleeps and his *daas* leaves him, his “I” is now the *succah* – and there is nothing else to his “I” more than this. The “I” of a person is his *daas*, so when his *daas* is removed, he becomes integrated with Hashem, and then his I becomes the *succah*.

In the same way that a person has *daas* and this is part of his “I”, that is how a person sleeps in the *succah* – meaning, the *succah* becomes the “garment” of his soul. Sleeping in the *succah* is thus the revelation of perceiving one’s *daas* as a garment; the *succah* becomes a garment of the soul. While asleep, a person’s essence becomes integrated with Hashem, and the *succah* becomes his garment.

The Happiness of Simchas Torah – Reaching Our True Essence

This light continues to shine until *Simchas Torah* [where it becomes complete]. What is the connection between *Simchas Torah* and Succos? Why does *Simchas Torah* come at the end of the days of Succos? Let us explore the depth of this.

Normally, we connect to the Torah through our *daas*. Through the pathway of *daas*, we receive the Torah. But on Succos, there is a point revealed where *daas* is seen as nothing but a garment, where a new path of connection to Torah is revealed. It reveals how we can connect to the Torah through a more inner point than *daas*.

That is what leads us to the great *simchah* (joy) that exists on *Simchas Torah*. The concept of *simchah* is when there is a clarification of what the reality of Torah truly is.

As long as a person remains on the level of after the sin and he relates to the Torah only through his *daas*, he is missing the inner point of connection to the Torah; he is missing the “light” that is the Torah. But through the rectifying light of Succos, a person can reveal how his *daas* is but a garment of his soul, and he can make the separation between his soul’s actual essence (his *atzmiyus*) and his soul’s garments (*levushim*); and, as a result, he can receive a new revelation of Torah. He can receive the “light” of the Torah, (which is also called the “*ayin*” aspect of the Torah).

And there is no greater *simchah* than this!

The Completion of The Torah – When We See How Our Comprehension In Torah Is Limited

This is why *Simchas Torah* is a celebration over the “completion of the Torah.” What does it mean to “complete” the Torah? When we understand that our comprehension of Torah is limited and it ends there, and we are aware that we have not yet grasped the actual essence of the Torah, this is exactly the *simchah* we can have over the Torah!

If we remain at the level of after the sin, we can only relate to the Torah through our *daas*, and our *daas* is limited. It is our “I”, and our “I” is narrowly confined. Our comprehension in Torah will then be limited to that level. But when we reveal the perspective that our understanding in Torah based on *daas* is but a garment of the Torah, and not the actual essence of the Torah, this is what can bring us great *simchah*, for it becomes revealed to us what the Torah truly is.

The joy on *Simchas Torah* is that we become truly aware of what the Torah is, and that our comprehension in it is limited. This is our “completion” of the Torah. It is when we realize that our comprehension in Torah, and the Torah itself, are separate from each other. Thus, the joy on *Simchas Torah* is not only about completing the Torah alone. It is because there is a revelation to us that our comprehension in Torah is the “completion” of Torah – our comprehension in Torah is limited, it has an end to it.

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But to show that we do have a connection to the unlimited aspect of the Torah, we immediately begin the Torah anew. As soon as we finish reciting the final words of the Torah, “*L’inei kol Yisrael*”, we immediately recite the first word of the Torah, “*Beraishis*”. A new revelation of Torah becomes revealed to us.

Before completing the Torah on *Simchas Torah*, we thought that there is an end and completion to the Torah, and after *Simchas Torah*, a new point becomes revealed to us, whereby we see that there is no completion to the Torah. We show this by immediately starting the Torah anew, where we reveal that the Torah is really unlimited. That is the revelation of the “light” in the Torah.

Succos: The Revelation of Reality

When a person remains at the level where he views his “I” as his very essence, he is bound to limitations. But when a person is aware that his “I” is but a garment, and that his very essence is a being that is integrated with Hashem, he is grasping onto the Infinite (the *Ein Sof*).

Thus, the rectification that Succos provides is that it clarifies what the Torah truly is, its inner dimension, which is: *Ain Od Milvado*. At the same time, it shows us our own limited aspect. This is precisely the revelation on *Simchas Torah*, the completion of the Torah – where it is revealed that the end is a limitation, and a garment. At the same time, we return to the beginning, to reveal how the inner essence of the Torah is unlimited. That is the ultimate, completed level of comprehension we can reach.

This is what the *Arizal* meant when he writes that had Adam never sinned, everything would have been rectified on the first Shabbos.⁴⁹ Adam would have immediately become attached with Hashem, and he would have revealed that the “I” of man is but a garment, and that the actual reality is *Ain Od Milvado*. Now that we live after the sin, there is a need for us to have the days of *Yomim Noraim*, *Succos*, and *Simchas Torah* [in order to return to this deeper reality].

In Conclusion

To summarize and conclude, the purpose of all these days of *Yomim Noraim*, *Succos*, and *Simchas Torah* is to reveal that there is a reality of *Ain Od Milvado*, and that everything else is but a garment, which wraps around Hashem. The essence of a person [and reality] is *Ain Od Milvado* – an unlimited point, wrapped around by garments that are limited.

Awareness to this perspective is essentially a clarification of where each thing in Creation belongs, and there is no greater joy than this, which brings a person to the ultimate level of “simple attachment”⁵⁰ to Hashem.

⁴⁹ *Shaar Maamarei Rashbi parshas Kedoshim*, p.179 (Brandwein edition).

⁵⁰ *d’veykus peshutah*

04 | The Revelation of "Ayin" Throughout The Days of Succos⁵¹

Yaakov Avinu Constructed Succos: Unifying "Kayin" and "Hevel"

The first time that the Torah mentions the concept of *Succos* is by Yaakov *Avinu*. When Yaakov *Avinu* camped, he made for himself "Succos", huts; the Torah says "And for his flock, he made Succos (huts). Therefore, he named the place Succos". Although the simple meaning of this *possuk* in the Torah is also true, there is also an inner meaning of the *possuk*, as follows.

The Torah is saying that there was "flock" (*mikneihu*) and that there were also *Succos* (huts). When Yaakov *Avinu* made *succos* for his flock, the deeper meaning of this is that he was unifying together his flock with the *succos*.

The word in the Torah for "his flock" is *מִקְנֵהוּ* ("*mikneihu*"), from the word *קַיִן* (*Kayin*). The word "*Kayin*" is from the word *kinyan*, "acquisition". The *succah* is called a "temporary dwelling." The Sages argued if *succah* must be a permanent dwelling or a temporary dwelling, and the *halachah* is like the opinion that *succah* is a temporary dwelling. It is also brought in *halachah* that the reason why we read the book of *Koheles* on *Shabbos Chol HaMoed Succos* is because *Koheles* tells us how vain this world is, which shows us how this world is only temporary. We find a hint to this from the names of the two brothers Kayin and Hevel. Hevel represents the theme of *Koheles*, which teaches us that this world is nothing but "*hevel havalim*", "vanity of vanities". The concept of *Succos* parallels Hevel/*Koheles*, whereas the concept of "*mikneihu*" parallels Kayin.

When Yaakov constructed *Succos* for his flock, he was essentially rectifying Kayin's sin of murdering Hevel. There was a disparity formed between Kayin and Hevel, (and soon we will explain what it was), and Yaakov's act of building the *succah* came to rectify that disparity. How? He made the *succos* for his flock, but in addition to this, his flock became integrated and enjoined with the *succah* that covered them. Thus, on an esoteric level, "Hevel" serves Kayin, and "Kayin" becomes integrated and enjoined with Hevel - and then Kayin and Hevel become unified.

Kayin/Yeish and Hevel/Ayin

Let us explain the roots of disparity that were formed between Kayin and Hevel.

It is explained in the writings of the Arizal that part of Adam's soul was given to Kayin, and part of Adam's soul was given to Hevel.⁵² In terms of our soul and of our personal task on this world, "*Kayin*" refers to our "acquisitions", or the physical dimension, known as "*Yeish*", which we can grab onto, perceive, and hold. "*Hevel*" is the exact opposite of "*Kayin*": *Hevel* is all about seeing this physical dimension as complete nothingness, "*ayin*". As *Koheles* said: "For it is all *hevel* (nothing; vain)."⁵³

ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה סוכות – עמ' כז סוכות_004 ולמקנהו עשה סוכות 51

This translation is a summary of a derasha printed in sefer *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh – Succos* (pages 27-38), and the bulk of it is taken from pages 27-30 and pages 37-38.

52 Note from the Hebrew sefer: The concept of the souls of Kayin and Hevel is a deep and broad matter which is spread out and discussed throughout the writings of the Arizal, and it requires many introductions to explain it; and not every mind can understand the concepts. Refer to *Sefer HaGilgulim*, 21-23.

53 *Koheles* 3:19

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From the perspective that “Everything is *hevel*” (or “*ayin*”) there is no difference between human and animal, because in relation to the reality of Hashem, everything in Creation is regarded as nothing. But from the perspective of *yeish*, there is a difference: a person is a person, and an animal is an animal; a person has *daas* (mental capabilities), whereas an animal has no *daas*. From the perspective of *yeish*, man is higher than animal. But Koheles says that since everything on this world is considered to be *hevel* (nothing), there is no difference between man and animal, for it is all *hevel*. From the perspective of *ayin* – or when *ayin* is revealed – everything is deemed as *hevel*.

Thus, “Kayin” is all about *yeish*, of tangible acquirements, of seeing reality at face value. If something cannot be tangibly sensed, from the perspective of Kayin/*Yeish* it is “*hevel*” – meaning, non-existent.

Something that is *hevel* cannot be tangibly felt. The exhale of air that leaves the body is called *hevel*. There are actually two levels of *hevel*. One kind of *hevel* relates to the worth of something: If it is important, if it is not so important, etc. This is the external use of the power of *hevel*. The inner use of *hevel* is when we are describing a concept that cannot be tangibly felt. Thus, there is a power of *hevel* that relates to This World, and there is a higher use of the power of *hevel*, which is transcendent

Hevel is essentially the power to turn everything in this physical dimension of *yeish*, into *ayin* (nothingness). In the lower use of this power, one dismisses the importance of something. By negating the worth of something, the *hevel* turns it from *yeish* into *ayin*. This use of *hevel* is used in the negative sense: to negate the worth of something. But in the higher use of the power of *hevel*, the use of *hevel* reveals the *ayin* in something, which is the true and inner view towards reality [when we uncover the inner dimension in this physical reality, which is that everything is really “nothing”, in relation to the reality of Hashem].

Yeish Vs. Ayin

Ayin needs to be contained in some kind of *kli* (receptacle). When a person is instead involved only with *Yeish*, he can only deal with that is tangible, and he cannot relate to the concept of *hevel/ayin*, so he will not be able to contain *ayin*.

When Kayin killed Hevel, the depth of this matter is because the perspective of “*yeish*” wishes to negate “*ayin*”. Kayin’s act of killing Hevel represents his perspective of *yeish*, which cannot accept the concept of *ayin*. The perspective of Kayin/*Yeish* doesn’t allow a person to listen to the inner voice of the soul which says that “everything is *hevel*”, and this is the depth of “killing Hevel”. A person kills “Hevel” on his own inner level when he refuses to listen to his soul’s call, which is constantly telling a person at all times: “Everything is *hevel*! *Ain Od Milvado* (There is nothing besides for Hashem)!!”

When one pushed away the inner voice in his soul and he chooses not to hear it, he is repeating the sin of Kayin, on a personal level. A person has physical acquisitions of this world, and he also has spiritual, otherworldly acquisitions. The most inner possession that a person has is his “I”. The soul is not willing to forego this dear “acquisition” – it is not willing to accept that even the “I” is *hevel*. A hint to this is that the word “I” in Hebrew is “*ani*”, which is the opposite arrangement of the letters in the word “*ayin*”. Thus, the “*ani*” of a person is the very antithesis to *ayin*.

Thus, when one considers his “I” to be an independent existence that is not subject to “*hevel*” – when one is unwilling to nullify his existence – this is a repeat of Kayin’s act of killing Hevel, on an inner level. The “Hevel” in our souls is essentially the inner voice of the soul that shows us how all of existence is really *hevel*; it tells us that all *yeish* must be turned into *ayin*. When one refuses to listen to this inner voice, this is “killing Hevel” on an inner level, for the person is refusing to nullify his *yeish* (physical existence) to *ayin*.

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Adam HaRishon's Choice

Earlier it was mentioned that the souls of Kayin and Hevel were originally part of Adam's soul. The understanding of this is that Adam's test was essentially that he was supposed to choose between which perspective to connect himself to: *yeish*, or *ayin*. Adam's sin was essentially the decision to connect to *yeish*. In our current 6,000 year era, it is now our *avodah* to turn *yeish* into *ayin*. This entails a cleansing from our sins, along with suffering, which enables us to achieve *bittul*, self-nullification [which subsequently brings us into the realm of *ayin*].

Kayin received *yeish* that was in Adam's soul, and Hevel received the *ayin* of Adam's soul. The temptation to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* was essentially the very same warring forces between Kayin (*yeish*) and Hevel (*ayin*). Before Kayin and Hevel were born, they remained as inner forces inside Adam's soul; when it came to Adam's test, *yeish* (Kayin) prevailed over *ayin* (Hevel) when Adam gave into eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, and when it came to Kayin and Hevel, *yeish* prevailed over *ayin* when Kayin killed Hevel. Thus, the sin of Adam and the sin of Kayin were essentially the same sin.

Succos: The Connecting Point Between Yeish and Ayin

Ever since the sin of Adam, *yeish* has prevailed over *ayin*. Had Adam never sinned, the souls of Kayin and Hevel would have been integrated, and it would have been revealed how everything, both *yeish* and *ayin*, are all *echad* (one unit) – the concept of “*Ain Od Milvado*”. Now that we live after the sin, the dimensions of *yeish* and *hevel* are separated and they cannot be integrated. But at the very roots and purpose of Creation, *yeish* and *ayin* are integrated into one, under the greater reality, of *Ain Od Milvado*.

The festival of *Succos*, though, is the point that reveals how *yeish* and *ayin* are integrated into one reality. *Succos* is connected with the word *וּלְמַקְנָהוּ*, which is from the word “*Kayin*”, and earlier it was explained that this was because the *sukkah* connects Kayin with Hevel; thus *sukkah* is the point where Kayin/*yeish* becomes enjoined and integrated with Hevel/*ayin*. At their very roots, Kayin and Hevel are connected in one unit. A hint to this is where the Torah says, “*And they were in the field*”, which shows us that there is a point where Kayin and Hevel are connected together.

Tasting of Hashem

It is written, “*Taste and see that Hashem is good.*”⁵⁴ We can “taste” of Hashem, so to speak. Although Hashem is incomprehensible, we can still have a “taste” of Him. The *Mesillas Yescharim* states that “man was not created except to delight in Hashem and enjoy the radiance of His *Shechinah*.” After Adam sinned, we lost the spiritual pleasure, the *oneg*, of basking in Hashem's Presence, and instead our sense for pleasure was replaced with evil and unspiritual pleasures. But at its very root, our power of taste (which was abused to sin with eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*) is the tool with which we can taste of Hashem.

When we “taste” the spiritual dimension, *ayin*, we lose our taste in *yeish*; when we taste of *bittul* (self-nullification), we lose our taste for the tangible and the comprehensible.

The true taste is experienced when we “taste” of the Creator. This is the depth behind the four species. In the four species, we bind together a species that has taste and no scent (*hadasim*), a species that has a scent and no taste (*lulav*), a species that has a taste and a scent (*esrog*), and a species that has no taste and no scent (*aravos*). All of these aspects become combined and integrated with each other, when we bind together the four species. The matter of *aravos* is troubling: if

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aravos have no taste and no scent, why do we take them? Why don't we instead take only a species that has either taste or scent?

But this is not a question, because the understanding of the four species is totally different than this. The Baal Shem Tov explained that the absence of the taste and scent in the *aravos* is really an example of *ayin* – in other words, “*ayin*” is the taste and scent of the *aravos*.

This is the secret behind the *aravos*. As long as a person hasn't yet connected himself to the point of *ayin*, then indeed, he will not find any taste or scent in the *aravos*. But when a person becomes connected to *ayin*, he will then find that the *ayin*, the nothingness, is the [spiritual] “taste” and “scent” of the *aravos*.

And this is essentially what gives a person the ability to connect together the four species and integrate them.

Hoshanah Rabbah – The “Seal Within A Seal”: The Shattering of Limitations

There is a secret depth behind why we bang the *aravos/hoshanos* on the seventh day of *Succos* (the day of *Hoshanah Rabbah*). It is really a matter which needs understanding: why do we set aside a special day on *Succos* to awaken mercy that we receive rain, and why do we specifically use the willow branch, which is the species that represents the wicked, who have no taste (Torah) and no scent (*mitzvos*)?

But the depth is as follows. The fact that the *aravos* have no taste and no scent is but the external aspect of the *aravos*. The inner dimension of *aravos* is that their absence of taste and scent is, itself, the very “taste” and “scent” of the *aravos*!

When we pray for mercy on our water on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we are referring to the original waters that were created on the first day of Creation, where there was nothing but “*the spirit of G-d*” that hovered over the face of the waters.” The Sages say that the “spirit of G-d” here refers to “the spirit of Mashiach”.⁵⁵ These were the waters of the spiritual dimension (“*ayin*”) and not of the physical dimension (“*yeish*”). And it is precisely the *aravos* which awaken the original waters of Creation, for the *aravos* have no taste and no scent, thus they contain “nothingness”, which is the key to the spiritual dimension. Its nothingness, (“*ayin*”) is essentially its taste and its scent.

This is the secret that lies behind the words of the Arizal⁵⁶ that there is a *piska tava* (good message) given over on *Hoshanah Rabbah* which takes effect on *Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah*. The *piska tava* is essentially the external layer of the seal, whereas the seal that was signed on Yom Kippur is the inner seal. Together, the seal of *Hoshanah Rabbah* and the seal of Yom Kippur form the *chotam b'toch chotam*, the “seal within a seal”. The seal represents a boundary, a limit, for the word *chosam* is from the word *techum*, “boundary”. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, where the dimension of *ayin* is revealed, all boundaries become integrated with the limitless dimension.

Thus, the *chotam b'toch chotam* is essentially the point where boundaries are nullified. When the boundaries are nullified, when limitations are shattered, we can then taste and smell the dimension of *ayin* [which we cannot taste and smell with our physical senses]. And then we can merit a “*chasimah tovah*” – a “good signature”.

When we perceive the seal of Yom Kippur as a limitation that cannot be broken, that itself awakens judgment upon ourselves. But when our physical dimension (*yeish*) joins with the spiritual dimension (*ayin*), when our limited dimension merges with the limitless dimension, we are then able to truly have a “*piska tava*”.

55 Beraishis Rabbah 2:4

56 Shaar HaKavanos: Succos, derush 6

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Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah: Two Dimensions Joining Each Other

This concept continues into *Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah*, of which “the end is contained in the beginning”⁵⁷; the finishing of the Torah, which commences with beginning the Torah.

The finishing of the Torah represents our limited dimension. From this viewpoint, the Torah is referred to as “*Toras emes*”, “the Torah of truth”, and the “seal of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is truth” – which means that we are confined to certain limitations. But when we consider the concept of “the end is contained in the beginning” – the fact that as soon as we finish the Torah, we begin the Torah – this reveals to us the concept that the limitless dimension beyond our own time and space can pour into our own limited dimension. This point is known as “*emes l’amitah*”, the absolute level of truth – and this is the point that describes the “*chotam b’toch chotam*” of *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

The concept of the “*piska tava*”, which appears after the signature that was written and sealed during Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, is essentially the point that reveals the root of the *chotam b’toch chotam*; it is the point of *hiskalelus* (integrating) with Hashem.

The “seal of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is truth”; when we reveal the point of *emes l’amitah* (absolute truth), we see that there are levels to the truth, and that not all truth is the absolute truth. What is *emes/truth*, and what is *emes l’amitah/absolute truth*? The limited dimension we normally are contained in is a truthful dimension, but there is a more inner dimension that is beyond it, where there are no limitations; that is the *emes l’amitah*.

Thus, our limited dimension we are normally in is not the *emes l’amitah*, although it is certainly *emes*. The *emes l’amitah* is the point where the limitless dimension meets with our own limited dimension and it is shined upon it.

This is the secret of the “*chotam b’toch chotam*”. The “seal of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*”, which is essentially the *chotam b’toch chotam*, is the *emes l’amitah*. It is the point where the limitless dimension is revealed upon our own limited dimension, and this is how what the *chotam b’toch chotam* accomplishes. It shows us that our own limited world is ultimately a part of a higher, limitless dimension, which shows us that there is more to the truth that we see. It is because we really do not understand the truth at all, for all truth is ultimately bound up with Hashem, and “no thoughts can comprehend Him”.⁵⁸

This is the depth that is behind these 22 days of *Tishrei* that spans Rosh HaShanah through *Shemini Atzeres*. Since Rosh HaShanah, we are being drawn closer to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*’s embrace⁵⁹. But Succos is the time where we actually become integrated (*miskalel*) in Hashem, for the *sukkah* is where we sit in the *tzeil* (shadow) of Hashem. It is the point of *ayin*, which we cannot grasp or comprehend in any way; it cannot be physically sensed.

The secret of these days is that they reveal to us the concept of *hiskalelus* in Hashem, where we can see that everything is really *ayin* (nothingness), and as Shlomo HaMelech says in *Koheles*: “For everything is *hevel* (nothing).” And when *ayin* becomes integrated with the Creator, it is revealed the depth of “*Ain Od Milvado*” – that there is nothing besides for Hashem.

⁵⁷ *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:6

⁵⁸ *P’sach Eliyahu*

⁵⁹ *Arizal: Shaar HaKavanos: Yom Kippur, derush 4*

05 | Everything In One Place ⁶⁰

The Difference Between Building and Sitting In The Succah

The *Mishnah* in Tractate *Succah*⁶¹ brings an argument concerning an old *succah*: According to Beis Shammai, an old *succah* is invalid for use, and according to Beis Hilel, an old *succah* is kosher for use. Rashi explains that the argument is about if a *succah* needs to be made for the purpose of the festival or not. Beis Shammai requires a *succah* to be made for the purpose of the festival, while Beis Hilel does not require a *succah* to be made for the purpose of the festival.

So according to Beis Hilel, an old *succah* is kosher for use, whereas according to Beis Shammai, any *succah* made thirty days before the festival is not kosher unless it was made intentionally for use of the festival.

However, this argument is only concerning the building of the *succah*. When actually sitting in the *succah*, the *Bach*⁶² writes that not only must one intend to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *succah*, but he must also intend to be aware of the reason for the *mitzvah*, which is “So that the generations will know, that in the succos I placed the children of Yisrael.”⁶³ The *Mishnah Berurah* says that while one still fulfills the *mitzvah* without knowing the reason for it, he does not fulfill the *mitzvah* if he does not know at all why he is sitting in the *succah*, or if he is unaware of the festival.⁶⁴

Thus, there is a difference between building the *succah* and sitting in the *succah*. Later we will return to discuss this difference.

Defining the Mitzvah of Succah: Establishing A Temporary Dwelling Place

What defines the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *succah*? The Rambam requires one to make a blessing over the *succah* whenever he enters the *succah*, even if he enters it a hundred times a day⁶⁵, whereas Rabbeinu Tam requires one to make a blessing over the *succah* only if he eats a meal there.⁶⁶ The Shulchan Aruch⁶⁷ rules according to Rabbeinu Tam, but the Vilna Gaon⁶⁸ rules according to the Rambam. The Gemara says that whenever one makes a blessing over a *mitzvah*, the blessing must be recited before the act of the *mitzvah*. Therefore, according to the Rambam, the *Magid Mishnah* rules that one must make the blessing over the *succah* before entering the *succah*.⁶⁹ However, this is not explicitly stated in the words of the Rambam, and as it is apparent, even those whose custom is like the Rambam do not make the blessing before entering the *succah*.

It seems that the definition of the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *succah* is not the actual entering of the *succah*, and neither is it defined by the act of eating or sleeping in the *succah*. Rather, the *mitzvah* is to mentally establish the *succah* as a dwelling place. In other words, whenever one enters the *succah*, whether it is his own or another's, the blessing over the *succah* is

60 סוכה כהגדרת מקום – 005 סוכות

61 *Succah* 9a

62 *Bach: Orach Chaim* 625

63 *Vayikra* 23:43

64 *Mishnah Berurah* 625:1

65 *Rambam Hilchos Succah* 6:12

66 *Rosh Succah* 4:3

67 *Orach Chaim* 639:5

68 *Biur HaGra* *ibid.*

69 *Magid Mishnah, ibid.*

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because he has established the *succah* as his dwelling place to be in, on Succos. On Succos, a person's dwelling place is not his usual residence that he has during the rest of the year, which is permanent and established. Rather, on Succos one has a dwelling place that is temporary, and this is his current dwelling.

The blessing over the *mitzvah* of *succah*, as well as the *mitzvah* of the *succah* itself, is about this perspective – as opposed to being a mere act. And since one has mentally established the *succah* as his current dwelling place, it follows that he must treat the *succah* as his dwelling place, making sure to eat there, sleep there, and stroll there, etc. That is why the custom is not to make the blessing before entering the *succah*, for such an action would contradict the intention. Instead, one makes the blessing over the *mitzvah* of *succah* only when he is in the *succah*, and in this way he shows each time that he is establishing the *succah* as his dwelling place.

Succos – A Festival About the Future: Identifying One's True Place

From all of the three festivals - Pesach, Shavuot, and Succos - we do not find a specific reference to the future, except for Succos. Succos is related to the future, whereas Pesach and Shavuot celebrate the past. The Sages state: "In the future, Hashem will make a *succah* for the righteous, made out of leviathan skin."⁷⁰ This understanding of this statement is connected with what we have explained until now: that the entire concept of *succah* is about establishing for oneself a place to settle into.

In the words of our Sages, we find similar instances of this concept, of being settled into a place. One of the Sages said: "I see those who grow spiritually, but they are few."⁷¹ What is it that determines a person's spiritual growth? It is not his deeds. It is about where he is found – to be found in a place above. The term "*ben olam haBa*,"⁷² one who is destined for the World To Come, is also referring to one whose place is in the World To Come even as he is on This World. Another instance of this concept is the difference between those who reside in Eretz Yisrael with those who live outside of Eretz Yisrael, regarding Yom Tov. The place where one mainly resides in, is what determines how many days of Yom Tov he will need to keep. Thus, the place of a person establishes the level of his deeds, as opposed to his deeds establishing his place.

Hence, the *mitzvah* of *succah* is about establishing a place to be in, and as the Sages state about the *succah*, "Leave your permanent dwelling, and enter into a temporary dwelling." One needs to establish the *succah* as his "place" – resembling the future [when all of the Jewish people will sit], in the *succah* of leviathan's skin. One needs to make the *succah* into his newfound place, which he is settling into. The lesson of it is that one must regard this world as temporary by being aware that only the Next World is his permanent dwelling.

One needs to know where his fixed place is, and this is not only a question to ask oneself on Succos. One may be destined for Gan Eden, or Gehinnom, depending on whatever level he is on. One's dwelling on This World is temporary, but he must see at every moment where his true place is, where his eternal place is. One must be able to define for himself, at every moment: "Where is my true place? Where do I belong to?" And the true definition of where we belong, is in our true, fixed place, which is in the Heavenly, whereas on This World we are only here temporarily.

⁷⁰ Bava Basra 75a

⁷¹ Succah 45b

⁷² Megillah 28b

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Our True Place Is "The Clouds of Glory" – As Opposed To This World

There is a well-known dispute between the Sages if the *succah* commemorates the actual *succos*/huts which the Jewish people dwelled in, in their sojourn in their desert after leaving Egypt (the opinion of Rebbi Akiva), or if the *succah* is in remembrance of the Clouds of Glory (the opinion of Rebbi Eliezer).⁷³

The *halachah* is according to Rebbi Eliezer, and this is perplexing, because usually the *halachah* is according to Rebbi Akiva. The *Bach* and the *Gra* deal with this question. But we can also provide another answer: Here it is different, because even the actual *succos* which Hashem made for the people in the desert was not their permanent dwelling place, for they were en route to Eretz Yisrael. The *succah* is all about establishing a dwelling place to be in, and it is only the Clouds of Glory which can establish a true place. [That is why the *halachah* here is like Rebbi Eliezer, even though normally the *halachah* follows Rebbi Akiva].

There is a *halachah* that the *s'chach* (the covering of the *succah*) must come from a product of the ground, and it must be removed from the ground, and it should not be able to contract *tum'ah* (spiritual defilement). Rashi explains that this is because the *succah* is compared to the clouds, which cannot contract *tum'ah*, for the *succah* is in remembrance of the Clouds of Glory. We can also add another point, that the clouds are not attached to the earth. The Gemara there explains that this is all according to Rebbi Eliezer's view that the *succah* is in remembrance of the Clouds of Glory. From these laws, we see that the *succah* is about changing one's place, removing oneself from the "ground" – foregoing the materialism of this world as one's true place, and instead, to become detached from the ground, and to make the Clouds of Glory into one's true place.

The opinion of Beis Hilel, as mentioned earlier, is that a *succah* does not have to be built for the purpose of the festival. As is well-known, *Chazal* state that "From ulterior motives (*shelo lishmah*) one is led to pure motives (*lishmah*)", and when we apply this to the laws of *succah*, it will mean that even when the *succah* isn't made *lishmah* – meaning that it was not made for the purpose of the festival – still, a person will be able to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *succah*, which represents *lishmah*.

Simply speaking, the *succah* is about leaving one's permanent dwelling and living in a temporary dwelling, as is Rabbi Akiva's view, that the *succah* commemorates the actual *succos* that the people dwelled in. This would be in the category of *shelo lishmah*, with regards to the intention in dwelling in the *succah*. The higher level is to consider the *succah* as one's permanent dwelling, which reflects Rebbi Eliezer's view, that the *succah* represents the Clouds of Glory. One needs to realize that his true place is in the Clouds of Glory [detachment from the materialism of This World], and this represents the concept of *lishmah*.

Being Entirely In The Succah

There is a well-known *Midrash* that entering the *succah* is a form of entering into exile.⁷⁴ If a person during the days of judgment was sentenced to exile, going into the *succah* fulfills the decree of exile upon him, and then he will be saved from having to endure actual exile.

Exile is about separateness, disparateness, and division. In contrast, redemption is when all of the Jewish people will return to their land, "And the children will return to their borders"⁷⁵– it is a state of complete mutual connection, rectification, and unity. *Chazal* said of sitting in the *succah* that one should sit in it in a way that resembles how one lives.⁷⁶

⁷³ *Succah* 11b

⁷⁴ *Yalkut Shimeoni Emor* 653

⁷⁵ *Yirmiyahu* 31:16

⁷⁶ *Succah* 28b

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The meaning of this is that sitting in the *succah* is about having the entire spectrum of one's body and soul in it. Although one fulfills the *mitzvah* as long as his head and most of his body is in the *succah*⁷⁷, the complete level of sitting in the *succah* is only when one is entirely in it. As a hint, the total numerical value of the word *succah* (סוכה) is equal to 248⁷⁸, hinting that all 248 parts of a person should be in the *succah*.

Gathered Together In One Place – The Complete Rectification For The Soul

If a person sinned with many different parts of his body, for example, if he didn't don *tefillin* on his left arm, but he used his right arm to perform acts of *chessed*, then the parts of his body which sinned will need to be reincarnated in his next lifetime (as a *gilgul*) whereas the parts of his body which didn't sin will not need to be reincarnated.⁷⁹ When exile is decreed upon the soul – meaning, when the soul has to be reincarnated in another lifetime and return to This World – only the parts of the soul which need rectification are sent down again. There is a separation between all of the 'limbs' in the soul. But through the *mitzvah* of *succah*, which corresponds to the 248 parts of the body, all of the parts of the body are in one place. The *succah* represents one unified structure, where the entire body is placed in and unified underneath it.

It is also known that the Four Species correspond to the four different types of people.⁸⁰ On a deeper level, these four different types of people are part of every person's soul. Therefore, everyone has these four parts to themselves. The concept of the *succah* is about taking all of one's parts and establishing one place for them. How can this be done, if some parts of the soul are rectified and some parts of the soul are not, part of the soul is destined for Gan Eden, another part is heading towards Gehinnom, and another part will be reincarnated in another lifetime?

The answer to this lies in what the Gemara says that the “the ground of the earth is all one.”⁸¹ Within the *succah*, there is a unification of all aspects. The view of Rabbi Akiva is that Hashem made a physical *succah*, meaning that there is a *succah* on a physical level of this earth. There is also the view of Rabbi Eliezer, that the *succah* which Hashem made refers to the Clouds of Glory, meaning that it was a *succah* on a heavenly level. And, from another viewpoint in the Sages, the *succah* is a form of going into exile. How are all these different aspects of the *succah* unified? When we view the *succah* as containing all of the above aspects.

One can see all of these aspects in the *succah*: the fact that it is a physical *succah*, the fact that they are in remembrance of the Clouds of Glory, a spiritual light that envelopes us, and the fact that the *succah* is a form of exile. One can attain his soul-rectification (*tikkun*) in the *succah*, by establishing the *succah* as his only place to be in, for he has no other place. One only needs to acquire a more expansive view.

Otherwise, a person just sees himself as scattered, with one part of him in Gan Eden and another part of him that belongs in Gehinnom, and in this way, a person becomes terribly scattered inside himself, with his pieces spread out endlessly and all over the place. Instead, one needs to see all of his aspects collected into one place. When that is his perspective, all of his man parts become rectified, through the secret of the *succah*. His many parts become unified into one whole.

Of this it says, “*In the shadow of Your wings, they take shelter.*”⁸² Even a part of one's soul which is in need of rectification, which may not even have the merit of taking shelter under Hashem's wing, can indeed become sheltered and protected

77 *Succah* 28a

78 The “*miluy*” (full spelling) of the word *succah* (סוכה) is א"ה, כ"ף, ו"י, ט"ו, ז"ך, ט"ו which is equal in numerical value to the word *מקח*, 248.

79 *Shaarei Kedushah* (R' Chaim Vital) 2:3

80 *Vayikra Rabbah Emor* 30:12

81 *Kiddushin* 27b

82 *Tehillim* 36:8

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from Hashem, when one establishes a place for himself where all of his aspects will become integrated and unified into one whole, where his many parts aren't in a scattered state.

The Sages state that “There will be no Gehinnom, in the World To Come. Rather, Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath, and the righteous will be healed from it, and the wicked will be judged with it.”⁸³ Today, there is either a state of Gan Eden or Gehinnom, but in the future, the same point will rectify both the righteous and the wicked. All the parts will become repaired through the same place.

Our *avodah* is to unify and repair all the parts of the soul, from the same point. This matter depends on a person's perspective. One needs to see the *succah* as a unifying point, meaning that it is the place which unifies together all aspects. As opposed to many pieces scattered together, all of the pieces are unified together as one, under the *succah*. The Sages state that “the Jewish people are all eligible to sit under one *succah*”⁸⁴, meaning that all 600,000 neshamos in the Jewish people can be integrated in one *succah*. This includes 600,000 different viewpoints, perspectives, and outlooks – they can all become integrated into one soul. This unifying perspective, *achdus*, is the way to repair all of the scattered parts.

Through viewing the *succah* with this perspective, one can then come to *Simchas Torah*, to the 600,000 letters of the Torah, a Torah that is like one *succah* which unifies all 600,000 viewpoints within the Jewish people.

Thus, the *succah* is a place where one becomes unified under one place, which he doesn't leave from. The rectification (*tikkun*) for everything takes place there.

The Succah: A State of Redemption Within Exile

Here we have learned of a concept of how opposites can be contained in one matter. The *succah* is a form of exile, but it is also the very opposite of the state of exile.

In exile, a person leaves his fixed place, but we have learned here that the *succah* should be viewed as one place, as opposed to a mere “temporary dwelling”. One can consider the *succah* as his place to live in, and at the same time, he can view it as a form of exile. He is in exile in the *succah*, but he is still living in one place [which is the state of redemption]. This is not a contradiction, because it is only an exile regarding one part of his soul which is in exile, whereas it is not an exile regarding a different part of his soul – instead, it is his true place. For one can see everything in one point, in one *havayah* (one existing reality) – and “the rest is the explanation, go finish it.”

⁸³ Nedarim 8b

⁸⁴ Succah 27b

06 | Where Heaven & Earth Kiss ⁸⁵Two Ways In Avodas Hashem – Beginning From Below, or Beginning From Above

Let us first begin with a brief introduction.⁸⁶ Generally speaking, there are two approaches towards the festivals. One way to approach the festivals is to work our way upwards, from the lower realm to the higher realm. A person ascends to the upper realms, through the festival. In this path, the festival serves as a gateway to rise higher to the spiritual realms. There is also an opposite approach towards the festivals: to work our way downwards, starting from the higher realm and ending at our lower realm. In this path, we draw light from the heavenly realms, onto this lower realm.

The festivals were determined by the date of the new month, which was determined by the *Beis Din*, who sanctified the new moon.⁸⁷ Thus, the *Beis Din*, who are here on this lower realm, have the power to draw down the heavenly realm, which is above time, onto this world, which is within the bounds of time.

The rest of the nation, however, has a different task: to ascend from this time-bound dimension, into the higher dimension, which is above the bounds of time.

This is a general introduction, for each person to know how he can fulfill his *avodah* of receiving the spiritual light of the festival, on his own current level. That was the general rule, and now we will speak about the details in this *avodah*.

Succos: Beginning From Below and Ascending To Above

On Succos, there are two different groups of people who enter the *succah*. One group is the “seven shepherds”, who are also called the “*Ushpizin*”⁸⁸ [Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid]. The other group of people who enter the *succah* is the rest of the members of the holy nation *Yisrael*. The seven shepherds/*ushpizin* descend from the upper realms, from Heaven, as it were, to down here below.

We, the nation *Yisrael*, who are found below on this world, ascend to Heaven, as it were - through the *succah*. *Rashi*⁸⁹ says that entering the *succah* is called *aliyah*, “ascension”, and this is because the *succah* has the status of sanctified ground, a place of ascending to the spiritual.

For each thing in Creation, we can always find three aspects: it can be used for holiness, for a mitzvah; it can be used to protect from spiritual impurity; and it can be used for the mundane. When it comes to the *succah* as well, we can notice these three aspects. The *succah* offers us a protection from evil, as it is written, “*For He hides me in the succah, on a bad day He conceals me.*”⁹⁰

85 סוכות 006 - נשיקת שמים וארץ בסוכה

86 Editor’s Note: The first few paragraphs of this translation have been slightly re-arranged from their original order in the Hebrew sefer, for the sake of flow and clarity.

87 Rosh HaShanah 24a

88 Zohar parshas Emor 103b

89 Rashi Shabbos 154b

90 Tehillim 27:5

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It is also used for mundane purposes, in that the *succah* provides shade from the sun.⁹¹ Shade from the sun is not holy, nor is impure - it is just mundane. A *succah* built for the purpose of providing shade, and not for the purpose of the festival, is still kosher for *succah* use.

Finally, the *succah* provides holiness. The Gemara says “In the future, Hashem will make a *succah* for the *tzaddikim*, from the skin of the leviathan.”⁹² The holiness of the *succah* that we have today stems from the *succah* of the future – the *succah* made from “the skin of the leviathan” - which will be entirely holy.

Succah – Where Heaven and Earth Kiss

Even more than this, though, is that we find a statement in *Chazal*: “In the future, the nations of the world will enter Eretz Yisrael and make a war with them [with the Jewish people], for it says, “*And I will gather all of the nations to Jerusalem, for war.*” And what will Hashem do, He will go out and wage war with the nations, for it says, “*And Hashem will go out and wage war with those nations*” ...and what will He do? He will cover the heads of Yisrael, as it says, “*A succah for my head, on the day of cavalry*”. What is this cavalry (*neshek*)? Rebbi Shmuel bar Nachman says: “On this day, the two worlds will kiss each other.”⁹³

Thus, from the verse “A *succah* for my head, on the day of cavalry” we learn that in the *succah*, there are two aspects – the *succah* of now, and the *succah* of the future.

However, the Sages taught that the *mitzvos* will cease in the future, and they did not exclude the *mitzvah* of *succah* from this [which implies that there will be no *succah* in the future]. But it was mentioned earlier that even in the *succah* which we have nowadays, there is no law requiring the *succah* to be made for the purpose of the festival, for a *succah* is kosher even if it is made for the purpose of shade. So in depth, even the *succah* of nowadays does not have a requirement to be made for the sake of the festival.

Therefore, even in the future, the *succah* will not cease. If the *succah* of nowadays would have to be built for the purpose of the festival, then the *mitzvah* of *succah* would cease in the future, because it would be in the category of *mitzvah*. But since even now the *succah* is not made for the purpose of the festival, the *succah* of nowadays contains the light of the *succah* of the future.

The above is also depth behind the well-known words of *Chazal* that in the future, when Hashem will reward the Jewish people, the nations will come and demand reward, and they will say that they deserve reward because they will keep *mitzvos* in the future. Hashem will tell them that reward cannot be given before they have done the *mitzvos*. Hashem will offer them an easy *mitzvah* to keep, and will agree to reward them if they keep this *mitzvah*. He will give them the *mitzvah* of *succah*, to which they will agree to keep [and later they will rebel and kick the *succah*].⁹⁴ From this Gemara, we see that there is a level of *succah* even in the Next World.

This is because, as implied earlier, the *succah* is the point where This World and the Next World “kiss” [meet]. Thus, only through the *succah* will the souls be joined with the bodies. The bodies are the Jewish nation, who are of This World of action, and they will join with the seven shepherds who are in heavenly realm, who are souls without bodies. Meaning, even now, our level of *succah* is the point where the two worlds meet. There is a *succah* where the souls are contained in bodies,

91 *Yeshayahu* 4:6

92 *Bava Basra* 75a

93 *Yalkut Shimeoni Emor* 23 (653). See also *Pesikta D’Rav Kahana: Nisfachim: 2*, and *Yerushalmi Yevamos* 15:2

94 *Avodah Zarah* 3a

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and there is a *succah* where the souls are without bodies. This is the point where the lower world and higher world “kiss” – it is where they join together.

Heaven and Earth Are Joined Together In The Six Dimensions of the Succah

In a *succah*, there are the *s'chach*, the ground, and the four walls.

As it is known, and as is the *halachah*, there do not have to be four walls in a *succah*.⁹⁵ However, a *succah* is invalid without *s'chach*, and it cannot be a *succah* without the ground. The *Poskim* discuss what defines the ground of a *succah*, and if it is part of the *succah* or not.⁹⁶ According to mystical tradition, one should think of all six directions of the *succah*⁹⁷ [when shaking the Four Species in it, as is the custom of the *Arizal*], which includes the ground.

According to the Sage Rebbi Eliezer, we can add on a seventh direction to the *succah*, the Clouds of Glory, for Rebbi Eliezer derives the laws of *succah* from the Clouds of Glory⁹⁸, which surrounded the Jewish people from seven directions – there were Clouds of Glory in all six directions surrounding them, and a seventh in front of them.⁹⁹ Thus, the ground and *s'chach* of the *succah* represent Heaven and earth. Through the walls of the *succah*, the “Heaven” and “earth” of the *succah* “kiss” each other.

There is one perspective in which Heaven and earth are separated from each other, in which Heaven represents the soul without the body and the earth represents the soul in the body, but there is also another perspective, in which Heaven and earth kiss. This is represented by the *s'chach* and ground of the *succah*. That is why it is only in the *succah* do the souls from on High (our holy forefathers) come down, without being clothed in a physical body, and they unite with the holy Jewish nation, whose souls are contained in a body.

There is a dispute between Rebbi Eliezer and Rebbi Akiva if the “*succos*” which Hashem placed the Jewish people in the desert in, if they were Clouds of Glory or if they are actual *succos*/huts, but now we can understand that they are both the same idea. The Clouds of Glory represent a *succah* on a purely spiritual level, with no garment in the physical, whereas the actual *succah* on This World is the physical level of *succah*, and therefore, both views are correct.

The Connection Between Succos and Aharon HaKohen

As is well-known, there were three constant miracles which escorted the Jewish people in the Desert: The manna, the Clouds of Glory, and the Well. The manna was in the merit of Moshe, the Clouds of Glory were in the merit of Aharon, and the Well was in the merit of Miriam.¹⁰⁰ What was the connection between Aharon and the Clouds of Glory?

Since the Clouds of Glory represent the concept of the *succah*, and of the *succah* which Hashem will build it says, “And spread upon us, the *succah* of Your peace”, therefore the *succah* represents the trait of shalom (peace). Peace is the idea of Heaven and earth kissing each other. The Sages state that Aharon loved and pursued peace and drew them close to Torah. He loved peace by making harmony between man and his friend, which is a degree of unity that exists on this physical world. But his trait of drawing others close to Torah represents a higher level, where Heaven becomes unified with earth,

⁹⁵ *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim: 630*

⁹⁶ See *sefer V'Dorashta V'Chokarta, 4th edition, parshas V'Zos HaBeracha. See also Avnei Nezer Orach Chaim 459:15, Igros Moshe 1:181*

⁹⁷ *Pri Etz Chaim: shaar chag haSuccos: 3*

⁹⁸ *Succah 11b*

⁹⁹ *Sifri, cited in Rashi Bamidbar 10:34*

¹⁰⁰ *Bamidbar Rabbah 13:19, Zohar III Emor 102b*

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the place where Heaven and earth kiss – the point where the Jewish nation “kiss” with their Father in Heaven. In summary of the above, *succah* is the idea of the *achdus* (unity) of all of Creation.

Emunah – The Point Where Heaven and Earth Unify

As it is known from the holy Zohar, the *succah* is called *tzila d'mehemenusa*, “shade of faith”,¹⁰¹ it is a place where one sits underneath the “shade of *emunah*/faith.” What is the connection between *emunah* and the *succah*?

The *succah* is where This World and the Next World kiss. This “kissing” point is through *emunah*, for This World and the Next World are opposites of each other. *Chazal* state that Yaakov and Esav were fighting over both worlds, and in the end, Yaakov took the Next World and Esav took This World.¹⁰² Just as Yaakov and Esav were total opposites of each other, for Yaakov was the “wholesome man, who dwells in the tents” while Esav is a “hunter and man of the field”, so are the two worlds opposite of each other, in direct contradiction to each other.

This World is like a temporary dwelling, while the Next World is a permanent dwelling, for it is eternal. As is well-known, there is a dispute between the Sages if the *succah* needs to resemble a permanent dwelling or a temporary dwelling.¹⁰³ There is a rule that when it comes to any dispute between the Sages, “Their words and their words are the words of the living G-d”¹⁰⁴ [so there is a way to understand that both views in the Sages are correct].

As it has been explained here, the *succah* is the point where Heaven and earth kiss. From the viewpoint of Heaven, the *succah* is a permanent dwelling, and from the viewpoint of This World, the *succah* is a temporary dwelling. *Succah* on a Heavenly level is permanent, while the *succah* on a physical level is temporary. The point where the *Succah* of the Clouds of Glory (the Heavenly *succah*) and where the physical *succah* “kiss” with each other - that is the point of *emunah*. That is the “shade of *emunah*” which is the *succah* – it is the power which unifies all of existence, hence it is the point where Heaven and earth kiss.

Succos Unifies the Physical With the Spiritual

There are many different designs in which a *succah* may be kosher for use. A *succah* can have four walls shaped in the letter ם as well as *succah* with three walls that is shaped like a letter ן. A *succah* is also kosher with two walls when it is in the shape of the letter ן. So there are many different forms of *tzurah*, physical formation, that a *succah* may take on, even though all of these designs are opposite from each other.

Succos is the time of *simchah* (joy), and one of the reasons for this, as explained in the *Rishonim*, is because it is the time of the year when the grain is harvested.¹⁰⁵ This is perplexing! Is this the entire *simchah* of *Succos*?! Is it a joy over something materialistic as gathering together the grain? Furthermore, the Sages state the *Succos* is the time to make an accounting for sins. This means that *Succos* is a continuation of Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is entirely spiritual, a day with no physicality in it. How, then, can the joy of *Succos*, a continuation of the sublime Yom Kippur, be about something physical and material?

The answer to this is contained in what has been explained until now. *Succos* is the point where Heaven and earth kiss. It is a festival which continues Yom Kippur. The revelation of the *succah* is that it unifies Heaven with earth. It is really

101 Zohar III Emor 103a

102 Rashi to Beraishis 25:22

103 Succah 7b

104 Gittin 6b

105 Rashbam parshas Emor (Bamidbar 23:43), Abarbanel ibid, Chizkuni parshas Re'eh (Devarim 16:15)

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impossible for one to be found on this world and always be bound to the *tzurah* of this world, for This World and the Next World are like fire and water to each other, and opposite designs cannot integrate. But when one's connection to This World is not always in the same *tzurah* (physical form), and instead he can contain many different designs – just as a *succah* can be four walls, or three walls, or even two walls – a person then has the ability to connect to This World and the Next World simultaneously.

As long as a person dwells in one place consistently, with the same four walls and roof and floor, his World To Come cannot fuse together with his physical world. But through Succos, when one lives in a temporary dwelling, which has many different possible designs that are each kosher for *succah* use, one nullifies the concept of *tzurah* (physical form) and then it becomes possible for his physical world to fuse with his World To Come.

The *Midrash* states that the Four Species of Succos is really a deeper allusion to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.¹⁰⁶ This is explained in *sefarim hakedoshim*¹⁰⁷ that the Four Species are different than all other trees, grass, and vegetables. All other plants are given an appointed angel to oversee their growth process, and the angel tells it to grow¹⁰⁸, but the Four Species of Succos are not given over to the hands of an angel. Rather, they grow entirely from Hashem's Divine Providence. That is why Hashem commands us to take these four species specifically, on Succos. The depth of this matter is that an angel has a *tzurah*, a certain design, and therefore all other plants are governed by means of *tzurah*, whereas the four species are not governed by any angel, so there is no *tzurah* that makes them grow. Instead, they grow directly from the Creator.

Along the same lines, when one sits in the *succah*, which is the meeting point between Heaven and earth, it is a point where there is no clearly defined *tzurah*. The Sages state 40 days before a fetus is formed, before it receives its *tzurah*, an announcement in Heaven goes out and declares who he or she is destined to marry.¹⁰⁹ Before the first 40 days, though, it has no *tzurah* – it is not yet in formation. In a *succah*, we leave our permanent dwelling and enter a temporary dwelling, meaning that we return to a point where there is no *tzurah* – for we leave our regular *tzurah*, and we get used to a place that is able to take on many different forms.

Thus, the lesson of the *succah*, on a deeper level, is for a person to get used to living a life where he is like *ayin*, like “nothing”, in the sense that he is not bound to any one design, and instead he can take on many different *tzuras* - different forms. When one eventually takes leave of This World and he enters the Next World, a “world which is entirely good”, it is easier for him to receive a new *tzurah*. In contrast, one who didn't get used to this on This World will have difficulty with forgetting about his old *tzurah* from This World and connecting to a higher, more sublime *tzurah* in the Next World.

The Connection Between Water and Succos

Based upon the above, we can also have a deeper understanding now of the connection between the festival of Succos and the concept of water.

An *esrog* is not like all other fruit trees, and it needs as much water as vegetables do, in order to grow. The *aravah* branches are called “willow branches of the stream”. The *nisuch hamayim*, the water libation, was offered on the Altar only on Succos. On Succos, the world is judged on its waters.

As is well-known, water can change its shape, depending on whatever is put into it. It is like *ayin*, nothingness, which has no shape of its own, and which can become any shape.

¹⁰⁶ *Vayikra Rabbah Emor 30:9, cited in Ramban parshas Emor 23:40*

¹⁰⁷ *Seder HaYom: kavanas haLulav, Bnei Yissocher: Tishrei: 11*

¹⁰⁸ *Beraishis Rabbah 10:6*

¹⁰⁹ *Sotah 2a*

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With this, we can also understand the depth of banging the *hoshanos* on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. During the days of Succos, we take the Four Species, and we carefully observe the halachos pertaining to the Four Species, and we carefully preserve the species so that they stay intact and kosher. When we bang the *hoshanos* on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, though, we nullify the physical form of the Four Species. The depth of banging the *hoshanos* is to take away the *tzurah*. The *aravos*, which grow alongside the water, which has no shape of its own, is returned to 'water' at the end of the festival, because when we bang them on the ground on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, the *aravos* lose their form, and instead they become like water which has no exact form.

Soon after Succos ends, we begin to pray for water, and the depth of this is because receiving water is a way to receive the kind of Heavenly light in which there is no *tzurah*.

Emunah – The Intangible

It is said of the Kotzker that he was told of one of the *tzaddikim* who was able to see the *Ushpizin*¹¹⁰ coming to his *succah*. The Kotzker responded to this: "He sees them. I believe in them - and *emunah*, believing, is better than seeing." This is because it says, "And Yisrael saw, and they believed."¹¹¹

The depth of his words is that "seeing" depends on *tzurah*, whereas *emunah* is not dependent on viewing any *tzurah*. *Emunah* is entirely to believe in the intangible. If something is tangible, it is unnecessary to employ *emunah* to believe in its existence. If something can be grasped, it always has a *tzurah*. The *succah* is called *tzila d'mehemenusa*, shade or faith, and reveals the dimension where there is no *tzurah*.

There are two levels: *emunah*, and *tzeil emunah*, the "shadow" of faith. To give a parable that explains the difference between these two levels, in the physical world, one cannot stare into the sun, and if he tries to, his eyes will be blinded. Therefore, in the practical sense, the sun has no form which we can see. But if the sun is blocked by a window, a shadow is formed, and when we look at the sun's shadow, we can see that the sun has a certain shape.

Parallel to this concept, there is HaKadosh Baruch Hu and man. We believe in the reality of the Creator, and this is our *emunah*, our faith in a Reality which no thought can grasp. Therefore it is not possible to equate any sort of *tzurah*/form to this Reality. In contrast, it says of man that he is created "In our form, and in our likeness." Man is a *tzelem Elokim*, which is also from the word *tsel*, as explained in the *Arizal*.¹¹²

Thus, in a sense, man is the *tsel*, the shadow, of the Infinite. The Infinite has no *tzurah*, whereas man, who is the 'shadow' of the Creator, does have a *tzurah*.

The *succah*, which is the *tzila d'mehemenusa*, the shade of *emunah*, represents the *emunah* that just as no thought can comprehend the Infinite and He has no *tzurah*, so too, man, when he is in the shadow of Hashem, he has no *tzurah*.

Living In Hashem's Shadow: Above The Enemy's Grasp

It has been explained here that the *succah* is the point where Heaven and earth kiss.

When one [considers himself to mainly be living on This World, he] is bound to *tzurah*, and he will be vulnerable to the attack of the *yetzer hora*, the evil inclination, who opposes him. But when one lives with the understanding that "For I will

¹¹⁰ The seven "Guests" who visit the *succah* on Succos: Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon, and Dovid

¹¹¹ cited in *sefer M'Sod Siach Chassidim*, p.42

¹¹² *Arizal: shaar haKavanos: Succos drush 7, Pri Etz Chaim shaar haLulav 4*

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hide in the succah, on a day of bad, I will be concealed,”¹¹³ he lives with the revelation of the “*tzila d’mehemenusa*” [living in ‘Hashem’s shadow’] represented by the *succah* – where there is no *tzurah*. When one lives in the shadow of *emunah*, there is no *tzurah*, so the enemy loses its *tzurah* as well. To the degree that one has *emunah* in the Creator, there is no *tzurah*, where one is above the grasp of the *yetzer hora*.

Ultimately, though, man does have a *tzurah*, so he will inevitably have to struggle against the evil inclination, who can attack a person on this world of *tzurah*. One will certainly have to wage war against the evil inclination. But the more a person lives in the point where there is no *tzurah* – which is the *tzila d’mehemenusa* [to live as if he is residing in the Hashem’s shadow], the less vulnerable he will be to the evil inclination. That is exactly how one can break the enemy’s hold.

In The Succah, One’s Entire Soul Becomes Nullified

There is a rule in the Torah that “There is no inclusion after an inclusion, except to exclude.”¹¹⁴ The *succah* enables a self-nullification of man¹¹⁵, and the *succah* is also a revelation of this concept of “there is no inclusion after an inclusion except to exclude.” The *succah* comes to “exclude”, to nullify, the *tzurah*/form of man. The soul of man contains 70 forces, as explained by the Vilna Gaon.¹¹⁶ There were 70 *korbonos* were brought throughout the 7 days of Succos, and, on a simple level, this corresponds to the 70 nations¹¹⁷, but on a deeper level, the 70 *korbonos* correspond to the 70 forces in the soul, and the burning of the *korbonos* represents a cessation of the 70 forces in the soul. Thus, nullifying the 70 forces of the soul represents a nullification of the entire *tzurah*/form of man, and to instead reveal [the point where there is no *tzurah*, the nothingness which has no shape or form], the “water” of Succos – the *tzila d’mehemenusa* [living within “Hashem’s shadow”].

Therefore, on a deeper level, the concept of the festival of Succos is to leave our permanent dwelling go to a temporary dwelling, is a way for man to leave behind *tzurah* and enter into the point where there is no *tzurah*.

The Connection Between Simchas Torah & the Torah Written From Moshe’s Tears

After Succos comes the finishing of the Torah, on *Simchas Torah*, where we read the *parshah* of *V’zos HaBerachah*. Concerning the last eight verses of this *parshah*, there is a dispute in the Sages if they were written by Yehoshua or if they were written with Moshe’s tears.¹¹⁸

On Succos we take the Four Species, which have a *tzurah*/form, and at the end of Succos we bang the *aravos* on the ground, where we nullify their *tzurah*. The more complete level of this nullification of *tzurah* is reached on *Simchas Torah*, upon reading the last eight verses of the Torah, which were written through Moshe’s tears (according to one opinion), for tears are water [which have no specific *tzurah*]. It is if Moshe wrote the end of the Torah with water, and not with ink. This is a total level of nullifying the *tzurah*. “Hashem looked into the Torah, and created the world”¹¹⁹, and therefore all forms of *tzurah* are rooted in the Torah. Moshe’s writing of the end of the Torah with tears is a nullification of *tzurah* at its root.

113 *Tehillim* 27:5

114 *Pesachim* 23a

115 Refer to the Rav’s first *drasha* on Succos, אור וצל_001 סוכות (Self-Nullification In The Succah)

116 *Gra*: *Yeshayahu* 11:1, also cited in *Likkutim al peirush haGra l’Sefer Yetzirah*. The 70 forces of the soul are explained in *Kuntrus Shivim Kochos HaNefesh*, cited in *sefer Eitzos V’Hadrachos*

117 *Succah* 55b

118 *Bava Basra* 16a

119 *Zohar Terumah* 161a

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This is the level of spiritual light that is revealed, at the end of *Simchas Torah*. The entire path from *Rosh HaShanah* through *Simchas Torah* is essentially a preparation of the union between *Yisrael* and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and the purpose of this union is this point that is revealed on *Simchas Torah*, when we reach the total level of *bittul* (nullification), of nullifying all *tzurah*, when we reach the part of the Torah that Moshe wrote with tears: “*And Moshe died there, the servant of Hashem*”.¹²⁰

The *avodah* of these days, on one hand, is to build for ourselves the spiritual containers to hold our *tzurah* - and, simultaneously, to shine the spiritual light that comes from above our *tzurah*, until the End of Days, when there will be a total nullification of *tzurah*, which will be the complete union between the Jewish people and their Father in Heaven.

As long as there is *tzurah* in the Jewish people, there cannot be a complete union between *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and with the creations, for the created beings have a *tzurah*, whereas *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has no *tzurah*. Only when the Jewish people nullify themselves to Hashem completely will they be, so to speak, without a *tzurah*, and thereby resemble their Creator, Who has no *tzurah*.

The 22nd day of Tishrei [*Simchas Torah*] is the time when the Jewish people can be on this level, of transcending their *tzurah*. The number 22 corresponds to the 22 letters of the *Aleph beis*. The root of all *tzurah* is the letters of the *Aleph Beis* [from which Hashem designed all of Creation from], and the 22 days between *Rosh HaShanah* and *Simchas Torah* are days to integrate the *tzurah* of the letters of the *Aleph Beis* with their inner light - until all *tzuros* become integrated with the Infinite.

In Conclusion

May Hashem merit all of us to build our *tzurah*, and then integrate it to above our *tzurah*, and to merit the total level of unifying with Hashem, completely.

07 | The Jew's Inner Self ¹²¹

Sukkah and the Four Species – The Dual Natures of Man

On *Succos*, we have two *mitzvos*: to sit in the *succah*, and to shake the Four Species. These two *mitzvos* represent the two sides of man. The Four Species, which we shake around and move, represents the concept that man is always in movement. We are full of various *retzonos* (desires), and all of these desires are a kind of movement. The *mitzvah* of sitting in the *succah* represents a totally different side to us than this: in a *succah*, we don't move – we just sit there.

We find that Hashem is mainly called by two names. The lower name of Hashem is “*adonoy*” - He is our *adon*, our master. This refers to how we serve Him with the *mitzvos*. The higher name of Hashem is the four-letter name of *havayah*, and this refers to the simple recognition of His existence. These two names of Hashem reflect the two sides of our life's mission. On one hand, we “move” constantly by doing all the *mitzvos*. This is how relate to Hashem as our Master, Whom we serve; that He is *adonoy*. But the inner essence to our life is that we recognize his existence and integrate our own existence as a part of Hashem. This is how we relate to Hashem with his higher name, *havayah*. It is the deeper part of our life.

The fact that Hashem exists is not just a fact about life, but it is something which we can connect ourselves to. The *mitzvah* of sitting in the *Succah* is entirely about this concept – to sit in Hashem's Presence, with no need to move around, and instead to connect to Hashem's Endlessness.

In this discussion, the intention is not merely to say a nice *dvar Torah* for *Succos*, but rather, to define the very essence of *Succos*: accessing our innermost point of our self – our point of non-movement – when we integrate with Hashem. It is also a concept that has ramifications to our entire life. It is the way how we can prepare for the future, when we will sit in the *succah* made of the *leviathan* skin.

The depth of our *avodah* on *Succos* is to combine the two sides of mankind and integrate them together: the Four Species, which represents our *mitzvos*/movement, and the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *Succah*, which represents our recognition of Hashem/non-movement.

Our Actual Essence vs. The Outer Layers of the Self

We will try to explain this, as much as Hashem allows us to understand it.

The most complicated thing in the world is our self. Anything else we recognize are all superficial aspects of reality: the clothing we wear, the house we live in, the street that we live on, the country we live in. The entire world surrounding us is also superficial to our existence. If a person can only recognize these externalities, he lives a very superficial kind of existence, for he spends his entire life on the outside. He is thinking all the time about things that are outside of himself.

When a person begins to look for his inner essence, he is apt to think that he “is” what he “does.” He identifies himself based on his actions, on his emotions, and on his thoughts [“I *am* what I do”, or “I *am* what I feel” or, “I *am* what I think”, etc].

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For example, a person has an affinity to do *chessed* (kindness). How does he think of himself? He may see himself as a “good person”, because he sees that he is drawn towards doing good things. But, with this perspective, his view of himself may change, such as when he has to reprimand his children sometimes. He may feel terrible about himself as he is scolding his children, because he cannot be nice to them right now, and he may view himself now as a “bad person”, and he feels that he is acting cruel to his children, etc.

If a person is deeper, he knows that there is more to him than the actions that he does. He is aware that he also has his thoughts, so he may identify himself based on the kinds of thoughts that are taking place on in his mind. Yet this is not either a correct self-identification, because a person is not defined by his thoughts.

Our actions, our emotions, and our thoughts are just outer layers that cover over our essence. They are called “garments” that clothe our soul.¹²² There is more to who we are than just our actions, our emotions, and our thoughts. How can a person identify who he really is?

To be honest, there is almost no one who truly knows and recognizes who he is, and there is almost no one as well who truly knows and recognizes Hashem. If a person doesn't know he really is, he can't either recognize Hashem. There are many people who are searching to find Hashem. But, it is written “*From my flesh I see G-d*”¹²³ - in other words, we need to know who we are in order to be able to recognize Hashem.

Only By Recognizing Our Self Can We Recognize Hashem

We will expand more upon these words, because it is a very fundamental concept which needs to be understood well.

There isn't any person who has no self-knowledge at all, of himself. All of us know ourselves to a certain extent, besides for those who have become mentally ill (may G-d have mercy upon them). But the way we understand ourselves is generally a superficial understanding. We recognize ourselves based on the outer parts of our self, such as our actions, our conversations, our emotions, and our thoughts. These are outer layers to our soul, the garments that cover over our actual soul, and therefore these factors are not the real way to identify ourselves.

When a person only has a superficial understanding of himself, he will also have a superficial relationship towards G-d. It is written, “*From my flesh, I see G-d*”, so if a person doesn't properly recognize his own “flesh”, his real self, he won't come to really identify Hashem either. As a result, he will never form a deep bond with the Creator, because he never comes to genuinely conceptualize the Creator's existence in the first place.

We can compare this to a person who wishes to grind flour but he has no home appliance to grind it with. The “I” in a person is a tool for one to recognize the Creator of the World, because “The Holy One and Yisrael are one”. If someone recognizes his own “Yisrael”, the Jew inside himself – in other words, his beginning point, for Yisrael is called “the beginning” (see *Rashi Beraishis 1:1*) - then he can come to recognize the beginning of his own beginning, the Creator, Who is the Ultimate Beginning. But if a person never got to his own beginning, and he only knows of the ‘branches’ of his beginning – i.e. his various abilities – then not only is he missing a bond with the Creator, but he is missing his own “Jew” within. The essence of the Jew is that he is a Yisrael - thus, if a Jew does not recognize that he is Yisrael deep down in his soul, he is missing self-recognition.

¹²² See *Tanya* chapter 4, and *Tzidkas Hatzaddik* 263.

¹²³ *Iyov* 19: 26

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How indeed can a Jew attain self-recognition? It is not written in any sefer/book in the entire world. A book is an outer entity, and thus it impossible for the actual “I” to be described in any book! If the “I” could be written about in a book, that would be releasing the “I” from its inner chamber out into the open world, and that itself would be impossible.

The only one who can reveal the “I” is Hashem Himself. “*I am Hashem your G-d.*” The word *anochi* (I) stands for the words “*Ana Nafshai Kesavis Yehavis*, “I Myself can write this.”¹²⁴ In other words, the only one who can write about the “I” is Hashem. Hashem has given us the tool in how we can recognize Him: the more we recognize our self, the more we recognize Him. If we have only a superficial self-recognition, then our recognition of Hashem will also be superficial. If we recognize what our essence is, then we will be able to recognize the essence of Hashem.

The Torah begins with the letter *beis*, in the word *Beraishis*. The Ten Commandments began with the letter *aleph*, in the word “*Anochi*.” The depth of this is that Hashem reveals Himself in the letter *Aleph*, which is the beginning letter. If we come to our letter “*aleph*” in our soul – our point of beginning – then we will be able to come to the total level of *Aleph*, the Absolute One, the Absolute Beginning – the One who existed, exists and will always exist: the Creator. But if man doesn’t recognize who he is, then he won’t be able to recognize his Creator.

What is the most hidden thing in Creation? Hashem’s Name is never pronounced. Whenever the Name of *havayah* is used in the Torah, we read it as “*Adonoy*.” The actual “I” of Hashem, even when it is written, is never read. And when we do read a name of Hashem, it is not written there. This is not only a fact about reading Torah. It is a perspective to have towards the Creation, and it is a perception of our soul.

There in inner kind of “writing” of our soul which cannot be read. If we could read it, we would be in the state of *Moshiach*’s times, which we are not in right now. When we all will be able to pronounce the Name of *havayah*, *Mashiach* will come. Nowadays, only a few individuals are allowed to use the Name of *havayah*. Our *avodah* is for us to reach the Name of *havayah* of Hashem, which we do not currently recognize.

We usually relate to Hashem with the fact that we must do the mitzvos He commanded us with. However, there is an inner aspect to our relationship towards Hashem which we start out being unaware of, and we must discover it. It is the fact that we are not just servants of our Master, but rather, our whole existence is connected with Him.

That is the difference between the lower name of Hashem, *adonoy*, and the higher name of Hashem, which is *havayah*. The lower name, *adonoy*, represents how we must do the *mitzvos*, for He is our Master. The name of *adonoy* implies that our relationship with Him is dependent on the actions we do. The higher name, *havayah*, reflects that we are all integrated with Hashem, regardless of what we do or not, because the connection is intrinsic. “A Jew who sins is still a Jew.”

The point of *havayah* – our true existence, in which we are integrated with Hashem – is the point that is hidden away deep in the soul. When we do the *mitzvos*, it builds the outer layers of our soul, but it doesn’t build the point of *havayah* in the soul.

When a person performs a *mitzvah*, he is doing an action. The root of all action is the power of *ratzon*, the will. The will represents man’s nature to always be in movement; *ratzon* comes from the word *ratz*, to “run”, to move. If a person considers his *ratzon* to be the deepest part of himself, he identifies himself with the power of movement, of action. He is at the level of the Four Species, which move in all six directions of the world – but he hasn’t yet gotten to his own self. He hasn’t yet gotten to the “*succah*” inside himself – to the “Yisrael” inside him, his true “I.”

With a poor sense of self-recognition, even a person sitting in the *succah* doesn’t grasp what the concept of *succah* is. Although it appears as if he’s reached the point of non-movement, because he’s sitting in the *succah* – he’s only there physically, but he doesn’t see himself as being in the *tzeila d’meheimenusa*, the “shadow of faith” that the *Succah* is. He’s

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doing all the mitzvos for His Master, but he hasn't yet reached *emunah* – the *succah* that is all about *emunah*, recognizing Hashem's existence.

Thus, there are essentially two stages in our bond with Hashem: first we become His loyal servants by doing all his *mitzvos*. At a later stage in life, we must eventually enter the second, inner stage, which is to recognize Him with our *emunah*. These two stages are represented by two great events that our people went through: the exodus of Egypt and the Giving of the Torah. By the exodus, we were released from Pharaoh's servitude and now we became *servants* of Hashem. By Sinai, Hashem revealed Himself with the giving of the Torah, and now we reached a new level: we *recognized* Hashem.

When Hashem revealed Himself by the Torah, He did not reveal Himself with His lower name, *adonoy*, but rather with His higher name, *havayah*. This shows us that the Torah is essentially the higher name of Hashem, *havayah*.

For this reason, we never really begin to learn the actual Torah, because we are not connected to *havayah*. And surely, we never finish it, for that reason. “*The Torah of Hashem is wholesome, it settles the soul.*” The Baal Shem Tov said that the Torah is wholesome and perfect because no one has ever begun to learn it and complete it. What is the meaning of his statement? No one ever begun to learn the Torah?! The meaning is that the Torah throughout the generations until the end of time is not yet the actual Name of Hashem to us, and this is the deep reason why the Name of Hashem is not allowed to be pronounced.

When a person recognizes his real essence, he merits to truly learn the Torah – the essence of the Torah. Through his learning, he can then come to recognize Hashem – not just the actions and *middos* of Hashem, but an actual recognition of Hashem Himself, so to speak, in the same way that he recognizes his own essence.

Only a person who feels his own essence can come to feel the reality of Hashem. Of course, anyone will claim that he can feel himself as existing, not just a Jew, but any non-Jew as well, and even animals, can feel they exist. But as we explained, most people never arrive at true self-recognition, and they only are aware of the outer layers to their existence.

Summary

To summarize: If we want to define the purpose of Creation, the definition is clear. The purpose of Creation is to recognize the reality of Hashem. The way to get there is through self-recognition. The self is the point in a person which never ceases, for Hashem and Yisrael are one; just as Hashem is eternal, so is a soul of Yisrael eternal. If a person views himself as an entity that can cease, then in turn he views his bond with Hashem with the same superficial perspective.

The soul of a Jew is a “piece of G-d from above”, and therefore, one can come to recognize Hashem through the recognition of himself. A Jew is the only nation on this world which is capable of feeling the inner self and thereby sense the Creator with just as much clarity.

This is the lesson of *Succos*. We have two *mitzvos* – to sit in the *Succah* and to shake the Four Species. We have both of these *mitzvos* because we are meant to integrate both of the lessons they represent together. The Four Species represents how we must move to do all the *mitzvos*, the actions through which we serve our Master with. The *mitzvos* are the way for us to get through to our **heart** and reveal it. “The heart is pulled after the actions.”¹²⁵

What is it that we must reveal from our heart? It is not limited to the great exalted feelings of love and fear of Hashem. It is not about becoming awe-struck from elation. It is about reaching our essence, our “I.” The point of doing all the *mitzvos* is so that we can use all these actions to reach our “I” and reveal it. In this way, we integrate *adonoy* with *havayah*.

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The “I” can be reached in several ways. There is way to reach it directly, but only the *Kohen Gadol* on Yom Kippur knew the secret of how to do it. The other way is the way which we generally take, and that is through doing all the *mitzvos*. **Through the *mitzvos*, we can get through to our essence, and recognize the Creator as a result. But when we do the *mitzvos*, our underlying focus should not be on the external actions themselves of the *mitzvos*, but rather on the goal, which is to come to our essence.**

Reaching Our Point of Menuchah/Serenity

Understandably, the words here are very deep, but they are the secret about life.

All of us want to grow higher, to become elated and elevate ourselves. Yet, elation is still being superficial. Life is not just about feeling more elated. Elation is movement, and movement is only the outer layer of our existence. For this reason, there is almost no one who reaches what he wants in life, because a person keeps evading his main goal, in spite of his many aspirations to grow and become more elated in spirituality.

There is a well-known parable that illustrates this message. A man dreams that there is buried treasure underneath the bridge of his town, while in reality, there is buried treasure sitting underneath his house all along.

The lesson we can learn from this is that even when a person seeks spirituality, he might very well be running away from his real “treasure” all along. For example, if he thinks that Hashem is in Heaven, while he is merely on this lowly earth, then all he will know of is the *mitzvos*, and his entire life will be limited to performing superficial actions. The truth is that Hashem is found everywhere (*Zohar III 225a*) – He is found inside a person! **Our *avodah* is to uncover our true existence, and then we will find Hashem there.**

Of course, it will require a lot of “movements” to get to that inner place in ourselves, but we must at least aspire to reach this point of serenity, which is called *menuchah*. When a person reaches the place of *menuchah* in himself, Hashem is truly revealed within him, because *menuchah* represents Shabbos, the point of non-movement and the cessation from all labor. One who attains *menuchah* on this world will be able to recognize the Creator, and he attains this recognition now in the same way that all of us will eventually recognize Hashem in the future. In contrast, if someone never reaches the point of *menuchah* in himself, the “Shabbos” in himself, then he will not come to the recognition of the One who created the world.

08 | The Jew's New Perspective ¹²⁶Be Ready To Acquire A Whole New Perspective

In the previous chapter, we began to describe how we have two layers to our self: our outer, superficial layers and our inner layer. The inner layer of our self is very hidden from us, and we must reveal it. We will now explain how we can reveal it.

Before we learn about how we can reveal something, we first need to know what it is that we are trying to reveal. After we conceptualize something, we can then attempt to reveal it.

When a Jew reflects about what he's missing in life, he likely thinks that he is missing certain good deeds and that he is lacking knowledge. If this is his approach, he thinks that it is his job to improve how he acts, and to add onto his knowledge. This is commendable, of course, but it won't help the person leave superficiality. He would still not improving his actual perception; he remains trapped in his limited perspective. Even if he improves how he acts, he never leaves his superficial perception. What a person really needs to do is to leave his perspective entirely and dig deeper into himself, where he can uncover a different and deeper perspective in how he views everything in life.

Each of us is searching to have a bond with Hashem, for it is written, "*My soul thirsts for G-d, for the living Almighty.*" We all are trying to get there, and we all want it very much. But we need to first have a basic understanding of what it is that we all want and searching for, in the first place.

The Inner Point of our Self Cannot Be Described

We have a desire to feel Hashem's existence in our heart.

As explained in the previous chapter, the name of *havayah* represents the actual reality of Hashem, while the name of *adonoy* (or *adnus*) represents our relation to Him in performing the *mitzvos*. We also explained that the way to reach the reality of Hashem is through self-recognition – we can recognize Hashem from within ourselves. What we need to know now is how we can come to perceive ourselves as *havayah* – to recognize our actual existence.

It is really impossible to define *havayah*. Let us explain why. If something can be understood, but it is very hard to grasp, we can give parables that help us describe what it is. But if there is a point which cannot be grasped at all, there is no way to try to explain it. For example, it is impossible to describe what an angel looks like. All we know about the angels is that our human senses cannot grasp them at all. Although we find that the angels are described sometimes as "light" and "fire", this still does not help us understand at all what an angel looks like. We aren't able to imagine them either.

The point is that if something is found in a different dimension than the one we are in, it is impossible to even try to describe it. That is why spiritual concepts cannot be described.

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Man's Perception Is A Fantasy

Getting back to our discussion, we will begin with the following simple reflection. Look at the table and chair in front of you. It seems that we perceive what these objects are: They were made by a certain company, and we can do things with them like sit and eat on them. This is true. But can our senses feel the actual essence of a table or chair? If you think about it, the answer is a simple No.

There are six directions of our physical dimension (north, south, east, west, up, and down), and whenever we see an object, we are only seeing it as it moves among the directions. But we never see an actual object itself!

If someone doesn't reflect into this concept, he will regard this is philosophy. He cannot accept this, because he is unable to change his immature perspective from his youth, which seems to show us that an object is as it appears.

The truth is that we do not really perceive anything on this world! In the future we will express, "*Then, we were like dreamers.*" This current world will seem to us like a dream. When you're in a dream, nothing is real, even though you are seeing things.

Man is called *adam*, which comes from the word *dimayon*, imagination. This implies that man's entire perception is seen through the lens of imagination – we never really see something as it really is.

What results from this is that we have no understanding of the Creator, and nor do we understand the essence of people that we see. All we can grasp about anything is that we see movements of something, but we never truly grasp and sense what another entity is.

Seeing Is Not Believing

We cannot sense the existence of anything as long as we confined to using our human senses. A person who needs to sense something through using any of his five senses will not be able to understand the existence of something, the *havayah* of something. A person might think that he needs to find the Creator, but he isn't aware that first he needs to reveal *havayah*. A person, before anything, must reveal the simple reality of this world!

There are a few individuals on this world who already grasp the true reality, because they have already revealed Hashem's existence in themselves. These are rare individuals, and they have a special *avodah* of beginning from the highest rung on the spiritual ladder, and radiating that light downwards onto this earth. But generally speaking, our *avodah* is to work our way upwards, beginning from the bottom point – which is: recognizing reality – and then working our way up to the uppermost point, which is to fully recognize the Creator.

This point must be very well understood: we do not see reality! We see movements of reality, but reality itself cannot be felt by any of the five senses.

The Secret

Recognizing reality – *hakaras hametzius* – is also known as "*Toras HaSod*", the "Secret Parts of Torah." People think that this is referring to learning the *Zohar*, the writings of the *Arizal*, the writings of the *Reshash*, etc. and seek to hear *shiurim* on these holy writings. But the truth is that if these secrets ever get taught, they are never understood, because a secret cannot be taught! A secret is a heart matter; it cannot be expressed to another person. The only way a person can do a heart transplant to another person is if he's dead.

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A secret is when a person grasps the true essence of something. If something can be seen with the human eye, you can try to explain it to another and help another person conceptualize it. But if something cannot be seen, there is no way to explain it to another. The secrets of Torah, *Toras HaSod*, are not a kind of knowledge that our intellect can process.

Even if a person knows the entire *Zohar* and writings of the *Arizal* by heart – backwards and forwards – it's possible that he never even grasped even *one* of its secrets! And the truth is that there is only one secret, not many secrets. The only secret there is to know what true reality is.

When a person hears this, he might ask, “Who doesn't know reality?!” But there is almost no one who truly knows what reality is! The true reality is hidden from us, no less hidden than how much the Creator is hidden from us. The Torah is a part of Hashem, so to speak; it is reality. Hashem looked into it to create the universe. In other words, Hashem created the world as a *havayah* – an existing reality – while we only see it through the lens of *adnus*, the lower perspective. Thus, the actual *havayah*/existence of the world is really very hidden from us.

Wearing Your Soul's Garments And Removing Them

We have explained what the problem is: we do not see true reality. Now we will enter more inward into the path we are describing. The path we are describing known as the perspective of “*levush*”, “garments” – to see everything as garments that cover over a deeper layer.

We all know that in the winter, we wear more clothing, while in the summer we wear less layers of clothing. This parable helps us understand our own soul: in our own soul, sometimes we wear garments, and sometimes we need to remove our garments. We wear our garments through keeping the Torah and *mitzvos*, as we are commanded to. There are five garments – action, speech, thought, emotion and will. This is one side of the coin.

The other side of our *avodah* is that we “remove” our garments. We can understand this with the following parable: When a person gets a gift, sometimes it comes wrapped, and he has to unwrap all the layers until he gets to the gift inside. The lesson is: We were born with many wrappers on us! Our essence is covered over by many “wrappings.” When a gift is given without giftwrap, it's not befitting. When it remains inside its wrapper though because the person never opens it, it's even worse – he never gets the gift at all. This shows us that it is necessary both to wrap a gift, as well as to unwrap it.

The same can be said of our soul. Our soul contains five garments which we were born with. Sometimes we need to use them, and sometimes we need to remove them. If a person remains his entire life only using his garments and never removing them at times, even if he only uses the garments for holy reasons, he has spent his whole life immersed in garments, and he never reached his true self. It's like a precious gift that remains unopened, still in its wrapping paper. Even if the “wrapping paper” is very nice, it has to be opened at some point!

Just like when we have times when we wear and remove our clothing, so do we have times when we perform with our soul's “garments” (action, speech, emotion, thought and will) and we make use of them, and times when we need to remove these “garments”.

Detaching Sometimes From Our Soul's Garments

The Torah says, “*For six days you shall labor, and on the seventh day you shall rest.*” We know that there is a concept in the Torah of resting from physical action, but the same is true with regards to our deeper soul garments – speech, thought, emotion and will. Sometimes, we need to detach from these as well.

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Just as physical action is viewed by us as an action, so is speech a kind of action. On Shabbos, we refrain from talking about weekday activities, so we have a concept of rest from speech as well.

Our emotions as well need to be silenced and withheld sometimes. We cannot always act merciful, for example, like when it comes to having mercy on a cruel person, which is forbidden. Shaul was punished for having mercy on Agag, the king of Amalek, and for being cruel to the city of Nov when he should have spared them. Sometimes a person has to act humble, and sometimes he has to be haughty (and the Baal Shem Tov explained that this is when views his haughtiness as a “garment” that he has to put on, which he can remove afterwards). There are other examples as well brought in *Chazal* as well in which we must detach from emotions.

Our thoughts also need to be silenced sometimes. We usually need to think, but sometimes we must stop our thoughts, like to refrain from thinking about Torah during *davening* or on Tisha B’Av.

Our *ratzon* (will) also has to be silenced sometimes, because there are some desires we have which we need to get rid of, and there are some desires which we need to put on hold and return to them later.

The Art of Detachment: The Secret of Reaching Our Essence

What is so terrible if a person never learns how to detach from his soul’s garments? As long as he performs holy actions his whole life, why should it bother him if he can’t detach sometimes?

On one hand, it is commendable if a person is always in any of his soul garments for holiness. But on the other hand, by always being involved in the garments, he never comes to recognize his essence, and he only knows of his garments.

If a person really wants to recognize himself, he needs two things. On one hand, he must adhere to the entire Torah and mitzvos; he must wear his garments as much as he is commanded to according to the Torah. But a person also has to learn to remove his garments sometimes, when the time calls for it – as long as it is within the guidelines of Torah.

Just as the *Kohen Gadol* would constantly go through a cycle on Yom Kippur of getting dressed, undressing, and getting dressed again, so is there a time and place for “wearing” our soul garments and for “removing” our soul garments. A person who knows when to use his abilities, and when to detach from them, is someone who will be able to reach his essence. If someone only knows how to use his soul abilities but he doesn’t know how to detach sometimes from them, he won’t be able to reach his essence.

One of the Sages said, “Just as I will receive reward for speaking, so will I receive reward for abstaining [from speech].”¹²⁷ We know what the reward is for doing the *mitzvos*, as the Sages said: “The reward of a *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah*.” But what is the concept of abstaining from actions, and what is its reward? The reward is: that the person merits to attain true *teshuvah* (to repent), by meriting a revelation of his true self – the soul in its pure form, with no garments attached. That is his reward. The Sages say that “There is no reward on this world”¹²⁸, and the reason for this is because the true reward is to merit a soul that has no garments attached; on this world, there is no such reward, because all of the 613 *mitzvos* we do on this world are but garments.

If a person merits to be one of the special individuals who reveals his essence already on this world, he is living the Next World even as he is on this world. It resembles the state of Adam before the sin. The word *mitzvah* comes from the word “*tzavta*”, “companion” – hinting to the reward for a *mitzvah*, which is that a person merits companionship with the Creator.

¹²⁷ *Pesachim* 22b

¹²⁸ *Kidushin* 39b

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Utilizing Both Speech and Silence To Reach The Self

As a person lives on this world, sometimes he has to “wear” his soul’s garments, and sometimes he needs to remove them. Therefore, it is impossible for one to constantly be in a state in which his inner self is revealed. The *mitzvos* of the Torah require us to make use of our soul garments; this is one side of how we reveal Hashem, and it reflects our *avodah* of *adnus*, to relate to Hashem as our Master as we carry out all His commandments.

But the other side to our *avodah* is to relate to Him with His name of *havayah*, and this reflects how the *Kohen Gadol* on Yom Kippur would pronounce the name of *havayah* (as well as how the *Kohanim* would pronounce it every day when they blessed the congregation in the *Beis HaMikdash*). Every person, in his own soul, has this power of the *Kohen Gadol* to “pronounce the name of *havayah*”, in which Hashem can be revealed to him, with no garments coming in between.

Let us now summarize this concept in clear and simple words: On one hand, we need to reveal the outer parts to our self, which are our actions, speech, thoughts, emotions and will. We need to find where we mostly identify our “I” with amongst these five layers to our personality. Simultaneously, we must also find our actual essence.

In order to reach the inner self, a person has to set aside time of the day in which he can reach his essence, by removing the layers of his soul. This is the secret behind the *avodah* known as “*hisbodedus*” (Jewish meditation).

There are people who try to practice meditation as a way to reach their inner self, but they think that *hisbodedus* is about speaking the entire time with Hashem. Even when they do attain quiet, it’s only because they run out of patience to speak with Hashem so much. They feel that every word spoken to Hashem during *hisbodedus* is precious, and therefore they opt to talk to Hashem the whole time. This is certainly truth to this point, but the problem is that when people only talk to Hashem during their time of *hisbodedus*, they actually lose their connection with Hashem in the process, because they are still involved with their self.

A bond with Hashem is not dependent on talking with Him. If a person was born as a mute, does he have no chance of becoming close to Hashem, since he can’t talk?! Of course not. In fact, a mute can probably form an even deeper kind of connection with Hashem, a more direct connection, since he doesn’t need the “garment” of talking to get to Him, for he achieves it by forming an internal kind of connection with Him.

During the time of *hisbodedus*, a person needs to form a relationship with Hashem both through talking to Him as well as through learning how to be silent.

Silencing Your Garments

On one side of the coin, a person has to form a bond with Hashem through developing his motivations and maturing in his service towards Him. Simultaneously, a person also needs to learn how to negate his very will. During the time of *hisbodedus*, a person needs to increase his will for holiness, to think holy thoughts and to have holy feelings, as well as to increase holy speech and accepting upon himself to better his actions. This is one side of the action – improving the garments of the soul.

The inner side to *hisbodedus* is that a person needs to reach a point of silence. He should reach a state in which he doesn’t do anything at all. He should also silence himself from any talking, and then calm his thoughts, emotions, and finally, his desires.

If a person succeeds in calming all of these layers, he will begin to feel his essence. Even if a person can’t silence all five layers at once (action, speech, thought, emotion, and will), he can still begin to feel his inner self a little more with the more he silences some of the layers.

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When a person totally silences all of these layers, he can come to reach a full revelation of his inner self. In order to fully reach the inner self, all five layers need to be silenced, and a partial inner silence won't suffice. The full revelation of the self can only be experienced when there is a total inner silence – when the actions, speech, emotions, thoughts, and will have all been quieted down.

It is difficult for a person to reach a total silence of all his five soul layers, and therefore we all understand that it can take a long time. “*The years of a man are seventy, and if he is strong, eighty years.*” Hashem gave us an average lifespan of 70-80 years specifically because He knew it would take us so long to get to our inner self! It can be called the “tractate” of our life. If a person doesn't reach a total inner silence and he only reaches a partial inner silence, he will still feel his inner self a bit, but it won't be nearly as strong as someone who has the complete inner silence.

This is the second stage in reaching one's inner self – by silencing the five garments of the soul: action, speech, thought, emotion, and will.

Only Jews Can Integrate These Two Abilities of Mankind

It is told of Rebbi Nachman of Breslev that “All the Torah which had been revealed to him was very novel, but whatever he didn't know was even more novel.” Many people toiled to try to understand this statement. The inner meaning of it is as follows.

Usually, we think that all we have to do is to do the *mitzvos* and not do the *aveiros*. This is true, but it is only one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is that we must learn how to reach an absolute inner silence; just like we must develop our five soul garments, so must we be able to silence them.

A *succah* contains it both light (*ohr*) and shadow (*tzeil*). The shadow must not be bigger than the amount of sunlight in the *succah*¹²⁹, but the *succah* still must have some of both. This shows us that we need to integrate both our “light” and “shadow” together – we need to make use of our soul abilities, as well as to detach sometimes from our soul abilities.

Chazal say that in the future, the gentiles will request reward, so Hashem will make a condition with them that if they keep one easy *mitzvah*, the *mitzvah* of *succah*, they will receive reward. The gentiles will agree and they will go to sit in the *succah*, but Hashem will make it hot on *Succos*, and they will get too uncomfortable and leave the *succah*, kicking it down on the way out. The depth behind this matter is that a non-Jew cannot integrate the dual nature of mankind together; they can understand that they need to do one or the other, but to incorporate both elements together is beyond them.

For example, there are gentiles who are very kind-hearted, and they feel that life is about loving and caring for others. There are gentiles who are very generous, who give millions of dollars to charity. There other gentiles who also understand the need to be in solitude and get in touch with the inner self, and to feel that there is nothing in existence except for God. Either of these groups are only halfway correct. We have to be nice and care about others, and we also have to reach our inner self through solitude and come to recognize the Creator. What a gentile cannot understand is that a person needs to do both. One must exemplify a benevolent being who helps others, as well as be in touch with his inner self. A gentile will understand either one of these facts about life, but he cannot incorporate both into his life simultaneously. Only a Jew has the power to integrate them both together.

Integrating The Dual Natures Together

¹²⁹ *Sukkah* 22a; see *Orach Chaim* 631.

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We will explain more about how to integrate these dual natures of mankind.

We will use the following scenario to illustrate the concept at hand. What does it mean to “integrate” two different entities together?

Let’s say a person has twins, and he buys a double stroller to hold both of the babies. When he’s wheeling them around in the double stroller, are the two babies ‘integrated’ together? No, because they are rather viewed as two babies in the same carriage. So this is not a good example of what it means to ‘integrate.’

What about a person who works, and he decides he will now start to do *chessed*? He splits his schedule so that he will have a few hours a day in which he works, and a few hours in which he does *chessed*. Does this mean that he is integrating his personal life with helping others? He’s simply rearranging his schedule. Although he has integrated more people into his life by giving more of his time to help them, he’s not simultaneously integrating others with his job, because he has different times for each of these activities.

An inner kind of integrating is when a person can simultaneously accomplish two different activities. We have begun to explain that on *Succos*, we have two *mitzvos* – the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *succah*, the *mitzvah* of shaking the Four Species. The fact that we have these two *mitzvos* shows us that it is our *avodah* to integrate our two aspects in how we relate to Hashem – our lower aspect, *adnus* (reflected by how we must perform the *mitzvos*) and our higher aspect, *havayah* (our recognition of Hashem).

What does this mean? Does this mean that we split up *Succos* into two activities – part of the day we sit in the *succah*, and part of the day we take the Four Species? That is only a superficial approach. The real definition of our *avodah* on *succos* is to integrate the Four Species with the *succah* - in other words, to perform the *mitzvos* with the recognition of His existence.

As we explained before, there are gentiles who understand what the concept of *havayah* is, and there are also gentiles who understand that life is about performing actions to benefit others, but a gentile cannot integrate both systems at once in his life. Only a Jew knows how to come to perform properly based upon the recognition of Hashem’s existence. A Jew can know how to connect these two pieces of knowledge together and see how they integrate.

Connecting To The Depth of Reality Even Amongst The Realm of Action

“The purpose of knowing about You [Hashem] is to realize that we do not know of You; however, all we can know is that You exist, and that is all that we can arrive at with our mental capabilities.”¹³⁰ Our actions on this world must be connected to the *havayah*, the true reality. If not, then a person is only connected with Hashem when he has time for *hisbodedus*, but when he goes out in the world and takes care of his various chores, he disconnects totally from *havayah*. He views *havayah* and our world of action as two separate worlds that cannot be integrated. But if a person learns how to integrate *havayah* into his daily actions, and vice versa, then he achieves a constant connection with the Creator.

A story is told about the philosopher Aristotle, who was once seen indulging on a plate of food. A student passed by and asked him, “Isn’t it unbecoming for the great philosopher Aristotle to indulge on food like this?” The philosopher responded, “When I eat, I am not Aristotle.” This is an example of an identity crisis - when someone cannot incorporate his wisdom into his daily life. He viewed his wisdom as one thing, and his actions as a separate thing, and he did not see how they must become integrated.

The entire lesson of our holy Torah, the secret of our entire life’s work in our service towards Hashem, is about revealing the reality of Hashem in all situations. As the Sages state: “There is no place that is empty from Him.”

¹³⁰ Sefer “*Bechinas Olam*”, authored by Rav Yedaya HaPenini ben HaRav Avraham Badarshi

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We need to reveal Hashem's existence, but it is not only that. We need to *incorporate His existence into the way we act!* We must reveal Hashem through our own private times of *hisbodedus*, when we detach from our soul layers, as we explained; and along with this, we need to reveal Him also during the times of the day in which we are actively using our soul garments. The reality of Hashem's existence must become manifested in how we act throughout the day.

Why It Is Difficult For People To Enter Inward

When we understand this, we can now understand another thing: why most people have a hard time entering inward, even though they are really yearning to do so. People have honest and true aspirations for holiness; why are many people not succeeding in getting there? It is because there is a great lack of understanding about what *pnimiyus* ("inwardness") is and how to enter it.

One reason for this is because we are found in a world of action, and we are not yet in touch with the deeper meaning to reality, *havayah*. The second reason why people don't enter the inner world is because people don't understand that the inner meaning of reality is something that can become manifest in how we act throughout the day as well.

Chazal say that in the future, the *mitzvos* will disappear.¹³¹ There are many explanations of this statement; the following explanation is the one that pertains to our discussion. The depth of this statement is that the *mitzvos* are only secondary to the inner meaning of reality, *havayah*, and in the future when *havayah* is totally revealed, the *mitzvos* will only be viewed as a spark of reality, and it will pale in comparison to the radiating light of *havayah*.

According to this explanation, it is not the actual *mitzvos* which will disappear in the future, but rather, a change of perspective. In our current state we view [initially] view *mitzvos* as actions to perform, and in the future, each *mitzvah* will appear to us a "spark" of reality. A *lulav* will not just be an action we perform, but a spark of the great reality that has been revealed.

There is only one reality – Hashem, who is "One, and His Name is One." Everything that we see on this world are only "sparks" of that one, single reality – which shines itself onto every place in Creation in many forms.

When we look around at the world, we see many people, and it appears that there is more than one reality in front of us. But through revealing the perspective of *havayah*, a person is able to view all the disparities as being many "sparks" that comprise one, single unit: the reality of the Creator. Nothing is apart from the reality of the Creator. "There is no place that is empty from Him."

When we live in a time of *hester panim* (concealment of Hashem's radiance), we also have to view it with this perspective, that all *hester panim* is essentially a lack of understanding of reality. There is no such thing as becoming apart from the Creator.

In Summary: Moving From The "I" To The Creator

To summarize: In order for a person to truly recognize the Creator, to truly recognize the reality that exists, one first needs to understand what his own reality is. He must realize that whatever he has understood about himself until now was only a superficial sense of self-recognition, based on his senses and mind, which can only grasp movements of reality, not reality itself.

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By detaching oneself from the five garments of the soul, one can recognize his essence, and from that, he can come to recognize the Creator. He can then deepen this recognition even further and reach an even higher point, which is to realize that there is really one true “I” that exists – the Creator, for there is nothing else besides Him.

So first, a person has to realize what he *isn't*. Then he can understand who he really *is*, and then he can recognize the Creator. The final stage is to recognize that there is only One “I” – the Creator; for all of Creation are merely emanations and sparks of His existence.

09 | The Jew's Inner Seal ¹³²The Seal of the Decree on Hoshanah Rabbah

On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, the decree [for the new year] becomes sealed. It is well-known that the decree is written on Rosh HaShanah, and signed on Yom Kippur, but the *sefarim hakedoshim*¹³³ reveal that on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, another signing of the decree takes place. It is called the *chotam b'toch chotam*, the “seal within the [first] seal.”

We find this concept in the *Gemara*,¹³⁴ that normally one is not allowed to send certain foods with a non-Jew even if the foods are sealed, but if they are sealed within another seal, it is permissible. The *Arizal* borrows this concept with regards to *Hoshanah Rabbah*, that on *Hoshana Rabbah*, the decree is sealed within the first original seal of Yom Kippur.

There are many deep explanations of this concept, but we will use one approach to explain it.

Chazal say that “the seal of Hashem is truth.”¹³⁵ *Chazal* elsewhere say that there is a special merit to a judge who gives a truthful judgment; this is called “*emes l'amito*”, complete truth.¹³⁶ Many of the commentaries discuss what the difference between “truth” (*emes*) and “complete truth” (*emes l'amitah*) is. If something is already the truth, then how can there be such a thing as a complete truth? And if only the complete truth is the truth, then how can the ordinary level of truth be called truth at all?

Along the lines of our discussion, the answer is as follows: the original signature of Yom Kippur is the truth, while the signature within that, which takes place on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, is called “the complete truth.” The two signatures complement each other [and thus they are not a contradiction. Soon this will be explained].

Spiritual Light Needs A Container To Maintain It

In order to understand this, we will need to reflect into the concepts of *ohr* (spiritual light) and *kli* (container). With the help of Hashem, may we merit to understand it.

In Creation, there are many spiritual lights (*ohros*) and containers (*keilim*) to hold the light. For example, from a superficial viewpoint, the piece of *challah* is a kind of spiritual light, *ohr*, that is contained in a plate, which is the *kli* that holds the *ohr*. The root light of Creation is the Infinite Light of Hashem (the *ohr Ein Sof*), and all of Creation is the root “container” which holds all of this endless light.

Every person, at his beginning stage, needs to find his own private *ohr*, his own light, and then he needs to put it into his own *kli*, container. After that, the *avodah* is to reveal the Infinite Light of Hashem within that container.

Containing the Infinite Light of Hashem is different than the first kind of container; the Infinite Light cannot go into a private kind of container, but rather a container that represents the collective whole of Creation.

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133 *Shaar HaKavanos: Derushei Chag HaSuccos: Derush 6*

134 *Avodah Zarah 39a*

135 *Shabbos 55a*

136 *Shabbos 10a*

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In order to receive such a “container”, man has to come to the recognition that all of Creation are really one. The only thing that splits us apart are the many desires of mankind, our *retzonos*. So in order to see Creation as all one unit, man has to nullify his *retzonos*. If a person succeeds at that, he will be able to see how there are not “many” people in Creation, which reflects disparity, but rather, that all of Creation is one unit.

Reaching The Collective “I”

The way to nullify our *retzonos* is through removing the five “garments” of the soul [which was discussed in the previous chapter]. Here many people arrive at a concept which they find entirely new.

People think that one has to first find his true self and reveal it, and that this means finding your unique strengths which no one else has; to find your specialness and uniqueness, etc. But the Infinite Light of Hashem will not enter a person if he has this perspective. Each person is unique in his five soul garments, and in order to receive the Infinite Light of Hashem, these garments need to be removed. Therefore, a person must learn how to avoid thinking about his specialness, uniqueness, and etc.

This is because, from the deeper perspective of reality, *havayah*, we are all one, and no one is “unique” and apart from others. If a person wants to reach *havayah* and he is still searching to find his true self, it’s like trying to touch the sun by touching the rays entering through the window. In order to reach *havayah*, a person must come to the realization that he has no private existence of his own. From the viewpoint of our soul’s garments, it appears that there is disparity in Creation, but from the viewpoint of *havayah*, there is no separateness whatsoever in Creation.

When a person removes his soul garments, beginning from improving his actions (then speech, thought and emotion) and then he finally removes his innermost garment – his *ratzon*/will – he will come to receive a new kind of container: one that represents the collective whole of Creation.

In the first stage, when a person is working with his soul’s garments to remove them, he needs to form a “container” for himself which enables him to find his true self. He cannot enter the perspective of *havayah* yet, because he is still found within a perspective disparity, because he is searching to find his private self. After he bypasses all the garments - by removing them - he has nullified the garments, and now he can be a container that represents the collective whole of Creation [as opposed to a ‘private’ container]. He can now enter *havayah*.

When a person gets past all the soul garments, he comes to discover his true self, but what he will discover is that his “I” is not a private kind of existence, but rather, that his “I” is part of a collective whole. He will then be able to hold the Infinite Light of Hashem, for he now has the “container” that can hold that which is collective.

It is reminiscent of the statement in *Chazal*, “It is a way of a man to go after a woman [in marriage]”¹³⁷ – in other words, the spiritual light is drawn towards its container.

The Four Stages of Revelation

However, the revelation of Hashem’s light in a person doesn’t come to every person. To illustrate, it is man’s nature to seek the woman for marriage, but not if she is already married. As long as a person is still found within his private “I”, it is as if he is already “married” to another entity, and the spiritual light will not be drawn towards him.

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But when a person reveals his “I” as being part of a collective whole, he has negated his private self, and he has emptied out his ego in order to make space in himself to receive the Infinite Light of Hashem (the light of the *Ein Sof*). That is his new “spouse”.

Emptying oneself of his private “I” will enable one to become a container that can hold the all-inclusive light of Hashem. He will realize that any spirituality that he sought for his own private motives feels to him like dirty clothing, unsuitable for a prince to wear, now that he has unified his once “private” soul with “collective” soul, with the Creator.

So the steps of one’s *avodah* are as follows. The first stage is for one to reveal his true self, which is by nullifying the five garments of the soul (action, then speech, then thought, then emotion, and then the will)¹³⁸. After that, a person reveals his true “I”, and what he discovers is that the real “I” is not his ego, but rather, that he has no private self of his own anymore [he has transcended the ego]. He is now a container to receive the Infinite Light of Hashem; he has emptied himself of any previous spiritual light, which were all narrowed to his egoistic concerns. Now that he has been emptied, he is a container that can receive the Infinite Light.

Naturally, a person will imagine that he can receive the Infinite Light even if he hasn’t yet transcended the ego; but any attempts to get there will prove futile. Hashem says, “I am I who I am, and there is no God besides me.” This is not the regular kind of “I” which we understand; it is not a private kind of “I.” When Hashem says “I”, it is referring to the collective “I”, and not to the private “I” – and He is saying that there is no other “I” besides for “I”, the “I” of Hashem – the collective “I.”

A person who wishes to receive the light of the *Ein Sof* will naturally be afraid to let go of his ego. He is thinking, “What will happen to me if I do this? Will I lose my identity when I nullify myself??” This is because he does not identify himself beyond his five soul garments, so of course, he considers this to be a loss of his identity. He’ll be prepared to forego his soul garments as long as he thinks he’ll receive a new identity in its place, but he is not prepared to give his identity if he knows that he is not getting back a new identity in return, so he won’t be willing to do it.

Meriting The Coming Of Moshiach

It is written, “Behold, days are coming, so says my Master, Hashem; when I will throw away all hunger from the land, when there will be no hunger for bread and no thirst for water, nothing except to hear the word of Hashem.” Is the prophet saying that there will come a time in the future when there will be no more physical hunger and thirst? No. The prophet is talking about something spiritual – that in the future, people will not be concerned with their own spiritual “bread” and “water”, but instead people will want to hear the “word of Hashem” of the true reality, a dimension beyond any egoistic motivations.

When a person nullifies his soul garments, he will find that he desires a revelation of G-dliness upon the entire world, that it should fill every heart. This is the power to transcend our private “I” and enter into the collective. *Chazal* say that “The son of David [a title for *Moshiach*] will not come until all coins (peratiyos) have been emptied from the wallet.”

¹³⁸ Editor’s Note: In the previous chapter, it was explained that the way to nullify the actions is by accepting upon oneself to better his actions. The way to nullify speech is by speaking with Hashem. The way to nullify thought is, for example, by refraining from Torah thoughts during davening. The way to nullify the emotions is by gaining control of our emotions (refer to *Getting To Know Your Feelings* [Chapter 16] of the author). The way to nullify the will is through getting rid of our various desires (for more specific guidance on how to do this, refer to the author’s *Getting To Know Your Self and Getting To Know Your Soul*, and *Bilvavi Miskan Evneh, Part Four: Chapters 15-22*). Refer also to the author’s recent series on the topic of “hisbodedus” (meditation): *Getting To Know Your Individuality*, Chapters 10 and onward). Also refer to the author’s *Da Es Yichudecha (Getting To Know Your Inner World, Chapters 7-10)*.

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There is a well-known Chassidic explanation of this matter, heard from Eliyahu HaNavi, which understands the word “*peratiyos*” not in the simple context, which is “coins”, but rather as *peratiyos*, our “private” lives. In other words, *Moshiach* cannot come as long as there are people who only worry for their own selves. As long as there are people who only care about themselves and not about others, the great spiritual light of *Moshiach* will not be able to enter the world, because there is not yet a container that is fitting to hold it.

When a person’s “container” is too small, it cannot hold the great Infinite Light of Hashem. But when a person nullifies his private “I”, he becomes a container to hold the collective “I”, and then the Infinite Light can rest upon his container.

The Revelation of Moshiach

Thus, the *avodah* of a person is first to nullify the self and identify himself as part of the collective “I”, which can hold the light of the *Ein Sof*, and after that, to reveal the perspective of *havayah*.

On a deeper note, either of these stages cannot exist without each other; they must co-exist at the same time, or else they do not start. When the first stage is missing the second stage, then the first stage is still being done out of egoistic concerns. And although *havayah* exists, without revealing the true self, the understanding of *havayah* cannot shine.

Therefore, the correct approach is for one to remove himself from all movements, and then *havayah* is revealed as a direct result. When the movements are removed – and the root of all movement is *ratzon*/will – the reality of *havayah* becomes revealed.

Many people do not get to their spiritual goals because they cannot identify themselves beyond their movements and soul garments. They aren’t aware of *havayah*, that there is a deeper layer of reality and existence that goes beyond their soul garments.

There are people who want to return every Jew to *teshuvah*, but they are trapped in their limited perspective of how they view themselves. Although it’s called “The *Baal Teshuvah* movement”, it is missing the awareness to *havayah*, and it is instead is focused on causing a spiritual “movement”. The *Baal Teshuvah* does not reveal *havayah*, because it is all about creating a movement, and this itself is a degree of disparity. The goal which we need to have is one goal alone, one *havayah*. It is not about causing any movement, not in the personal sense and not in the communal sense.

We can now understand a statement of the Baal HaTanya, in the name of *Tikkunei HaZohar*¹³⁹: “If there will be any *tzaddik* who succeeds in returning another Jew to complete repentance, *Moshiach* would immediately come.” There are explanations given to this matter, but along the lines of our discussion, it is as follows. If there is anyone in the world who arrives at an absolute understanding of *havayah*, that understanding would shine so strongly that the entire world would feel it, and then the world will be instantly ready for *Moshiach*. Throughout the generations, there were always righteous individuals who reached *havayah* – as much as they tried to reach it. There was never yet anyone who reached it absolutely. Therefore, no *tzaddik* until now has been able to influence the entire world.

The one *tzaddik* who will be able to do is *Moshiach*, and he is the only one who will bring everyone back to *teshuvah*. But it will not be done in the simple sense like we understand, that all Jews will become observant again of Torah and *mitzvos*. The return to keeping all the *mitzvos* will become self-understood; people will realize it on their own.

What *Moshiach* will do is to return everyone to the viewpoint of *havayah*. This will give people a true self-recognition, that people will see that there is more to who they are than their various movements. No one will think of sinning, as a

¹³⁹ *Maamarei Admor HaZakein HaKetzarim*, p.403; *Tikkunei Zohar HaChadash: Noach: 145 with Peirush HaSulam*.

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direct result. This is what it means that *Moshiach* will return everyone to *teshuvah* - it will be an inner kind of *teshuvah*, and there will be no *teshuvah* greater than it.

Beyond Choosing

The Sages revealed that if we merit it, *Moshiach* will come even before the prescribed time of his arrival. If we don't have the merit, then he will come at the time that he is destined to come at.¹⁴⁰

The redemption will not come due to our *bechirah*/free will. When *Moshiach* comes, he will then get everyone to do *teshuvah* [whereupon it will be coming from our free will to choose the correct decisions]. If, however, we merit the arrival of *Moshiach* before his destined time, then we will have to choose on our own to do *teshuvah*, and *Moshiach* will not have to return us, because we will already be returned by the time he comes. But if we don't merit the early arrival of *Moshiach*, then it will be *Moshiach* who returns us. How?

There are two perceptions – *bechirah*, to choose with our free will, and *yediah*, to “know” clearly the truth without having to choose. As we live right now, *bechirah* is in the forefront, while *yediah* remains in the background. In the future, this will be turned around, and the light of *yediah* will shine and prevail over the understanding of our *bechirah*. Right now, we think that something we gain due to making the right decision is more praiseworthy than something we don't have to struggle to get. That is why we think that whatever we gain through our *bechirah* is more commendable than something which comes directly from Hashem without having to struggle for it, which is *yediah*.

The *sefarim hakedoshim* reveal that *Pesach Sheini* is more prominent than Pesach itself, because the *Pesach Sheini* was brought by those who were originally exempt from having to bring the *korbon pesach*, due to being ritually contaminated. Although they didn't have to bring the *korbon pesach* in the first place, they still wished to bring it, and therefore they brought the *Pesach Sheini* a month after Pesach. They chose to do so even though they could have walked away exempt. Understandably, those who brought the *Pesach Sheini* seem more virtuous than those who brought the original *korbon Pesach* on Pesach itself, for they were commanded so by the Torah.

This understanding, though, is only due to our current perspective. In the future, we will understand that Pesach itself is more prominent than *Pesach Sheini*, because we will realize that it is more praiseworthy to do Hashem's will than to choose to do so. *Yediah* will be more of a virtue than *bechirah*. It is reminiscent of the concept of *emunah* which great *tzaddikim* had, in which they were willing to serve Hashem as long as they knew they were doing Hashem's will.

This is the truthful level of serving Hashem – when one reaches the understanding that he all wants to do is be connected to Hashem, and as a direct result, he has no desire to deviate in the smallest way from Hashem's will. He doesn't even think of veering from Hashem's will, and he doesn't even want to, because he is totally attached with Hashem.

Furthermore, by a *tzaddik*, doing Hashem's will is his very pleasure in life. All he wants to do is remain and bask in the pleasure of Hashem's light, and he has no interest to descend to this physical world. But Hashem commands us to be on this world, for that is His will. The *tzaddik* does so, submitting himself completely to Hashem's will, because he has *emunah*. He has *emunah* that if Hashem says to do it, I must do it, even though I have no pleasure in this.

This is the real praise of *tzaddikim*: they would rather remain in the spiritual realm and not have to deal with this world at all, but they descend from their pleasure in order to carry out Hashem's will. Moshe Rabbeinu is called “My servant”¹⁴¹, because even though he was totally connected with Hashem, he was willing to descend from his perch and deal with the

¹⁴⁰ *Sanhedrin* 98a

¹⁴¹ *Yehoshua* 1:2

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masses. He gave up his spiritual pleasure of basking with Hashem so that he can carry out Hashem's will and lead the people; that is the epitome of a "servant" of Hashem.

Incorporating The Reality of Hashem Into Life

The perspective of *havayah* [the deeper meaning of reality], is when a person uncovers a deeper part to reality that goes beyond doing the *mitzvos*. The higher and deeper meaning of reality, *havayah*, is all about basking in the reality of Hashem's existence, while the lower layer to reality, *adnus*, is about relating to Hashem as a Master, which requires us to do the *mitzvos*. So far, we have only explained what *adnus* is without *havayah* [when people are doing all the *mitzvos* and they are in touch with the various garments of the soul, but they are not connected to *havayah*].

[Now we will explain the other kind of problem – when there is *havayah* without *adnus*.] There are people who understand these concepts being described here, and they have worked on all of these concepts. They are connected to *havayah* – yet, they don't want to do the *mitzvos*! Such a person is basking in the great spiritual pleasure of *havayah*, but he neglects his aspect of *adnus*.

What a person needs to understand is that although *adnus*/doing the *mitzvos* is a lower plane than *havayah*, and although he is descending from the pleasure of *havayah* when he has to engage in *adnus*, still, this is exactly how he must serve Hashem. Our *avodah* is to integrate *havayah* and *adnus* together; we cannot remain with only our *adnus* and never reach *havayah*, but nor can we neglect *adnus* if we have reached *havayah*.

A gentile doesn't understand that the two must be integrated. You can have a gentile who reaches an inner and spiritual kind of pleasure on this world, but then he wishes to totally disconnect from this world, and he cannot deal with reality on this world. The gentile is enjoying the spirituality so much that he won't give it up for anything.

Chazal say, "Greeting a guest is greater than greeting the *Shechinah*." This we learn from Avraham *Avinu*, who ran to go greet guests, even though Hashem was in middle of visiting him. The question on this is: How could Avraham *Avinu* leave the *Shechinah* and go greet these guests, who appeared to Avraham *Avinu* as lowly Arabs who served the dust of their feet? The *sefarim hakedoshim* answer that this act is precisely what revealed Avraham *Avinu's* exalted level. Avraham *Avinu* was definitely giving up his enjoyment of being with the *Shechinah* to go and greet these guests; he was willing to descend back to the physical and lowly earth and do Hashem's will and give up his great pleasure.

When a person sits in *hisbodedus*, he is surely more attached to Hashem than when he has to deal with the world. It is definitely more pleasurable to bask in closeness with Hashem than to have to go out to the world and do the *mitzvos*. Avraham's greatness was that he was willing to forego his great pleasure of closeness with Hashem, because he had *emunah* that it is Hashem's will to greet the guests.

Doing Hashem's Will Even Though We Don't Understand It

Thus, our *avodah* is to do whatever is required of us to do, for it is Hashem's will, even though we would have much more pleasure if we would simply bask in the knowledge of Hashem's existence all the time. Why does Hashem want it that way? For that, there is no answer. The *sefarim hakedoshim* write, "There is no reason for a *ratzon* (will)."

Even when we want things in our life, we don't know why we want them. A child asks his parents for money. Why does he want the money? So he can buy himself a candy. And why does he want the candy? Because it tastes good. And why does he want it to be tasty? We can keep probing further and further into why we want something, but there comes a certain point where we can't figure out what is causing us to want. We don't know why it is that we want certain things. No reason

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can be given of why we want something. All we know is that if we get what we want, it is somehow good for us, because it will give us some pleasure. But we still don't know what is making us want certain things.

This is the meaning of "There is no meaning for a will." There are some desires we have in which we are of what is rooting them, but there is a root to all our desires which is unknown to us. How much more so does this apply to the *ratzon* of Hashem. Until a certain point, we can know what He wants, but at a certain point, we cannot know what His reason is. We have no comprehension of His root will.

Self-Awareness and Feeling Your Existence

We will now return to discussing how one can come too reach his inner self. It is clear that all people [and even some clever animals] can feel that they exist, and this can be done constantly. The only time that a person stops feeling his existence is if he goes through something stressful or if he's asleep. A person never feels another's existence as much as he feels himself as existing.

Feeling your existence, and being self-aware, are not the same thing. Sometimes a person is entire disconnected from self-awareness, such as if he's heavily involved with something that's noisy, or if he's in a very noisy place and he can't concentrate. There are always times in which we forget that we exist; either it is because a person is involved with others, which is a good reason, or it is because he's self-absorbed in an evil thought, a bad reason.

No matter what the reason is, either way, we all have times in which we forget we exist. However, even in these moments, we can still feel that we exist, even though we have temporarily lost self-awareness. The only issue is whether is aware and attentive to reality or not.

We explained at length that we do not see *havayah* – the depth of reality - but rather sparks of *havayah*. It is therefore possible for a person for many people to look at the same thing yet see it from different perspectives. To illustrate, two people taste the same wine, and one of them says that it's horribly tasting, while another person considers it to be a fine wine. There is nothing in which any two people always see the same thing.

Thus, the perception of reality also depends on each person. Not everyone sees reality in the same way! When a person first hears this concept, this might sound very strange, but that is only because we think we know what reality is. When we begin to understand that whatever we see is only sparks of a deeper reality, and not reality itself, (*havayah*), we can then understand that what we think of as reality really depends on each person's particular mental capacity.

To illustrate what we mean, if a person would lose his sense of taste, he would feel as if he has lost a part of himself. His "I" is a spark of reality, and thus when he loses part of his "I", he feels that his entire reality has undergone a major change. Similarly, the *Gemara* says that a blind person is considered like a dead person.¹⁴² This is because he has lost a certain part of his individuality if he cannot see. Of course, he knows that he hasn't lost his entire "I", even though he has never seen his "I" in the first place.

The truth is that now that he has become blind, he has a much greater chance of revealing his true self. But as far as the outer layers of his "I" goes, he has definitely lost a part of his "I".

Chazal state that sleep is a sixtieth of death¹⁴³; closing the eyes is a partial nullification of the "I", and this is true even when a person isn't actually asleep.

¹⁴² *Nedarim* 64b

¹⁴³ *Berachos* 57b

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Reaching The Non-Ego State: Beginning With The "Yechidah" Level of The Soul

In the writings of the *Arizal*, it is brought that man [his soul] is comprised of five parts [beginning from highest to lowest]: *Yechidah*, *Chayah*, *Neshamah*, *Ruach*, and *Nefesh*. Below that are three layers [thought, speech and action], and below that is the physical body. When a person merits to reach his non-ego state and he identifies himself as part of a collective whole, he can only get there through accessing the deepest part of the soul, the "*Yechidah*."

The lower levels of the soul cannot be used to get there, and therefore, *Moshiach* has not yet come. *Moshiach* can only come if there will be a *tzaddik* who reaches the non-ego state through all five layers of the soul – *Yechidah*, *Chayah*, *Neshamah*, *Ruach* and *Nefesh*; as well as the rest of the self, all the way down until the body. Even if a person reaches the collective *Yechidah*, if his body is still used only for his private purposes, he lives a contradiction. Just as the body and soul are opposites and they contradict each other, so does the private use of the body contradict the collective use of the soul.

In the current state of affairs, the *Yechidah* in each Jew is sustained from the one *tzaddik* in the generation who has reached the collective *Yechidah*. This *tzaddik* is affected in his entire being by the revelation of *Yechidah*, whereas the rest of the generation enjoys the rays of his *Yechidah*, but unlike that special *tzaddik*, they cannot enjoy it to its full extent, and therefore it doesn't affect every layer of their existence.

Not only that, but the *tzaddik* as well is somewhat harmed by the rest of the world's impurity, so his outer layers aren't as purified as his *Yechidah*. As for the rest of the world, their outer layers of their self are totally unaffected by the *Yechidah* of the *tzaddik*; [only their *Yechidah* is being sustained by the *Yechidah* of the *tzaddik*]. This is because most people never come into contact with their own *Yechidah*, and not as well with their own *Chayah* and *Neshamah*; in fact, even the *Ruach* is never reached by most people!

When most people come into contact with any spirituality, it remains outside of them, like a surrounding light, but it usually doesn't get absorbed into the person. Therefore, even if a person reaches his non-ego state, the rest of his lower layers still feel ego-oriented, because the lower layers of a person's existence aren't able to have the perception of the *Yechidah*. So the *avodah* of a person is as follows.

First, a person should reveal his *Yechidah*. He should reach the point in which he feels himself as part of a collective whole, rather than as a private kind of existence [as explained previously in this chapter]. After that he can shine the light of that understanding onto the rest of his soul layers.

What we can notice from this is the following deep insight. It is impossible for a person to totally negate his sense of ego, because if he would, he wouldn't be aware of the self at all, and he wouldn't be able to begin becoming a part of the collective whole. When a person is working on himself to reach the collective state and leave his private state, there is obviously some attention being given to his private state, or else he would be perfect and there would be nothing to work with. So obviously, the collective aspect and the private aspect of a person must ultimately work together.

In summary: Man initially starts out by recognizing his private existence, and then he can transcend it by realizing that he is a part of a collective existence. If he gets to that point, he realizes that there is a higher part of himself that has reached a non-ego state, but there are still lower parts of himself which haven't gotten there yet. Then his *avodah* is to shine the light of that understanding upon the rest of his private existence.

The Five Parts of The Soul Are All One Unit

We will explain this now with even more clarity.

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We need to define the concept that the soul has “five parts.” Don’t think that this is like a machine that has five gears going on inside of it. The soul is one complete unit, and its five layers are to be viewed as five levels of **perception**, towards the same thing.

To illustrate, the *halachah* is that when a person is informed that his father has died, he must say “*Baruch Dayan Emes.*” Yet, if he will inherit his father, he is also required to make the blessing of *Shehechyanu*. If he will split the inheritance with other brothers, he makes a blessing of *HaTov V’Hamaitiv*.¹⁴⁴ How are we to understand this irony? At the very moment that a person must express profound sadness over his father’s death, he must also express a degree of joy over the fact that now he has inherited his father? How can our soul stand this contradiction?!

The answer is: There are different layers going on in the soul, and these “layers” are essentially different viewpoints on the same situation. The inner layers of the soul are less concerned about the ego and what it will gain, and it is the inner layers of the soul which express mourning over a deceased father. The outer layers of the soul, though, are thinking about the money, because the outer layers are ego-oriented. Because there is a part of his existence that is experiencing some joy, he must recite a blessing.

From this we can see the concept, that there can be one reality which is perceived through different viewpoints.

So if the *Yechidah* would be another “part” in the soul and it needs to be shined onto the other four lower “parts” of the soul, then it would mean that we have only have four parts to the soul, because the *Yechidah* nullifies itself to the Infinite Light, leaving us with the remaining four parts of the soul. But that is not the understanding, as we explained. The soul is one entity, and for this reason, the *Yechidah* is somewhat affected by the rest of the lower soul layers which haven’t been purified yet, which hampers the *Yechidah* from nullifying itself to the Infinite Light.

Only in the future, when the world receives its rectification, will all the layers in our soul connect to our *Yechidah*. Then, all of Creation will become integrated with the Creator, and the absolute unity will be achieved.

Simchas Torah: Integrating Your “I” With Hashem

The purpose of Creation is essentially that we all reach an absolute unity with the Creator. This is the reason why *Shemini Atzeres* comes after all the spiritual light and containers we have gotten from *Rosh HaShanah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Succos*, and *Hoshanah Rabbah*. In *Eretz Yisrael*, *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* are on the same day.

The depth behind this is because the essence of *Simchas Torah* is that a person forgets about his private existence. He takes his mind off the fact that he exists. [Therefore, it comes after all that we have built from *Rosh HaShanah* through *Hoshanah Rabbah*, so that we can now take our “I” and nullify it to Hashem]. “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”; all of us are rooted in the Torah, because we were all hewn from there. On *Simchas Torah*, the depth of the joy is that on this day we can return our entire sense of existence to the original state of Before Creation, in which “I” did not exist at all.

Thus, *Simchas Torah* is not merely a joy upon the fact that *learn* Torah; nor is it a joy upon the fact that we have *received* the Torah [that would be *Shavuot*]. It is a joy upon the fact that we have *finished* the Torah – and what does it mean to

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finish the Torah? It does not merely mean that someone finished the Torah from reading *Parshas Beraishis* until the end. It means that a person returns his existence to the Torah, that he identifies his point of origin in the *Torah*, from which he was indeed created from.

Everything was created from the Torah, and thus it is our *avodah* to return ourselves and to trace all of existence to the Torah. It is upon us to take our entire existence and return it to its root – the Torah that we are all created from. That is how we “finish” the Torah – by returning our existence to the Torah, we “complete” the Torah.

The Torah begins with the letter *beis* and ends with the letter *lamed*, which forms the word *lev*, “heart.” This hints to us that the Torah is the heart of our existence. Just like the rest of the body is sustained by the heart and looks to the heart for support, so does our entire existence look to the Torah as the heart that sustains us.

10 | Lulav In Our Heart ¹⁴⁵

The Torah Is Eternal, And Its Lessons Are Eternal

The *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* ¹⁴⁶ teaches a fundamental concept that, since the Torah is eternal its lessons are always applicable to every generation, no matter the time or place. The lessons of the Torah apply to all of us, and our job is to

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learn how to apply its wisdom to our own situations. Based upon this, let us explore the various laws of the *lulav* brought in the *Mishnah* in Tractate *Sukkah*¹⁴⁷.

A "Stolen Lulav"

In the *Mishnah* which explains the laws of *lulav*, the first *halachah* taught in the *Mishnah* is that a stolen *lulav* is disqualified for use of the *mitzvah*.

Upon face value, this teaches that a person does not fulfill the *mitzvah* of *lulav* with a stolen *lulav*. But there is a deeper meaning which can be uncovered through understanding the "*pnimiyus*" (inner world) behind the *lulav*.

The Zohar¹⁴⁸ teaches that *lulav* comes from a combination of the words "*lo*" ("to him") and "*lev*" ("heart"), to show that "one's heart [his spiritual heart] must be in his jurisdiction." In other words, a person needs to be in control of his own heart.¹⁴⁹ In other words, a person's heart should not be swayed by the hearts of others, especially in relation to our way of serving Hashem. Our service of Hashem has to come from within us, an expression of our own individuality, and we should not 'steal' our *Avodas Hashem* from others.

Thus, on an inner level, a stolen *lulav* refers to "a stolen heart." Any service of Hashem that is not a true representation of our own individual selves is considered "disqualified," just like a stolen *lulav* is disqualified, for the heart of a person [which we need to use in our service to Hashem] should be our own and not "stolen."

Copying Another Person's Avodas Hashem

There is a custom to shake the *lulav* in all four directions. But one needs to inspect himself: When shaking the *lulav* in all four directions, is he acting from within himself, or he is merely copying the way other people are doing it?

Once there was a *tzaddik* who would *daven* as a *baal tefillah* at the *Kosel*. At particular points in his *davening*, he would move a certain way. After this *baal tefillah* passed away, someone else took over his role and led the *davening*. The new *baal tefillah* copied the *tzaddik's* same movements at the particular points in the service. However, a *gadol* who regularly *davened* at this *minyán* stopped doing so when he noticed that the new *baal tefillah* was copying the *tzaddik's* movements.

This story teaches us that a person should not copy how another person serves Hashem. When we shake the *lulav*, we should not merely be copying another person's movements. Rather, our performance of the *mitzvah* should be our own act of self-expression. Does our shaking really reflect our own, unique soul – or are we just mimicking others?

Consider a five-year-old child who comes to *shul* and does not know how to *daven*. He may watch others and imitate their body movements. He stands when everyone stands, he sits when everyone sits. He covers his eyes when they cover their eyes. This mimicry resembles a stolen *lulav*. It's a stolen heart! If a person's *Avodas Hashem* is merely a reflection of others rather than personal and heartfelt, it is as if he is acting like a monkey who copies other people. Though his body may be moving, his heart and soul are not. Thus, his actions are not true.

Copying Is Really Stealing

¹⁴⁷ *Mishnayos Sukkah, 3:1 (Talmud Bavli Sukkah 29b)*

¹⁴⁸ *Zohar I: 267b; Zohar II: 271a*

¹⁴⁹ *Beraishis Rabbah 34: 10*

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Imagine one man walking quickly down the road. A second man notices this man's pace and also quickens his pace. He catches up to the first man, walking alongside him until the first man reaches his house, walks inside, and shuts the door. The second man is left standing on the street. He cannot follow the other man all the way into his own, private house.

When we shake *lulav*, the fundamental question is whether we are doing this *mitzvah* from an inner, personal place in ourselves, or are we just copying the external motions of everyone else? If so, eventually our imitation catches up with us and becomes worthless.

During the year, we often subconsciously copy other people's movements or body language. We may presume this is acceptable since we are not copying anything negative. However, upon reflection, one may realize that copying another person in any way is a form of stealing. And more importantly, it does not represent one's personal *Avodas Hashem*. When we serve Hashem, we have to give Hashem a service that came from us, not something that was copied from others. Thus, our service, such as waving the *lulav*, has to originate from our own individual soul. Otherwise, it resembles a stolen *lulav*, which is invalid for use.

A "Dry Lulav"

The next law of the *Mishnah*¹⁵⁰ relating to *lulav* is that "a dry *lulav* is disqualified" for the *mitzvah*. The commentaries discuss the meaning of the term "dry." However, on a deeper level, as we explored above, we can also learn the implications of a "dry *lulav*" for our souls in our *Avodas Hashem*.

Shaking the *lulav* is a way to give praise to Hashem. A person praises the Creator for giving him the *mitzvah* of the four species. The *Talmud Yerushalmi*¹⁵¹ states that a dry *lulav* is invalid because it is written, "*The dead do not praise Hashem.*"¹⁵² In other words, a dry *lulav* is considered to be like a dead *lulav*. "*The dead do not praise Hashem,*" as opposed to the living who do praise Hashem.

On Yom Tov, there is a *mitzvah* to rejoice. "*And you shall rejoice before Hashem your G-d.*"¹⁵³ Although this verse describes the joy standing in the *Beis Hamikdash*, this requirement of *simchah* applies to all of the *mitzvos*. All of the *mitzvos* need to be done with joy. A person is required to hold the four species when he recites *Hallel* and then shake them when he recites *Hodu L'Hashem Ki Tov*¹⁵⁴; one can certainly shake them already beforehand, upon making the *berachah* over the *lulav*¹⁵⁵, but the main time to shake the *lulav* is by *Hallel*,¹⁵⁶ since the main aspect of the *mitzvah* of the four species is to praise Hashem with them. When we experience true, authentic joy when performing this *mitzvah* from deep in our hearts, this gives us the life which in turn enables us to praise Hashem with feeling – in contrast to the verse, "*the dead do not praise Hashem.*"

Acting By Rote

When a person shakes the *lulav* as he says the words "*Hodu LaHashem, Ki Tov,*" he can ask himself whether he truly feels gratitude to Hashem. If he does, his *lulav* is "alive" and it's "valid" for the *mitzvah*.

¹⁵⁰ *Mishnayos Sukkah 3:1*

¹⁵¹ *Yerushalmi Sukkah 12b*

¹⁵² *Tehillim 115: 17*

¹⁵³ *Devarim 12: 18*

¹⁵⁴ *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim: 651: 8*

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*

¹⁵⁶ *Sukkah 37b.*

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However, if he is just saying the words without concentration and meaning, it is like: “*With his mouth and lips he honors Me, but his heart is far from me, and their fear toward me is like commandments learned by rote.*”¹⁵⁷ Such a person is [considered] among “the dead” who do not praise Hashem! It is one thing to utter the words of *Hallel*, but the question is whether one really feels a vitality in saying them? This is the ultimate question that sums up a person’s *mitzvah* performance and *Avodas Hashem*.

Consider a person salivating over a delicious piece of food. When he then eats this food, he feels a vitality and enjoyment. He’s not just chewing the food, he’s enjoying the experience.

A person should also experience the same vitality (*chiyus*) and enjoyment from shaking *lulav* during *Hallel*. Is he merely going through the motions, or is he feeling vitality from those movements? Is he doing it with *chiyus*? If he does not feel a *chiyus* as he shakes *lulav*, he is like a “dry *lulav*.” His *lulav* might be technically kosher for use of the *mitzvah*, but his absence of *chiyus* means his performance is essentially dead, and “*the dead do not praise Hashem.*”

The level of dryness of the *lulav* is an analogy for the level of “dryness” of a person’s performance of this *mitzvah*. The performance of shaking the *lulav* has to be done with spirit, with life, with *chiyus* inside – otherwise, it is “invalid” for the *mitzvah*.

The *Gemara*¹⁵⁸ teaches that in Jerusalem it used to be common for people to leave their house holding the *lulav*, take it with them to *shul*, hold it while reciting *Shema* and *Shemoneh Esrei* and while visiting the sick or comforting the mourners. When he came to the *beis midrash* to learn, he would let his son or servant hold the *lulav* for him.” Anyone who took the *lulav* with him wherever he went obviously derived *chiyus* from the *mitzvah* of *lulav*. A person does not deliberately carry around a sack of stones wherever they go because the stones do not provide him with any *chiyus*. Analogously, shaking the *lulav* only has meaning when one is performing the *mitzvah* with *chiyus*.

A Lulav Used For “Idol Worship”

The Mishnah¹⁵⁹ also teaches that a “*lulav of Asheirah* (a kind of idol worship) is disqualified for use of the *mitzvah*.” What does this mean on an inner, deeper dimension?

As we brought from the Zohar, the word “*lulav*” comes from the words “*lo*” (to him) and “*lev*” (his heart), in other words, the heart of a person has to be “his.” This applies not only to avoiding copying others, but to the extent to which our words are heartfelt. Our words and speech have to reflect our hearts.

For instance, when one *davens* in *Shemoneh Esrei* for a person who is sick, *rachmana litzlan*, he generally has a lot of *kavannah* (concentration) when he *davens* the prayer of “*Refoeinu*” (Heal us). His words are heartfelt and represent his deep and honest desires for healing. In contrast, many of us may *daven* the blessing of “*Hoshiva Shofteinu*” (Return our Judges), without truly desiring, deep in our hearts, that Hashem will return our judges to us.

How does this apply to idol worship?

The *Gemara* says, “A person should not hire himself for idol worship purposes, and he should not come to need people. What is idol worship? Anything which is strange to him.”¹⁶⁰ The *Gemara* gives the example of someone who had a prestigious job, such as a doctor, and now he needs money. It teaches that the person should not take the job of cleaning the

157 *Yeshayahu* 29: 13

158 *Sukkah* 41b

159 *Sukkos* 32b

160 *Bava Basra* 110a

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streets to make money. Such a job would be like *avodah zarah* for this person, like idol worship, because he's doing something that's "strange" (*zarah*) for him to do. However the *Gemara* does qualify this by saying that he is permitted to take a job that's beneath his dignity rather than become a beggar.

When a person does something that is not truly appropriate for him, his heart deep down is cringing. His actions contradict what his soul truly wants, and thus he suffers inside.

Are our hearts happy or are they cringing because the shaking of the *lulav* feels like a strange practice to us? On the surface, our deeds appear to be serving Hashem. But the question is whether our actions represent the true desires of our heart? Are our hearts filled with thoughts of holiness, with yearnings for Hashem and for His Torah and *mitzvos*? Or are our hearts, *chas v'shalom*, so materialistic and affected by all kinds of negative influences that they remain distant, recoiling from our holy actions?

In order for our *mitzvah* of *lulav* to be "valid," we must shake it with sincerity. By shaking the *lulav* with our whole heart, our *avodah* is valid and acceptable to Hashem. In contrast, if we have desires for strange things, then when we shake the *lulav*, it resembles a *lulav* used for idol worship. The shaking of the *lulav* becomes invalid and causes spiritual harm in the process. As he shakes the *lulav*, instead of sanctifying himself through the *mitzvah*, the contradiction between his actions and his heart's desire causes him to sink lower into the impurity of his evil desires, *Heaven forbid*.

An Adult With A Childish Heart

When a person has strange desires in his heart that are contrary to *Avodas Hashem*, shaking *lulav* can endanger himself and cause Heaven to examine his deeds.

The Torah teaches us that "*the inclination of a man is evil from his youth.*"¹⁶¹ When a person matures, does his heart change too? Does his head control his heart or vice versa? Has he begun to move towards "the righteous, whose hearts are in their control, in contrast to the wicked, who are controlled by their hearts?"¹⁶²

Consider a father who gives a treat to a child on the condition that he says "thank you." The child, of course, says "thank you" but without any true feeling of gratitude. In actuality, all he wants is the treat. Aware of the emptiness of the words, the father does not value the "thank you." However, since he is a child, the father hopes that he will mature one day to the point where his gratitude is genuine.

Yet, adults may be guilty of the same issue. Though mature on the outside, some people's internal *ruchniyus* has not matured and instead remains stunted. In order to grow, these people must continue to practice their external *avodah* but also have the desire to mature. If a person fails to work on increasing the genuineness of his internal *ruchniyus*, then shaking the *lulav* will awaken Heaven to judge him.

If the heart of a person truly desires things other than *Avodas Hashem*, the heart is getting *chiyus* from those other things instead of holiness. Such a heart resembles a *lulav* used for idol worship, and it cannot get *chiyus* from the *lulav*.

"How Is It Going...?"

A person's words reveal his life's orientation.

¹⁶¹ Bereishis 8:21

¹⁶² Bereishis Rabbah, 34: 10

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For instance, consider a common scenario these days. A person who meets his friend in the street and asks him, “So, how’s it going?” Presuming he is referring to his financial situation, his friend answers, “Oh, *Baruch Hashem*; I’m making it.” He never even entertains the thought that maybe he is being asked about his spiritual situation, that is, how his *Avodas Hashem* is going. His answer reveals his values and focus in life which is on livelihood, making money, paying his debts, and materialism.

In contrast, if he was not worshipping money, and instead was practicing and obtaining *chiyus* from pure *Avodas Hashem*, he would have interpreted his friend’s question differently. Being focused on *Avodas Hashem* himself, he would have presumed his friend was also referring to that subject, Thus, he likely would have told his friend about his successes and his failures in his *Avodas Hashem*.

Let’s explore another example. Consider a person with a sick child who *Baruch Hashem* subsequently recovers. If he was asked “What’s new?” he is likely to think immediately of his child’s health because that is the issue foremost on his mind. Thus, he answers about his child’s health. However, if his primary focus is not on his *Avodas Hashem*, then he is unlikely to answer his friend by describing his spiritual struggles and achievements.

Consider a third example revealing a person’s true orientation. One friend may ask another “So, how was your Yom Tov?” His friend may respond: “I went on this trip and that trip. I visited my parents and my in-laws, etc.” His answer reveals his true focus of the *chag*. In failing to interpret the question as an inquiry about his spiritual experience or his fulfilment of the *mitzvah* of rejoicing on Yom Tov, this person reveals his [personal] *avodah zarah*, that he worships his family and travels more than Hashem.

This is not a condemnation of such visits and trips during *Chol HaMoed*. Rather, it is to reveal his primary focus and priority in life. Is a person living his life for *Avodas Hashem*? In the depths of a person’s heart, does he really value *Avodas Hashem*? Is this his priority or not?

A person sees what he wants to see and a person hears his heart’s desires. A person’s answer to such general questions about their welfare reveals their true focus, values and priorities. In other words, where their *ratzon*, their desire, is strongest. By interpreting these questions as referring to their children, their work, their finances, their family etc., they reveal that these are their true “*avodah*,” an *avodah* that is strange to Hashem. In contrast, someone whose heart and mind is constantly and primarily focused on Hashem would interpret such general questions about their welfare as referring to their spiritual welfare.

In summary, since *lulav* is a combination of the words *lo* (his) and *lev* (heart.), then performing the *mitzvah* of *lulav* reveals our true heart’s desires. In order to serve Hashem properly, a person’s heart has to be primarily focused on his *Avodas Hashem*. Valuing other things above *Avodas Hashem* constitutes “idol worship” on an inner level, and “invalidates” his *lulav* shaking.

Lulav From A “Condemned City”

The *Mishnah*¹⁶³ then teaches that a *lulav* from an “*ir nidachas*” (a city condemned to be burned, due to a majority population of idol worshippers) is invalid for use of the *mitzvah*. In contrast to the previous *halachah* discussed above regarding a *lulav* of *Asheirah*/idol worship, this *halachah* refers to the public (as opposed to the individual).

Let’s consider a modern-day, practical example demonstrating public idol worship. Imagine a newspaper headline which reads “People are working hard.” Most people would interpret this statement as referring to physical and financial work. It

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is highly unlikely that many people would interpret this “hard work” as work of *Avodas Hashem*. Such a presumption serves to expose a mainstream focus on materialism and physical “work,” rather than a spiritual “work” of *Avodas Hashem*.

Our Physical Heart And Our Spiritual Heart

Let’s consider another hypothetical, contemporary scenario which reveals the Jewish mainstream’s current position. If a person were to ask another “Is your heart okay?” most people would presume that this question concerned their physical health and would answer “*Baruch Hashem*, I don’t get heart attacks, my heart is fine.”

However, a general reference to our “heart” could also refer to our spirituality, our *Avodas Hashem*. It is taught¹⁶⁴ that the right chamber of our heart houses our *yetzer tov* (good inclination) and the left chamber of our heart houses our *yetzer hora* (evil inclination).¹⁶⁵ Thus, this question about our “heart” could also be an inquiry about the struggles between good and evil taking place in our heart....

Unfortunately, in reality, most people are not inquiring about another’s spiritual level. In fact, it would be rare for a person these days to ask another “How much evil have you managed to expel from your heart recently? How much has your *yetzer tov* overpowered your *yetzer hora*?”

A Lulav With Its Tip Chopped Off

The *Mishnah* teaches that a *lulav* with a severed tip is invalid for use. What is the deeper meaning of a *lulav* with a severed tip? The *halachah* is that the *lulav* has to be shaken in the way it is grown.¹⁶⁶ The *lulav* grows on the date tree with its leaves pointing upwards. Thus one has to shake the *lulav* with its tip pointed upwards. Shaking the *lulav* with its leaves pointing downwards does not fulfil the *mitzvah*. In relation to our inner world, a person has to constantly strive to grow upwards rather than downwards in his *Avodas Hashem*. The *mitzvos* are performed in order to elevate a person. Just like a *lulav* has to be shaken with its tip pointed upwards (“in the way it grows”) in order to be valid, similarly a person’s *Avodas Hashem* must be growing upwards in order for it to be meaningful.

Interestingly, the leaves of a *lulav* grow sharper towards the tip. This natural growth process may also be used as a hint towards our *Avodas Hashem*. Everyone has some growth, but most people reach a certain point where they stop growing. A few rare individuals reach the sharpest, uppermost point. However, despite our current level, we should all be aspiring to reach our maximum potential, our personal best.

Regardless of results, there is a significant difference between those who do and do not aspire to reach the highest level of *Avodas Hashem*. Those who lack the drive and desire to achieve their highest possible level of *Avodas Hashem* (for reasons some of which will be discussed below) resemble a *lulav* with a severed tip.

People with high aspirations are often dubbed by others as “delusional” or “unrealistic.” Admittedly, some people do delude themselves in their *Avodas Hashem* and act unrealistically as a result. However, though we must be authentic about our current level and capabilities, we must always be aware that our purpose in this world is to keep growing in order to perfect ourselves and reach our maximum potential.

164 *Sukkah* 29b

165 *Zohar*, *Terumah* 162b; see *Tanya* chapter 9.

166 *Sukkah* 45b

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A person can always be growing spiritually, like “*a righteous person, who blossoms like a date tree.*”¹⁶⁷ Though we will always experience ups and downs in life (as it is written, “*a righteous person falls seven times and rises*”¹⁶⁸), we should always be striving to move toward a higher point than our current position. One needs to have an ambition to reach the highest level he can reach in *Avodas Hashem* (This does not negate the difficulties involved and that we must *daven* and cry out to Hashem to help us reach it). A *lulav* with a severed tip resembles a person who lacks ambition to reach his maximum potential in *Avodas Hashem*.

We Must Have A Desire [For] Human Perfection

The design and shape of a *lulav's* leaves represents how we must try to reach the pinnacle of growth. They grow higher and sharper until they reach the highest, sharpest point. However, some people are content with only achieving or stagnating at a mediocre level with regard to their *Avodas Hashem*.

The whole purpose of Creation is that people should perfect themselves. Since the Torah teaches us that the purpose of Creation is to perfect ourselves, it must be that it is possible for us to perfect ourselves. Thus, one of the greatest sins is when a person has no aspiration whatsoever for human perfection.

One reason a person may give up or fail to aspire higher is that he may feel broken-hearted if he is not perfect yet. If this is the case, we must remind ourselves that it takes the whole of one's life to reach perfection. Another reason one may fall into this trap of apathy is that one may falsely believe that they are not capable of being a *tzaddik* or that such extensive work is beyond them.

This hope and striving for perfection must always be alive in a person's heart. The lower the aspiration, the lower the achievement. For instance, Reb Yisrael Salanter said about himself “I aspired to become like the Vilna *Gaon*, and therefore I became Reb Yisrael Salanter. If I would have aspired to become Reb Yisrael Salanter, I never would have become who I am today.” In other words, focusing on an even greater level than is actually achievable right now can actually help us reach our own personal best.

By adopting the erroneous belief that it is impossible for one to reach the ultimate perfection, one ices himself up inside spiritually, like an evil force of “*Amalek*” within. This mentality that “It's hard enough just to be on an average level of *Yiddishkeit*” creates a lukewarm, lethargic feeling toward *Yiddishkeit*. Though we must be aware that not everyone can reach the level of a *tzaddik*, adopting the apathetic attitude that “I'll never be a *tzaddik*” interferes with the ambition to strive to perfect ourselves and our world. Such an attitude contradicts the fundamental purpose of Creation.

The Ponovozher Rov *zt"l* once planned to open a yeshiva for intellectually gifted students. However, the Chazon Ish did not agree with his idea because, “every person has to believe that he is an excellent student. If you open up a yeshiva that is exclusively for the best students, you are basically sending a message to boys who aren't in this yeshiva that they are hopeless.”

Aspire For Perfection, Daven For The Results

A fundamental point to bear in mind in our striving for perfection is that we cannot ever achieve any goal through human efforts alone. As the *Mishnah* in *Avos*¹⁶⁹ states, “The task is not upon you to finish, nor are you exempt from it.”

¹⁶⁷ *Tehillim* 92:12

¹⁶⁸ *Mishlei* 24:16

¹⁶⁹ *Avos* 2: 16

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While we must do whatever we can to reach perfection, achievement is a gift from the Creator. Of this, it is written, “*I toiled, (thus) I found.*”¹⁷⁰

We cannot reach perfection by ourselves alone, and thus Hashem does not demand us to be perfect. However, we must aspire for perfection, to try our hardest in order to reach it! After we try our hardest, we should step back and discover whether Hashem considers this to be the right path for us at this time. The Torah teaches us to try our hardest, and then to “find” what is actually best for us. Yet, without trying, a person will definitely never “find.”

Perfection Is Attained In Stages

One should be very clear in our goals for our own *Avodas Hashem*. On the one hand, we need to aspire for the greatest self-perfection. On the other hand, we must not act too much above our current level. It is not delusional to aspire for higher levels – it is crucial.

We never know when or if those aspirations will finally be realized. We have been waiting for this for at least 5770 years, and we still have not reached perfection yet. But in the end we must believe that we will get there.

The *lulav*'s tip represents our faith that we will ultimately reach self-perfection. A *lulav* without a tip represents a person whose inner essence is lacking the drive to even aspire towards self-perfection.

However, self-perfection is attained in gradual, authentic stages. Each time a person reaches his goal, he can shift the bar slightly higher and only then endeavor to reach for this next higher spiritual level. Though the ultimate goal is to perfect himself and his world, he must carry this out one gradual step at a time.

These levels of perfection in *Avodas Hashem* can be compared to the stages and processes of our lives. For instance, when a person is a child, he strives for the perfection represented by his *bar mitzvah*. The next main life's goal may involve the higher aspiration of marriage – a man is like “half a body” until he gets married.

After he gets married, he may aspire to become a father. However, it would be premature and untimely for a child under bar-mitzvah to aspire to get married or be a father.

Similarly, with *Avodas Hashem*, there are different stages in life. One should aspire to achieve the next consecutive goal after an attainment of their current level. A person must repeat this sequential order of achievement until he reaches his personal, greatest perfection, a total *d'veykus* (attachment) with Hashem. All other areas of perfection are only partial perfection in comparison to this highest achievement.

Realistic Aspirations

In life and in *Avodas Hashem* in particular, we have minor goals which are all self-contained. However, each of these goals is cumulative like steps on a staircase, and we must continue to aspire for the complete and ultimate perfection. Consider increments of time. A week is complete in and of itself. However, when our goal becomes a month, then a week becomes an incomplete portion of this goal. Similarly, a month is a complete period of (approximately) four weeks. Yet, one month is but an incomplete portion of a whole year. And each year is only a seventh of *shemittah*, and *shemittah* is only a seventh of *yovel*.

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Aspirations in *Avodas Hashem* are necessary. Yet they must be carried out incrementally. One problem with high aspirations is that those with unrealistic expectations may be presumed to be delusional, mentally unstable or disconnected from the tangible world. How can we avoid this problem? In our quest for spiritual perfection, we need to stay grounded and realistic by being aware of our limits, working gradually and knowing ourselves. A person has a three-fold job. First, a person has to be fully aware of his actual level in *Avodas Hashem*. He needs to be painfully honest with himself as to where he is currently holding on a spiritual level. He should be aware of his Divinely given qualities, as well as weaknesses. He has to have no delusions about his current status and the distance between it and his ultimate potential.

Being thus grounded in reality, a person then has to believe that he is fully endowed to have a relationship with Hashem and serve Him in every moment to the maximum level possible for him to attain. He must do his best to achieve this goal. Finally, a person must have the awareness that only Hashem can bestow on him the gift of perfecting himself, and the acceptance and *emunah* that perfection can only come from Hashem.

The Restrictions Of Believing "I'm Realistic"

We must always be climbing the ladder of growth which is "*footed on the earth, but its head reaches the heavens.*"¹⁷¹ However, by mistakenly believing that high aspirations are delusional, many people slack off from trying to perfect themselves.

Other people may make a grave mistake of failing to achieve their potential due to their lack of awareness that we were created precisely to perfect ourselves. Had Adam not sinned, he would have gone straight into the ultimate Shabbos of Creation, and the greatest perfection of man would have been reached. But since he failed the test, it has been man's job to bring ourselves and the world back to perfection. Though the road is long, Hashem has guaranteed that man will achieve this ultimate goal no later than the year 6,000.

Finally, there are those people who avoid reaching for perfection in themselves because they are painfully aware of their deficiencies. "*A heart knows the bitterness of its soul*"¹⁷². By avoiding to attempt to fulfill their maximum potential, a person is denying the purpose of why we were created. This negative focus encourages them to give up on reaching that perfection. In their despair, they resemble a *lulav* whose tip has been severed. Such people comfort themselves by arguing that "It's enough if we are just settle with who we are. We should just be happy the way we are."¹⁷³

It is true that a happy person is one who is "happy with his lot,"¹⁷⁴ but his contentment refers to someone who really believes with *emunah* that though he is not yet spiritually complete, Hashem has given him all the tools he needs to achieve his maximum potential. He knows he will indeed have everything in the end, and he trusts that Hashem will help him get there.

Ultimately, a *lulav* with its tip intact is represented only by those people who are both simultaneously aware of their current level and yet strive for their greatest spiritual heights because they have *emunah* that Hashem has endowed them with the ability to achieve perfection.

A Lulav With Severed Leaves

¹⁷¹ *Beraishis* 28:12

¹⁷² *Mishlei* 14: 10

¹⁷³ See *Mesillas Yesharim*, chapter 4.

¹⁷⁴ *Avos* 4:1

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There is another *halachah* in the *Mishnah* that a *lulav* with severed leaves is invalid. *Rashi* explains that this refers to a *lulav* where the leaves have become separated from the spine so that there is nothing connecting the leaves to the source. Technically, the leaves could be tied to the spine or may even be able to survive independently without the spine. However, the Gemara learns from this that the Torah requires that the leaves of the *lulav* must obtain their nutrients and energy from the spine, in order for the *lulav* to be deemed valid for the *mitzvah*. What is the deeper meaning behind this *halachah* and how can we apply it to our *Avodas Hashem*?

Are We Connected To Our Mitzvos?

Each of us may perform many admirable *mitzvos*. However, the question is whether they are connected to us? If so, what source is connecting us to these actions? Does a person feel that his *mitzvah* performance is his very life? Or is he just forcing himself to do the *mitzvah* and yet he remains detached from the action?

When we eat, we may feel very connected to our food because we realize we are obtaining vitality from the food. When a woman puts on perfume to go to a wedding, she may feel very connected to her perfume and be energized by it. However, when a person puts on *tefillin*, does he feel connected to this act to the extent that it energizes us? Is *Tefillin* just being worn on us, or is the person wearing the *Tefillin*? If one is just wearing his *Tefillin* as a superficial act, he resembles a *lulav* whose leaves have been severed. Though his actions may be technically perfect and follow the letter of the law, he lacks connection to the *mitzvos* because he is not being energized by them.

Chazal refer to this problem of disconnection as “His wisdom is more than his deeds.”¹⁷⁵ He might have been taught all the *mitzvos* or he has read about the *mitzvos* in the *sefarim*. He may perform the *mitzvos* out of fear to avoid punishment. However, he can never grow from the deeds he is performing because he is not being watered by them.

Performing the *mitzvos* in this way can be compared to a father who cares for his child’s physical needs (feeding him and clothing him and buying him toys) but who does not feel an emotional connection in his heart toward the child. He is missing the natural love and warmth that a father is supposed to have toward his child. Perhaps he gives physical nourishment to the child out of obligation, or fear of punishment for neglect. Naturally, the child feels this lack of love and may grow up stunted as a result. But more relevantly for our analogy, the father too misses out on the connection he could have had with the child, so he does not grow as a father. Thus, the father’s parenting is lacking because it does not include the vital element of emotional attachment and love.

A Lulav With Spread Out Leaves

The *Mishnah* teaches a *halachah* that a *lulav* with leaves that are spread out in different directions is kosher, but it is only considered kosher *b’dieved* (fulfilling the requirement after the fact but not in the optimal way). Though this type of *lulav* is not deemed invalid like the examples above, it is not the ideal, it is not “*mehudar* (aesthetically enhanced).” The leaves of the *lulav* are supposed to all point in one direction. However, when the leaves of the *lulav* are spread out, they are pointing in all directions.

Let’s explore how this can be applied to our soul. There are times when a person is generally heading towards the right direction in life. In general, he is aware of his life’s purpose and he has a good plan for steering himself in the right direction. However, though he starts off with a worthwhile goal and good intentions, as he is actively pursuing this goal he becomes caught up in various distractions which deter him from his ambition.

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For instance, a person is motivated to emulate Hashem who is kind and merciful and so he opens up a *chessed* organization. When he starts the organization, his intentions are pure and his ambitions are real. As the money begins to pour in, he distributes it to the needy. But as the money accumulates, he slowly becomes tempted and begins to wonder “What’s wrong if I make a little profit in the process?”

This hypothetical example is actually quite a common phenomenon. Though many people start *chessed* organizations with completely pure intentions, they ultimately dip into the profits themselves. They may be tempted by unanticipated financial pressures or other factors that distract them from their original *chessed* goal.

“They Seek Many Calculations”

How do we fix this “spread out *lulav*” in ourselves? According to this same *Mishnah*, Rabbi Yehudah says that spread out leaves of a *lulav* should be tied together from the upper part. (We do not practice this in actual *halachah*). Applying this solution to our *Avodas Hashem*, this may be interpreted to mean that a person has to take all his weaknesses, and connect them all together, giving them a united focus.

Though this may be feasible, on occasion one’s weaknesses have “spread out” so much that they cannot be fixed in the regular way. In this case, the only solution is to start over again from scratch. If we start an act with good intentions and have an earnest desire for something worthy, but then find ourselves being distracted from our goal along the way, we must try to return to the original, straight path. We should remind ourselves of where we come from and where we are going. We must try to prevent other interests and temptations swaying us away from our goal.

The spine of the *lulav* is naturally straight. Hashem created us as straight-minded people, as the *possuk* says, “G-d made man upright.”¹⁷⁶ A *lulav* which has grown with its leaves spread out resembles the end of the *possuk*, “And they seek many calculations.” The “many calculations” (*cheshbonos rabim*) in a person are his *negios*, his other personal interests or temptations that sway him from his original, straight path.

Yaakov *Avinu* was able to deal with Lavan the crook and yet stay honest and truthful. However, most of us are not on the level of Yaakov *Avinu*! Thus, we would find it difficult to withstand such temptations and distractions. Being placed in compromising situations, such as in a situation where we feel required to lie (for instance, to the government) presents a danger to our souls. Our souls are pure and straight. Any act that encourages us to deviate from following the path of truth is risky. For instance, apparently the Brisker Rav was against joining the Knesset, not because of the ideological reasons of the Satmar Rebbe, but because he believed that being in the government would negatively affect the purity of his soul.

Lulav Of The Har Habarzel

The *Mishnah* then teaches the *halachah* that the *lulav* which grows on the *Har HaBarzel*¹⁷⁷ is kosher. The *Gemara*¹⁷⁸ clarifies that the validity of this type of *lulav* depends on how the leaves grow. *Lulavim* with the bottom leaf covering the next adjacent leaf are deemed kosher. However, *lulavim* with lower leaves that do not touch the next ones adjacent to them are deemed invalid. Let us explore how this teaching can be applied to our own soul.

The leaves of the spine on the *lulav* may represent a person’s offspring, because leaves grow out from the spine like children are produced from a couple. However, like those *lulavim* of *Har HaBarzel* that have separated leaves, the leaves of

¹⁷⁶ *Kohel* 7: 29

¹⁷⁷ “Iron Mountain”, an area in Eretz Yisrael in which the *lulav* grew in an unusual shape.

¹⁷⁸ *Sukkah* 32a

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the *lulav* do not always stay united with each other. Similarly, a person's children do not always stay connected. Often siblings and family members are spread out all over the world. Families that are disconnected from each other resemble the category of *lulavim* of the *Har HaBarzel* that the *Gemara* deems invalid, due to its separated leaves.

In other words, ideally, everything that emanates from a person is supposed to be connected. This concept also includes our *mitzvos* which all have to be connected to each other as well as to the source. Our *mitzvos* must be interrelated, not merely isolated, separate acts.

*Chazal*¹⁷⁹ state that even the emptiest Jew contains as many *mitzvos* as the amount of seeds in a pomegranate. And the *Malbim*¹⁸⁰ points out that a pomegranate can contain 613 seeds, which totals the amount of all the *mitzvos*. A famous question is posed as to how any Jew can be considered “empty,” if they are full of *mitzvos*? According to Rov Dovid Povarsky *zt”l*,¹⁸¹ a pomegranate's seeds exist independently from each other. Though there are many seeds, many *mitzvos*, they are all meaningless if each act is disparate from each other. These types of people resemble the *lulav* of *Har HaBarzel*, whose leaves do not overlap each other. Their actions are not “one piece” because they lack a fundamental unifying force behind them.

Designating Our Heart Towards Hashem

In the *Tefillas Geshem* (Prayer for Rain) of *Sukkos*, we refer to Yaakov *Avinu* as a “*yichad lev*” – one whose heart was designated totally for Hashem. The *Gemara*¹⁸² says that if one dreams about a *lulav*, it is a sign that “*he only has one heart, towards his Father in Heaven.*” Similarly, the *Gemara*¹⁸³ says that a *lulav* comes from a date tree because “*just as a date tree has only one heart, so do the Jewish people have only one heart, towards their Father in Heaven.*”

The *Rokeiach* teaches that the Torah hints that *lulav* comes to unify all of a person's desires for Hashem. The first letter of the Torah is *beis*. The last letter of the Torah is *lamed*. The first letter of *Nevi'im* is a *vov*, and the last letter is a *lamed*. This spells the word *lulav*. Thus, *lulav* unifies the entire Torah (including *Nevi'im*) together. Similarly, the actions of someone who only has “one heart towards his Father in Heaven” are unified and purposeful.

As we mentioned earlier, *lulav* is a combination of the words *lo* and *lev* which can be interpreted as one's own heart or owning one's true desires and actions. If someone is in control of his heart's desires, he is considered someone with “*one heart, towards his Father in Heaven.*” In contrast, those whose hearts are controlled by other variables (various passions or other people) do not have only “*one heart towards his Father in Heaven.*” Rather, their hearts are governed by other variables and factors.

According to the *Gemara*,¹⁸⁴ “before a person eats and drinks, he has two hearts. After he eats and drinks, he only has one heart.” On a simple level, this may describe a hungry person as anxious whereas a satiated person feels physically calmer.¹⁸⁵ But on a deeper level, the *Gemara* may be referring to spiritual food and drink. Before a person “eats” and “drinks” spiritually, he has two hearts because essentially his *yetzer hora* and his *yetzer tov* are fighting and are thus not unified. However, once a person is satisfied spiritually, this means his *yetzer hora* has subsided, leaving the person with one, unified heart dedicated to Hashem.

179 *Berachos 57a*

180 *Malbim, Shir HaShirim 4: 13*

181 *Rosh Yeshivas Ponovozeh.*

182 *Berachos 57a*

183 *Sukkah 45b*

184 *Bava Basra 12b*

185 *Rabbeinu Gershon and Rashbam, ibid.*

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One way of viewing the *yetzer hora* is as a person's various extraneous desires that attempt to block him from carrying out Hashem's will. Specifically, these *retzonos* (desires/passions) confuse a person, so that all his actions do not emanate from the same, single Divine source. When a person carries out different activities to please his *yetzer hara* (for instance, music, candies, trips, etc.), there is no unifying purpose binding together all these activities. Rather, they simply represent a bunch of disparate desires that are carried out on impulse. In contrast, a person constantly acting *l'sheim Shamayim*, (for the sake of Heaven) only has "one heart." His actions and choices all emanate from one central point.

We shake the *lulav* in four directions, including up and down. Why do we shake it up and down as well? We can compare this to someone building a structure, with four sides. Four walls alone will not suffice. The house needs a roof and a floor as well. The roof and the floor connect the four walls together. In summary, a *lulav* with separated leaves which grows on the *Har HaBarzel* represents a person who has a lack of connection between the *mitzvos*. Though this *lulav* may be technically kosher *b'dieved* (fulfilling the requirement after the fact but not in the optimal way), it is incomplete and thus fails to be *mehudar*, a beautiful *lulav*. So too with our *Avodas Hashem*. Only a beautiful and complete *avodah* which has no deficiencies, even *b'dieved*, is a proper representation of the revelation of the purpose of Creation.

Lulav Is One Heart – One Desire

Hashem chose the Jewish people as **His** people. He gave us the Torah. The first letter of the Torah is *beis*, and the last letter of the Torah is *lamed*. Rearranging these letters spells the Hebrew word *lev* – "heart." May it be the will of Hashem that He help us receive the Torah in the inner depths of our heart, that we may merit to have only one, unified heart, and ultimately that our sole desire is to carry out the will of our Father in Heaven.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ To reveal your inner will, see *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Vol. 4, Chapters 15-22.

11 | The Depth of Lulav & Esrog¹⁸⁷

The Lulav Corresponds To Yitzchok or Yosef

The *Midrash* compares the Four Species to Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov and Yosef.¹⁸⁸ The *esrog* corresponds to Avraham, the *lulav* corresponds to Yitzchok, the *hadassim* to Yaakov, and the *aravos* to Yosef. However, the *Zohar* says that the *lulav* corresponds to Yosef¹⁸⁹.

The *Midrash* also states that the Four Species correspond to four different parts of the body.¹⁹⁰ The *lulav* corresponds to the spine, the *hadassim* correspond to the eyes, the *aravos* correspond to the mouth (the lips), and the *esrog* corresponds to the heart. Here we will focus on how the *lulav* corresponds to the spine.

Lulav Corresponds To the Spine & Yitzchok Avinu

The *Gemara* says that there are 18 interlocking points in the spine.¹⁹¹ The human spine and the animal spine have the same general structure. The Rambam writes that the spine is connected to the brain by a chord, which has a protective shell.¹⁹² This chord allows the brain's life-giving energy (*chiyus*) to extend through the spine. It extends the energy from the upper section of the body into the lower section of the body.

The *lulav* also bears this correspondence. The leaves of the *lulav*, which extend upwards from the spine of the *lulav*, correspond to the chord that connects the spine with brain. Just as the brain is soft tissue and the spine is hard, so are the leaves of the *lulav* soft and the spine of the *lulav* is hard. The highest part of the spine is above the brain, and it is parallel to the where the *tefillin* are placed [directly behind the skull]. This is called the “*luz* bone”, where the Resurrection of the Dead begins from.¹⁹³

As mentioned earlier, the *lulav* corresponds with Yitzchok, and just as Yitzchok experienced a degree of the Resurrection of the Dead [when he was tied to the Altar, his soul left him and Hashem returned his soul to him], so does the *lulav* correspond to the Resurrection of the Dead [for the *lulav* corresponds to the spine, and the top of the spine is the *luz* bone, where the Resurrection of the Dead begins from].

Here we will see that there are two aspects to the *lulav*: the spine, and the leaves. The spine of the *lulav* corresponds to Yosef. The spine itself does not extend upward, it does not ascend, and so does Yosef represent the concept of non-ascension. The leaves of the spine of the *lulav* correspond to Yitzchok, and just as the leaves ascend upward, so did Yitzchok ascend upwards, when he was sanctified as an *olah* at the Altar.

Is the The Lulav or the Esrog More Prominent?

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ספר "מועדי השנה – בלבבי משכן אבנה" כרך א' עמ' תמו-תנב

188 *Vayikra Rabbah parshas Emor 30:10*

189 *Zohar III: Raya Mehemna parshas Pinchos 236a, 256a*

190 *Vayikra Rabbah parshas Emor 30:14*

191 *Berachos 28b*

192 *Peirush HaMishnayos L'Rambam: Chullin 3:1*

193 *Beraishis Rabbah 28:3*

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When listing the order of the Four Species, the Torah first lists the *esrog*, then the *lulav*, and then the *hadassim* and *aravos*. However, when the Mishnah discusses the laws of the Four Species, the Mishnah first discusses the laws of the *lulav*, whereas the laws of the *esrog* are described last. This needs understanding.

There appears to be a novel concept here. We must say that there are two aspects to the *esrog*. In one aspect, the *lulav* is more prominent than the *esrog*, and in the other aspect, the *esrog* is more prominent than the *lulav*. We shall explain how.

Lulav/Line and Esrog/Circle

The shape of the *esrog* is similar to the shape of a skull, whereas the shape of the *lulav* resembles a spine. If an *esrog* is as round as a ball, it is invalid for use. However, a skull is not perfectly round. The skull is not the brain, it is above the brain. The brain is above the spine, and the skull is above the brain. In contrast with this, the *lulav* must be straight, and if it is bent too much and it resembles a chisel, it is invalid. (The *hadassim* and *aravos* though are kosher for use if they are bent or crooked.)

Clearly, we can see the difference between the spine/*lulav* and the skull/*esrog*. The straight shape of the *lulav*, which resembles the spine, represents the concept of *yashrus*, uprightness [also called *yoisher*, the “line”, of Creation]. The round shape of the *esrog*, which resembles the skull, represents the concept of *igul*, the “circle” (or the equalization, or equilibrium) of Creation, where all points are equidistant from the center.

[In terms of the two Messiahs, which correspond to the *lulav*/Yosef and *esrog*/Dovid]: The *lulav* corresponds to Yosef, and the *esrog* corresponds to Moshiach ben Dovid. From the viewpoint of *Moshiach* ben Yosef, the *lulav* comes before the *esrog* [meaning that *yoisher*/line/straightness/uprightness is more prominent than *igul*/circle/roundness/equilibrium] but from the viewpoint of *Moshiach* ben Dovid, the *esrog* comes before the *lulav* [meaning that *igul* is more prominent than *yoisher*].

The *Gemara* says the blessing over the Four Species is recited over the *lulav*, since it is the tallest of the four species [hence it appears the most prominent]. The *Gemara* asks: Why don't we lift the *esrog* above the *lulav*, and then make the blessing over the *esrog*? The *Gemara* answers that it is because the *esrog* must be held together with the *lulav* when reciting the blessing, so the *esrog* cannot be placed higher than the *lulav*.

We can learn from this that the *Gemara* originally thought that there is no requirement to hold the *esrog* together with the *lulav* when reciting the blessing, and that is why the *Gemara* thought that perhaps the *esrog* can be placed higher than the *lulav*. The *Arizal* wrote explicitly, however, that the *lulav* and *esrog* need to be held together. The *Shulchan Aruch* rules that they must be held together.

However, **it seems that in the future, the blessing of the Four Species will be over the *esrog***. The *Gemara*'s original thinking, that the *esrog* should be placed above the *lulav*, is really about the future. The *halachah* in our times is that the blessing is made over the *lulav*, but this is because we live in a world after the sin. That is also why the Mishnah first discusses the laws of the *lulav* before the *esrog*.

In our times, the *lulav* corresponds to Yosef, while the *esrog* corresponds to Dovid. Yosef corresponds to the concept of *yesod*, foundation, while Dovid corresponds to *malchus*, royalty. In our times, *lulav*/Yosef/*yesod* is more prominent than *esrog*/Dovid/*malchus*. In Hashem's four-letter name of *havayah*, the letter *beh* corresponds to the *esrog*, and the letter *vov* corresponds to the *lulav*.

Our *avodah* nowadays is in *yoisher*, also called *kav*, the “line”, which also connotes a war with the evil inclination. This is depth of what Chazal say, “We have been victorious”. But in the higher dimension, the *esrog* precedes the *lulav*, meaning that *esrog*/*igul*/Dovid/*malchus* is more prominent than *lulav*/*yoisher*/*kav*/Yosef/*yesod*. This will be manifest in the future,

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when *Moshiach* ben Dovid will rule, when the world will return the state of before the sin, when “the bark of the tree tasted like its fruit” – because the entire world will be at equilibrium. That is why the *esrog* is round, like the round skull which is above the spine, above the place where the body receives life-giving energy from, and above even the brain, the source of the spine, where the spinal cord extends from.

In our times, a round *esrog* is invalid for use. But in the future, it will be kosher for use. The *esrog* in our times is less prominent than the *lulav*, hence the *esrog* is subservient to the *lulav* in our times – and that is what causes the *esrog* not to be perfectly round.

Two Kinds of Life – Lulav/Straightness/Choosing, and Esrog/Roundness/Equilibrium

The word *lulav* is equal in numerical value to the word *chaim* (life), which is 68. The word *esrog* is equal to 610, which is almost equal to 9 times the amount of 69 (612). The *lulav* and *esrog* have different aspects of *chiyus*, of life-giving energy.

Both a dry *esrog* and a dry *lulav* are invalid for use. An *esrog* is deemed too dry if a needle and string can pass through it or not, meaning that its dryness is measured by how moist it is. Concerning the *lulav*, though, there are three different opinions of what defines a dry *lulav*: Either if it is 12 months old, or if it is easily broken from the touch of a fingernail, or if its green color has whitened.

A *lulav* is straight, for it resembles the spine. On a deeper level, this corresponds to the idea of *bechirah*, to choose, between good and evil. Since the *lulav* corresponds to *chaim*/life, and the Torah says that one should “choose life”, the straightness of the *lulav* represents the “line” that one must find between the two points of good and evil, of life and death. Often a person needs to take the middle path, as the Rambam says.

The other kind of “life” is represented by the *esrog*. The round shape of the *esrog*, which corresponds to the skull, represents a kind of life where one is naturally pulled after good. The *esrog* stays on the tree from year to year, and it does not fall to the ground like the fruit of all other trees. It is the very opposite idea of the *lulav*, which becomes too dry after 12 months. The *esrog* represents the state of before the sin, when there was no death yet, where there was only eternity. After the sin, there was death, and now our life depends on how we utilize our *bechirah*. Through using our *bechirah* correctly, we draw forth life.

Now that we are after the sin, the *esrog* can also “die” [i.e. it can become dry], but even when the *esrog* dies/dries, it hints that its main role is to draw forth life on its own – how so? Its dryness is determined by how moist it is, and moisture is from the element of water, which corresponds to eternal life, for water comes to a person without any exertion and preparation to get it, and also, it comes from Heaven, as opposed to being produced from the ground. It also can be consumed the way it is, unlike bread, which needs to be baked first. It also does not have to be digested.

In the *lulav*, however, a lack of moisture does not show that it is dry. The *lulav* is not meant to be eaten, hence its moisture or lack thereof does not define its aliveness.

Earlier, we mentioned that the Resurrection of the Dead will begin from the *luz* bone, which is parallel to the place [behind the skull] where the *tefillin* is placed. This is the top of the spine. Thus, the Resurrection of the Dead is linked with the *lulav*, as opposed to the *esrog*. The *esrog* corresponds to the point before the sin, as mentioned earlier [hence the Resurrection of the Dead is not linked with the *esrog*, for the *esrog* is rooted in the point where there is no sin and hence no “death”].

The *Midrash* says that a *lulav* has a taste with no scent. Taste corresponds to eating, and eating is linked with Adam HaRishon. The *lulav*'s taste is its fruit, which are dates. Chazal state that one should cleave to Hashem as two dates which

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cling to one another.¹⁹⁴ As is known, the purpose of the *Melaveh Malka* meal is to give enjoyment to the *luz* bone. It is a higher form of enjoyment. The *luz* bone did not partake in Adam's act of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, hence it enjoys a higher form of pleasure. The meal of the *Melaveh Malka* is not enjoyed by a person on physical level, and only the *luz* bone enjoys it. It is an act of eating which is undamaged from sin, and that is why the *luz* bone has enjoyment in it.

In Conclusion

When the *lulav* and *esrog* will be joined together in the future, it will be the joining of Yosef (*lulav*) with Yehudah (*esrog*).

Nowadays, we bind together three of the Four Species, and the *esrog* is not included in this. But **in the future, the *esrog* will be joined together with the other three species, and the *esrog* will also be held above all of them, and the blessing will be over the *esrog*.** *"And they will become unified, in your hands."*¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ *Sanhedrin 64a*

¹⁹⁵ *Yechezkel 37:17*

12 | Simchas Beis HaShoeivah – The Unified Song¹⁹⁶

“Anyone Who Did Not See The Simchas Beis HaShoeivah, Never Saw Joy In His Lifetime”

Succos is called “*zman simchaseinu*”, time of our joy. A major part of the *simchah* on Succos was the event of the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah* [a festive celebration made in the *Beis HaMikdash* starting from the second night of Succos], as the Rambam says.

Chazal say that “One who did not see the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, never saw *simchah* in all his days.”¹⁹⁷ What was this special *simchah*, and why was it different than all other joys? And how can it be that a person who never saw the *Beis HaShoeivah* never saw *simchah* in his entire life?! Is there no *simchah* available on our world?! What about the joy of a *chosson* and *kallah*, whose joy resembles the joy in *Gan Eden*? What is the meaning of this cryptic statement, that a person who did not see the *simchas beis hashoeivah* never saw *simchah* in his entire life?

Let us study, then, what was so special about this *simchah*.

The Four Instruments By The Simchas Beis HaShoeivah

Chazal say that at the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, the *chassidim* (pious individuals) and *anshei maaseh* (people of worthy deeds) would sing songs and say words of praise, and in addition, the Levites would sing with four different instruments: *kinoros* (harps), *nevalim* (cymbals), *matzaltayim* (lyres), and *chatzotzros* (trumpets).

The question is: (1) Why these four instruments specifically? (2) Another question: the *Mishnah* later says that there was a countless amount of musical instruments there. So why does the *Mishnah* make specific mention of these four instruments?

The Two Different Songs By The Simchas Beis HaShoeivah

The Gemara says that at the *Simchas Beis haShoeivah*, the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* would sing, “Praiseworthy is our childhood, for we have not shamed our elders.” The *baalei teshuvah* sang a different song: “Praiseworthy is our old age, for we have atoned for our childhood.” These were two distinct kinds of songs.

The *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah* was a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* to rejoice on the festival, as the Rambam says. If so, why was this joy experienced on two different levels? Did the *simchah* depend on what level of *teshuvah* a person reached?

We will need to ask another question: What is *simchas Yom Tov*? The joy on the festival, externally speaking, is fulfilled with drinking wine, now that we do not have the *korbonos* of the *Beis HaMikdash*. But what is the *simchas Yom Tov* about? What are we rejoicing about on the festival? Simply speaking, the joy of Succos is because Hashem took us out of Egypt and

¹⁹⁶ סוכות 032 – שמחת בית השואבה

¹⁹⁷ Succah 51a

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brought us into the Clouds of Glory. So why were there different kinds of joy by the *simchas beis haShoeivah*, depending on if you were of the *chassidim*, *anshei maaseh*, or *baalei teshuvah*?

When the nation left Egypt, were there *baalei teshuvah* then? Everyone was on the same level then, there were no differences. They all did not change their names, clothing, and language. So why did this joy become differentiated on Succos, depending on what level you were on?

Succos Is The Continued Joy of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur

We have explained so far that there were two kinds of joy by the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*. There was a joy of the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*, and there was another joy, experienced by the *baalei teshuvah*. What were these two different joys?

On Rosh HaShanah, the world begins anew. When there is a new beginning, it is the birth of the world, and there are no *baalei teshuvah* yet. Everything has just been born and it is all clean and pure. On Yom Kippur, though, there are *baalei teshuvah*. Yom Kippur is a time of *teshuvah* for all. Rosh HaShanah is the pure beginning of the world, while Yom Kippur is about atonement for everyone, for all who have sinned.

On Succos, which is the time of our joy, this is not just ‘another’ added joy. Rather, it is the continued joy that began with Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. On Succos, there is a joy that has been continued from Rosh HaShanah, and there is another continued joy on Succos – a continuation of Yom Kippur.

The joy on Succos that began on Rosh HaShanah is a joy that celebrates new beginnings. That joy was represented by the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*. Thus, they would sing, “Praiseworthy is our childhood, for we have not shamed our elders”, for this was the joy continued from Rosh HaShanah, which is a pure state, where there is no sin. The joy of the *baalei teshuvah*, however, was a continuation of Yom Kippur. On Motzei Yom Kippur, a Heavenly voice goes out and proclaims, “Go eat your bread in joy” – this is the joy of the *baalei teshuvah*. Thus their song was “Praiseworthy is our old age, which has atoned for our sins”.

Therefore, the *simchas beis hashoeivah* contained two different joys: the joy continued from Rosh HaShanah, and the joy continued from Yom Kippur. These were the different songs of the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* versus the song of the *baalei teshuvah*.

Succos: The Connecting Point Between All Jews

The Gemara concludes that “These and these (the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*, together with the *baalei teshuvah*) would say, “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin. And one who has sinned, should repent and he will be forgiven.” The first part of this song made sense for the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* (who did not sin) to say, for they did not sin, and the second part of the song sounds like the *baalei teshuvah* (who sinned and repented). If so, why did they both say each of these sentences?

Herein lays the secret of Succos. Rosh HaShanah is a new beginning, where there is no sin; Yom Kippur is an atonement for all who have sinned – and what does Succos do? It connects both of these elements together – both those who have never sinned, and those who have sinned. This is apparent from the fact that *chassidim*, *anshei maaseh* and *baalei teshuvah* both sang together the song of “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin, and one who has sinned, should repent and be

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forgiven.” The day of Rosh HaShanah is a day that celebrates the pure state of the *anshei maaseh* and the *chassidim*, and the day of Yom Kippur is a day that is designated for the *baalei teshuvah*, whereas Succos synthesizes these two groups together.

Succos is the connecting point between all Jews. *Chazal* state that in the future, the entire Jewish people will sit in one *succah*.¹⁹⁸ Thus, the *succah* connects everyone together. That is why the *chassidim*, *anshei maaseh* and *baalei teshuvah* were all connected together on Succos, through the song they sang at the *simchas beis hashoeivah*.

The Deeper Meaning Behind The Four Musical Instruments

Let us return to our previous question on the words of the Mishnah, which describes the *simchas beis hashoeivah*. The Mishnah says that the *Leviim* would play certain instruments, along with the song at the *simchas beis hashoeivah*. They used four instruments: *kinoros*/harps, *nevalim*/lyres, *matzltayim*/cymbals, and *chatzotzros*/trumpets. Why these four instruments specifically?

Kinoros/Harps: The Baalei Teshuvah

The *kinor* (harp) was the instrument used by Dovid HaMelech. The Gemara says that Dovid HaMelech hung a *kinor* atop his bed so that the northern wind at midnight would blow on it and he would wake up from it. Dovid HaMelech is the root of *baalei teshuvah*. The *kinor* at the *simchas beis hashoeivah* was thus a symbol for *baalei teshuvah*, and therefore, the *kinor* accompanied the song of the *baalei teshuvah* at the *simchas beis hashoeivah*.

Nevalim/Lyres: The Chassidim

The second instruments were the *nevalim*, lyres.

The word *nevalim*, from the word *neval*, is explained by *Chazal* to be “an instrument that causes *nevel*, disgust, to the other musical instruments that are played along with it, because its beautiful sound causes everyone to focus on its sound and forget about the other musical instruments. It is like hearing a sweet voice in a crowd of unpleasant voices – it causes people to disgust all other voices there, and to focus only on the sweet-sounding voice.

The group of Jews who did not sin – those who were called *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* - represented this concept of *nevel*, for since they did not sin, they were pure, and this causes a disgust for those who did sin, who now seem inferior in their spiritual level to these pure souls who never sin. The *baalei teshuvah* feel disgusted about themselves (and in the eyes of others) in the presence of *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*, who never sinned to begin with.

As the two groups sang together, the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* were singing a song of praise in honor of those who did not sin, and the *baalei teshuvah* were singing the praises of those who repented, and the contrast of these two songs together clearly made the *baalei teshuvah* feel a disgust about themselves, for it was clear that the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* were on a much higher spiritual level. That was the inner meaning behind the *nevalim*.

Matzaltayim (Cymbals) and Chatzotzros (Trumpets): The Anshei Maaseh

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The other instruments two there were the *matzaltayim* (cymbals) and *chatzotzros* (trumpets). What did these two instruments represent?

Concerning the matter of the *chatzotzros*, the *Maggid of Mezritch* said in the name of the *Baal Shem Tov* that *chatzotzros* stands for “*chatzi tzurah*”, “half a form” [this will be explained soon]. And what were the *matzaltayim*? They combined together the two *chatzotzros*. The two *chatzotzros*/trumpets, in and of themselves, were like “half” an instrument, because they are meant to accompany the sound of the *matzaltayim*/cymbals. Thus, through the *matzaltayim*, the two *chatzotzros* are combined together to have a meaningful sound.

Until now we explained the connection between the *kinoros*/harps and the *baalei teshuvah*, and the connection between the *nevalim*/lyres and the *chassidim*. What were the *anshei maaseh*, and what musical instrument represents this group?

First, we need to know the meaning of *anshei maaseh*. Who are *anshei maaseh*? Simply speaking, we can say that these are people who have many good deeds. But other commentaries say a deeper meaning of *anshei maaseh*: these are leaders of the generation who cause the people in the generation to do good deeds.

So, in summary, there are three groups of people: the *chassidim* are those who never sinned to begin with, the *baalei teshuvah* are those who sinned but they repented with all their heart, and *anshei maaseh* are leaders of the generation.

Moshe Rabbeinu appointed Yehoshua, a “man of spirit”, which is explained as “one who can lead each person according to his spirit”. Each person, by himself, is “half a form”, like the *chatzotzros*. If we try to connect a person to another, he might not have a good relationship with that person, or, he may bond with the person. On Succos, through the *matzaltayim*, the two halves of the *chatzotzros* were connected together. Two opposite things become connected together, like a husband and wife, which are connected together through a third, spiritual force that can unite the two opposite forces together. This was represented by the *matzaltayim*.

Thus, a *chassid* is the kind of person who does not sin, a *baal teshuvah* is one who has sinned but he has repented, and one who is of the *anshei maaseh* (or a *baal maasim*) is someone who has the ability to “combine together opposites” and produce a harmonious sound from it.

If so, there were altogether three different songs by the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*: the song of the *chassidim*, the song of the *baalei teshuvah*, and the song of the *anshei maaseh*.

The song of the *chassidim*, “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin”, was a song about those who do not sin, and the song of the *baalei teshuvah*, “And one who sinned, should repent and be atoned” was an opposite kind of song: it was about those who did sin. What was the connecting force between these two opposite kinds of songs? The *anshei maaseh* were the connecting point between the *chassidim* and the *baalei teshuvah*, for the *anshei maaseh* were the leaders of the generation who were able to connect everyone together.

(These represents two different major ways of connection to Hashem – one way is through *yashrus*/uprightness, as depicted in the verse “*G-d made man upright*”¹⁹⁹, and there is another way, the way of “There is no darkness except from light”, which is the spiritual light of *baalei teshuvah*).

The Joy of the Nisuch HaMayim (Water Libation) On Succos

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What exactly was the *simchah*, the joy, in the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*? As the Mishnah famously says, it was a celebration about the yearly water libation, the *nisuch hamayim*, in the *Beis HaMikdash*. In the time of the *Beis HaMikdash*, during the rest of the year, they would pour wine on the Altar together with the *korbonos*, and on Succos, they would pour water with the *korbonos*. This special water libation, the *nisuch hamayim*, was the reason for the entire joy of the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*. What was so special about this water libation?

It was an entirely new revelation, and it was through the power of water. There are many connections between water and Succos. Succos is the time where the world is judged on its waters. The four species all grow from water. On Succos, we begin to *daven* for water. And on Succos, they poured water on the Altar. The *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah* on the holy festival of Succos was a *simchah* about water, in addition to the wine that they poured with the *korbonos* on the Altar.

What happened when they poured together the water with the wine? The Mishnah²⁰⁰ says that there was one hole on the Altar for water, and one hole for wine, and the two holes were separate from each other. The Mishnah discusses: What happens if they made a mistake, and they poured water in the hole for the wine, or vice versa? The Mishnah says that they still fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *nisuch hamayim*.

The Rambam discusses another problem: What if they poured the water and wine together into the same hole? The Rambam says that this was also enough to fulfill the *mitzvah* of the *nisuch hamayim*. From this we learn a novel insight [involving the concepts of water and wine, which we will explain].

On a deeper level, what was the difference between *nisuch hayayin* (the wine libation) and the *nisuch hamayim* (the water libation)? It is based on an opinion in the Gemara that says that the *Eitz HaDaas* (the Tree of Knowledge) was a grapevine.²⁰¹ Thus, it was through wine that all ruination came to the world. In contrast to this wine of ruination, the wine that was poured onto the Altar was a kind of wine which brought spiritual purification.

Even more so, *Chazal* state that “When one sees a *sotah*, the wayward wife, in her ruination, he should abstain from wine.”²⁰² This is because wine is connected with sin, for it brought evil to the world. But when one sins and he has to bring a *korbon*, how he is atoned? Through the wine on the Altar that was brought together with his *korbon*.

Whereas water has always been pure, wine became impure through the sin of Adam. On Yom Tov, the *mitzvah* of *simchas Yom Tov* is fulfilled through wine. The Gemara says that “There is no happiness except in wine.”²⁰³ But on Succos, it was revealed that there is no happiness except in water. We see this from the fact that the main part of *simchas Yom Tov* on Succos, according to the Rambam, was the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, which was a celebration entirely about water.

Whereas on Pesach and Shavuot a person only fulfills the *mitzvah* of *simchas Yom Tov* through wine, because “there is no happiness except in wine”, on Succos, there was a new revelation: that the *mitzvah* of *simchas Yom Tov* (on Succos) is only fulfilled with water, and what kind of water? The water of the *nisuch hamayim*.

What is the difference between these two forms of *simchas Yom Tov*, of wine versus water?

During all other festivals, where *simchas Yom Tov* is with wine, this is an incomplete level of *simchah*, because wine was ruined by the sin, ever since Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. We also see this from the very fact that *simchas Yom Tov* is only fulfilled nowadays through wine. In the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the *mitzvah* of *simchas Yom Tov* was with the

200 *Succah* 48a

201 *Sanhedrin* 70a

202 *Nazir* 2a

203 *Pesachim* 109a

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meat of the *korbonos*, and after the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed through our sins, *simchas Yom Tov* is only fulfilled with wine. Thus, *simchas Yom Tov* through wine is entirely a result of sin.

Contrast this with the *simchah* through water, which is the *simchas Yom Tov* on Succos. Such *simchah* does not involve any sin, so it is a higher form of *simchah*. This is the depth that was revealed on Succos.

The *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* are represented by Rosh HaShanah. This is the level where there is no sin, which is like water, which did not become ruined by sin. Thus there is a connection between water and Rosh HaShanah. But Yom Kippur, which is for the *baalei teshuvah*, is connected with wine. The *baalei teshuvah* represent the concept that wine can mix with the water, for the *baal teshuvah* becomes purified from sin/wine. But both groups sang “Praiseworthy is one who did not sin, and one who sinned shall repent and be forgiven” – because on Succos, there was a connection between the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* with the *baalei teshuvah*, a mixture of “water” and “wine” together.

This is the depth of the words of the Rambam that the *mitzvah* of *nisuch hamayim* was fulfilled if the water and wine were mixed together in the same hole. On Succos, the “water” (a hint to the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*) and “wine” (*baalei teshuvah*) can “mix”, for they are connected together on Succos.

The Joy of the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah – The Joy of Unity

Let us see more this point of how Succos connects everyone together.

As is well-known, each of the Four Species represents all four kinds of Jews.²⁰⁴ The *esrog* has a taste and a scent, representing the *tzaddikim*, who have Torah and good deeds. The *lulav* has a taste but no scent, representing those who have Torah but no good deeds. The *hadassim* have a scent but no taste, representing those who have good deeds but no Torah. The *aravos* have no scent and no taste, representing the wicked, who have neither Torah nor good deeds. They are all taken together in one bundle, and then they are all atoned for.

That is the simple understanding, and now we will explore this deeper. The *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah* revealed a kind of *simchah* that did not exist during the rest of the year or on any of the other festivals. It revealed a kind of *simchah* which connects everyone together. How can everyone be connected together?

The Gemara says it was either called *beis hashoeivah*, for they would “draw” water for it (from the word *sheuvah*, “draw”), or it was called *beis hachashuvah*, from the word *chashuv*, “important”, for it was an important *simchah*.²⁰⁵ Why was it important? The Gemara says that when they would pour the wine and water on the Altar into the two separate holes, the water and wine went to the *tehom* (the depths) of the world. Elsewhere, the Gemara says that the *shisin* (passageways) which flowed underneath the *Beis HaMikdash* were created already during the six days of Creation.²⁰⁶ Thus, it was an important *mitzvah*, for it came from the six days of Creation. There were two different *shisin* – one was for water, and one was for wine.

Thus, included in the very first six days of Creation were the concepts of *nisuch hamayim* and *nisuch hayayin*. On the sixth day of Creation, Chavah gave grapes of the *Eitz HaDaas* to Adam, and Adam squeezed it and drank its wine. Thus, in the first six days of Creation, there was a ruination of wine. Water was also damaged during the first six days of Creation.

²⁰⁴ *Vayikra Rabbah Emor 30:12*

²⁰⁵ *Succah 50b*

²⁰⁶ *Succah 49a*

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On the second day of Creation, Hashem separated the upper waters from the lower waters. This was a kind of ruination for the water.

The Gemara has an argument if we begin to *daven* for rain on the second or sixth day of Succos. The depth behind this is because the wine became ruined on the sixth day of Creation (since the *Eitz HaDaas* was a grapevine, according to one opinion of the Sages), and the water became ruined on the second day of Creation (since the waters argued with each other on the second day and were then split). Thus, the *baalei teshuvah* are represented by wine, and even their water is on the level of wine. What is their rectification? By returning to their original level [of before the sin]. The lower waters became separated from the upper waters, and ever since then, they yearn to return to the upper waters. This is because their rectification is when they return to the upper waters, which is their source.

Thus, the “water” of *baalei teshuvah* is represented by the second day of Succos, and the “wine” of the *baalei teshuvah* is represented by the sixth day of Succos.

Two Different Sources of Rectification

Earlier it was mentioned that the Gemara brings a dispute if the celebration was called *beis sho'eivah* or *beis chashuvah*.

The word “*sho'eivah*” (שוֹאֵבָה) is from the words “*shov aleph*” (שׁוּב אֵ), “return the *aleph*”, and the word “*chashuvah*” (חַשׁוּבָה) is from the words “*shov ches*” (שׁוּב חֵ) which means “return the *ches*”.

How can these two opinions in the Gemara be reconciled? The Gemara is saying that there are two different ways for a person to return to the state before the sin. Either one can return to the first day of Creation, when Hashem was one and there was no sin yet – this is represented by the letter “*aleph*” in the word *sho'eivah*, or, a person can “return” to the “eighth day” of Creation, the level of the future, which is represented by the letter “*ches*” in the word *chashuvah*. We will explain this.

“Shov Aleph”: Returning To The First Day of Creation

The water in Creation is currently in a state of ruination, for it has fallen to the level of “wine” (water was created before wine, so wine is on a lower level than water), and water will only be rectified when it is returned to the way it was on the first day of Creation, its beginning point, or when it is returned to the way it was on the sixth day of Creation, before the sin.

The actual beginning point of water was not on the second day of Creation, but on the first day of Creation, for the first time that the Torah mentions water is by the waters of the *tehom*, the depths of the world, which were on created on the first day of Creation. As the Gemara says, the *shisin*, the passageways in the ground where the wine and water poured into the Altar flowed through, went all the way into the waters of the *tehom*, where the wine and water of the Alter were deposited. Thus, the wine and water which flowed from the Altar and into the *shisin*, were really being returned to the *tehom* – in other words, they “returned” to the first day of Creation.

Thus, the waters of the world are returned to their root when they are returned to the first day of Creation. This is the implication of the word *sho'eivah*, from the words “*shov aleph*”, “return of the *aleph*”, which means to return to state of the first day of Creation, when everything in the Creation was unified together, the waters of the world had not been split, and there was no disparity yet in Creation.

In the *Mishnah* that describes the celebration of the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, one of the Sages said “Our eyes did not see sleep” there.²⁰⁷ The deeper meaning of this is that there is no “sleep” on Succos. Since Succos reveals the concept of “*shov aleph*” – returning to the first day of Creation - so when the waters of the word returned to their original source on Succos (through the waters of the *nisuch hamayim* that flowed into the *tehom*), the waters were all returned to their original state of oneness. Sleep cannot exist in a state of oneness. Only when a person drinks wine does he become sleepy. But when the wine was mixed with water on Succos, they both flowed into to the *tehom*, where the wine was returned to “the first day of Creation”. This rectified kind of wine cannot not bring sleepiness, because sleepiness did not exist on the first day of Creation. Hence, by the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, the Sages could not fall asleep, for even though there was wine there, this was a rectified kind of wine which does not bring on sleepiness. The words “*shov aleph*” contained in the word “*shoeivah*” reveals a return to the first day of Creation, a point where there is no sleep.

When would they draw forth the water for the *nisuch hamayim*? The Gemara says that they did it right before *alos hashachar* (the first rays of dawn). If so, they did it at nighttime. The Rambam also says clearly that they did it at nighttime. This was a novel concept, for all other *avodah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* was not done at night. Here we see that there was a new kind of *avodah* (it was not regarded as a total level of *avodah* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, of course, but it is a nonetheless a kind of *avodah*): this was an *avodah* only for the nighttime. It showed that there is a point where the darkness of the night can be just like the light of the day.

How so? In the word “*shoeivah*”, there was “*shov aleph*” - a return of everything to the first day of creation, where water and wine connect together, where there was no difference between *baalei teshuvah* and *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*, and everyone could connect together.

All differences within Creation began with the second day of Creation, when the waters of the world were separated into lower waters and upper waters. The second day of Creation was also the day when Gehinnom was created, and the Sages state that Gehinnom was created from the strife of the waters which took place on the second day of Creation. Gehinnom is a place to rectify those who have sinned. From the viewpoint of the second day of Creation, the *baalei teshuvah* are deserving of Gehinnom, because Gehinnom shows that there is difference between *tzaddikim* and the wicked, that the *tzaddikim* belong in Gan Eden and the sinners belong in Gehinnom. But from the viewpoint of the first day of Creation, everyone is unified together and connected, and everyone is regarded on the same level, for on the first day of Creation, there is no Gehinnom yet, only Gan Eden.

This is the depth of how at the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, both groups (the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*, together with the *baalei teshuvah*) sang in unison: “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin”, and this was the aspect of “*shoeivah*” of the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah* – the power of “*shov aleph*”, which returns everything to the first day of Creation, where all is one and unified.

“Shov Ches”: Accessing the Light of the Future

The second approach in the Gemara is that the celebration was called *simchas “beis haChashuvah”*. The word “*chashuvah*” connotes *shov ches*, a return to the letter *ches*, equal to the number of 8, which corresponds to the level of the future. *Chazal* state that the song of *Az Yashir Moshe* refers to the future Redemption, and the word “*az*” (אז) is the letters

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aleph (א) and *zayin* (ז) which is equal to 1 and 7, for a total of 8. Before Creation, Hashem was One and His Name was One.

In the future Hashem will again be One. Hence, the future, when we will return to the state of oneness, is also a return to the state of the first day of Creation. Nowadays, we do not have this oneness.

The *simchas beis hashoeivah* returned all of Creation to the state of before the sin. That is why the *chassidim*, *anshei maaseh* and *baalei teshuvah* were all able to sing together by the *simchas beis hashoeivah* – it was because it was a return to before the sin, when there was no difference yet between righteous and wicked, between those who never sinned with those who sin – for it was a world without sin. That is the approach which we have been explaining until now.

Now we are explaining a different aspect of the *simchas beis hashoeivah*: it is a way to access the future. The *Zohar* says that the joy of the *simchas beis hashoeivah* comes from the future, because they would draw forth the water on the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah* with the joy that is called “*sasson*”, and *sasson* refers to the joy of the future. This is the view that it was called *simchas beis ha* “***Chashuvah***” – it returns the world to the level of the letter *ches*, equal to the number 8 – the number that corresponds to the future.

This is another way of how the *baalei teshuvah* and *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* all become connected together - it because in the future there will be no sin and hence no difference between those who sinned with those who never sinned.

In the future Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination, and the Gemara brings this teaching in middle of the discussion about the *simchas beis hashoeivah* which is in Tractate Succah.²⁰⁸ Why does the Gemara say it precisely here, and not in any other tractate? It is because Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination from the spiritual light of the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, a joy of the future, where there is no separation between anyone. When Hashem slaughters the evil inclination, it will be clear that there is no difference between *baalei teshuvah* with *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*.

The Gemara there says further that Hashem will show how the evil inclination looks to both the righteous and the wicked, and then He will slaughter the evil inclination, and everyone will be crying.

The righteous will be crying because the evil inclination looks so big, and the wicked will be crying because they will see that the evil inclination is really small and they will be amazed how they didn't overcome it. The wicked will be crying, and they will do *teshuvah*, and then Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination. Then there will be no more difference between the righteous and the wicked.

That is the depth of the *simchas beis hashoeivah*. What is the entire difference between the *baalei teshuvah*, with the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*? It is because *baalei teshuvah* succumbed to the *yetzer hora*, while the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh* overpowered their *yetzer hora*. But when the *yetzer hora* becomes removed, there is no difference between *baalei teshuvah* with the *chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*. So when Hashem slaughters the evil inclination in the future, this does not simply mean that the *yetzer hora* will cease to exist, but that there will no more difference between those who sinned with those who don't sin.

The *simchas beis hashoeivah* reveals that all of the Jewish people are connected together!

In Summary and Conclusion

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There is still more to say about this, but to summarize, we have learned here that the *simchas beis hashoeivah* was a joy about the unified state of the Jewish people, and this unity was achieved in two different ways:

- 1) By returning to the root (this is the “*shoeivah*” aspect in the *simchas beis haShoeivah*, which is from the words “*shov aleph*”, returning to the “*aleph*” – to return to the state of the first day of Creation, or before the sin of Adam).
- 2) By accessing the future (this is the “*chashuvah*” aspect in the *simchas beis haShoeivah*, from the words *shov ches*, returning to the “*ches*”, the “eighth” – to connect to the state of the future, when there will be no more sin).

May we merit in our own times, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to a complete joy, a unified state of the Jewish people, which is the very Redemption, may it come speedily in our days.

13 | In The Light²⁰⁹The Inner Point of Succos: "Praiseworthy Is The One Who Did Not Sin"

[At the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah* on Succos, they would sing:] "Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin, and one who sinned, shall repent and be atoned."²¹⁰

Yom Kippur is a time of atonement for all sin, and then comes Succos, which reveals the concept of "Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin". On a deeper level, "Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin" is a point that is even in one who did sin, because in the innermost depths of the soul, there is a part of the soul which does not sin.

Thus, the depth of Succos is to reach this inner place in the soul of "Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin."

Succos and The Keruvim: "Giluy Panim" – The Revelation of the "Face" of Hashem

The *Aron* (Ark) had a *kapores* (covering) on top of it, which served as an atonement (*kaparah*); thus the *kapores* symbolizes Yom Kippur, which atones. The *keruvim* (cherubim) atop the *kapores* had their wings spread in an upwards manner, thus the *keruvim* symbolize Succos, which we hint to in the prayer, **וּפְרוּס עֲלֵינוּ סוּכַת שְׁלוֹמִיךָ**, "*And spread upon us, the succah of Your perfection.*"²¹¹

Succos comes after Yom Kippur, so it is like the *keruvim* atop the *kapores*. By the *keruvim*, each face was turned to the other, "like a man facing his brother". Thus, Succos, which is symbolized by the *keruvim*, is about the concept of *giluy panim*, the "revelation of the "Face" (Countenance) of Hashem".

The Depth of The Completion of Torah on Succos

"On the festival [of Succos], the world is judged on water."²¹² Besides for the simple meaning of this matter, that it is the time of the year when the world is judged for its water, the depth of this matter is because it is the time where the world goes back to being destroyed, as the world was destroyed by the waters of the Flood, when the world was judged with water. *Chazal* state, "He builds worlds, and destroys them" – and it is explained that the concept of destruction is always recurring throughout Creation, since Hashem is constantly building worlds and destroying them. Even after the world was destroyed through a Flood, there was the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, and there were the ten holy martyrs, which were all examples of the destruction that makes its appearance throughout the history of Creation. On Succos, where the world is judged on water, the depth of this matter is that it is a time where the world is supposed to return to being destroyed.

סוכות_051_גילוי פנים דופן 17. פנים תשע"ז 209

210 Succos 53a; for more about "the point in the soul where there is no sin", see Purim #032 – Understanding The Mitzvos of Purim

211 Tefillas Maariv

212 Rosh HaShanah 15b

Thus at the end of Succos we celebrate “the completion of the Torah”, because if the Jewish people wouldn’t have received the Torah, the world would have returned to *tohu u’vohu*, nothingness; on Succos, the world should go back to being destroyed, it is being “judged with water” – but this destruction does not take place in the end, so we can then celebrate the completion of the Torah.

The Torah is therefore “completed” on Succos, for on Succos the Torah has then fully descended onto this world, from the higher realms that it comes from.

Sitting In The Succah: Dwelling In The Holiness (Ain Od Milvado) That Fills Creation

There is a statement of Chazal, “*Ain Od Milvado*” (There is nothing besides Hashem) – even in the *chalal* (empty space) of the world”.²¹³ Thus, in the *chalal*, in the entire space of this world, in between the higher and lower realms, there is *Ain Od Milvado*. Therefore, there is holiness that fills the entire *chalal* (space) of Creation.

This idea is the depth of Succos: When one is in the *succah*, he is in the holiness of the *chalal*, in the very airspace that is in between the *succah*.

In a *succah*, there are the *defanos*/walls, *s’chachl*/coverings, the *chalall*space in between, and the ground. Chazal say that “The name of Hashem dwells on the *succah*”²¹⁴ – the holiness in the *succah* is that there is “*Ain Od Milvado*”, even in the *chalall*space of the world.” On Succos, the world returns to destruction, where there is nothing but the *chalal*, empty space – but precisely in the *chalal*, that is where there is *Ain Od Milvado*.

Even the *chalal*/airspace in the *succah* is holy. That is the novel concept that the *succah* reveals. It shows that there is no such thing as *hester panim* (concealment of Hashem’s radiance). It is like the *keruvim*, where there was *panim b’panim* (face-to-face), for the *keruvim* were face-to-face with each other; this reflects the concept that there is *giluy panim* (the revelation of the “Face”, or “Countenance” of Hashem) everywhere.

After we have gone through the atonement of Yom Kippur, there can now be the revelation of *Ain Od Milvado* even where it seems like there is *hester panim* - and that is the revelation on Succos.

The Holiness Extends Into Even The Ground of The Succah

The holiness of the *succah* is not just in the *s’chachl* and in the *defanos*/walls, but even in the *chalall*airspace of the *succah*. Even more so, it extends into even the very ground of the *succah*. The Gemara says that it is possible for the ground to be part of the walls of the *succah*. Thus, the *giluy panim* of Hashem extends into even the ground of the *succah*.

Therefore, on the festival of Succos, it is revealed that even the ground itself can have the *panim* of Hashem.

The *mitzvah* of sitting in the *succah* is depicted as an extension of the holiness in *Eretz Yisrael*, according to the *sefarim hakedoshim*. The Gemara says that Adam’s head was taken from *Eretz Yisrael* and the rest of his body came from the rest of the world.²¹⁵ The head, which houses the face, the “*panim*”, is from *Eretz Yisrael*. The holiness of the *succah*, which is the

213 *Devarim Rabbah* 2, *Yalkut Shimeoni*: *Yisro* 270

214 *Yalkut Shimeoni*: *Re’ah*: 905

215 *Sanhedrin* 37b

holiness of *Eretz Yisrael*, is thus the revelation of the level of “*panim*”. Adam’s sin caused death, which makes man go into the earth, which became ruined after the sin; but *Eretz Yisrael* is the rectified form of earth, for even the ground of *Eretz Yisrael* is holy; it is “the land which has the eyes of Hashem in it”. That shows that even the ground itself can have the revelation of the *panim* of Hashem, and this is in the holiness of the *succah*, which the ground is a part of.

This is similar to the level of the giving of the Torah. For this reason, on Succos, there is a celebration in honor of completing the Torah (because Succos is connected to the giving of the Torah). By Har Sinai, Hashem spoke to the nation *panim b’panim*, face-to-face, and the impurity of the Serpent was removed from upon them at that time, so there was no death then, hence no more curse of man going back into the earth, and the depth of this is because at that time, it was revealed that even the ground can receive the *panim* of Hashem.

This is the depth of Succos. In earlier times, they used to kiss the dirt on the ground of the *succah*, and the depth behind this matter is because even the dirt of the *succah* has the revelation of the *panim* of Hashem in it. Such earth is not merely “*adamah*” which earth is normally called, but *adamah*/earth that becomes *adameh l’elyon*, “I will resemble the One Above”.

It is the idea of *panim b’panim*, face-to-face with Hashem, the idea that the *giluy panim* (revelation of the “Face”) of Hashem fills every possible place. There is a verse, “*Hashem is your shadow*”, and the *Nefesh HaChaim* explains in the name of *Chazal* that just as a shadow is everywhere you go, so is Hashem everywhere you go. That is the “*tzeila d’mehemenusa*” (the “shade” or “shadow” of faith) that is Succos – it is a hint to how Hashem is the *tzeil*/shadow”, which refers to the level of “*panim b’panim*”, a return to the original plan of Creation, where the entire Creation is turned to face the *panim* of Hashem.

When such a dimension is revealed, a person is *medameh* (“resembling” and thereby emulating) to Hashem, and he becomes *domeh* (in the likeness of Hashem) to Hashem [elevated from the earth/*adamah* to *adameh l’elyon*].

“In The Shadow” of Hashem – On Succos A Person Can Feel Especially “Near” Hashem

The festival of Succos is called “*tzeila d’mehemenusa*” (in the shade/shadow of faith)²¹⁶, a term similar to the word “Betzelel”, which is from the words, “*b’tzeil Keil*” – “in the shadow of the Almighty.” Thus, Succos is a time where a person can especially feel the “*tzeila d’mehemenusa*”, how he is in the “shade” of Hashem, how Hashem is near him like his own shadow. The time and place of Succos (the *succah* itself) has the power to bring a person to be near Hashem [“*etzlo Yisborach*”, “near” Hashem – from the word *aitzel*, “near”, and from the word “*atzilus*”, the highest spiritual dimension].

There are three festivals – Pesach, Shavuot, and Succos. On Pesach, the concept of *korban pesach* was how a person could become especially near Hashem, for the *korban pesach* had to be *tzli* (roasted), which is from the word *aitzel*, near, a hint to being near Hashem. On Shavuot, we received the Torah, which is near Hashem. On Succos, we have the *succah*, which is called *tzeila d’mehemenusa*, a time and place where we can be especially near Hashem.

We explained that the depth of this is for a person to feel the “*panim b’panim*” of Hashem, where the *panim* of Hashem is revealed, through the *s’chach* and four *defanos*/walls of the *succah*, as well as through the airspace (*chahal*) in between the *succah*, and even in the ground of the *succah*. Thus, in all six directions of the *succah*, there is the *panim* of Hashem. That means that the revelation of the *panim* of Hashem is everywhere, in every place.

Even The Worst Sinners Can Feel Hashem On Succos

Even more so, the *succah* is called “*Succas Dovid HaNofeles*”, the “fallen *succah* of David.” This shows us that there is an aspect of *nefilas panim* (“fallen face”) in the *succah*. What is this *nefilas panim*? We find that Kayin had *nefilas panim*, when he was sad that Hashem didn’t accept his *korbon*, and Hashem said to him, “*Lamah naflu panecha*”, “Why has your face fallen”? *Chazal* say that on Succos, “the entire *Klal Yisrael* is able to sit in one *succah*”, which includes even the souls who have *nefilas panim*, the souls who have fallen into “*She’ol*” (the most depraved depths of sin). That means that the revelation of the *panim* of Hashem can extend even into lowest level, which is called “*She’ol*”.

Why The Seven Ushpizin Come Down To The Succah

On Succos, the seven “shepherds”, the *Ushpizin*²¹⁷, descend into the earth.²¹⁸ Why do they come down?

In Heaven, there is Gan Eden and Gehinnom, which are separated from each other by a hairsbreadth. But on Succos, where even the wicked are atoned for by the four species, (for the *aravah* atones for those who do *aveiros*), there is a unique revelation taking place on this lowly world we dwell on which does not take place in Heaven. The seven *Ushpizin* are willing to descend to this earth, in order to witness it.

In Heaven, there is *giluy panim* (revelation of Hashem’s radiance), but only in Gan Eden, and not in Gehinnom. In Gehinnom, there is *hester panim* (concealment of Hashem’s radiance), which is called “*She’ol*”. But on Succos, there is a revelation that even on this lowly realm, there can be *giluy panim* even in the ground, the lowliest plane of earth. This is a higher revelation than anything found in Heaven!

In Heaven there is a differentiation between the souls of the righteous and wicked, with Gan Eden and Gehinnom. But the seven “shepherds”, the *Ushpizin*, desire for the righteous and wicked to be unified, because they want the entire *Klal Yisrael* to be unified. They come down here to this earth on Succos, because their deep desire is to see the entire *Klal Yisrael* unified.

Chazal say, “One shepherd, to all of them.” On Succos, when “all of *Yisrael* can sit in one *succah*”, when even the wicked are atoned for by the *aravos* in the *lulav*, the seven shepherds come here to this world not only to see the *tzaddikim*, but even the wicked. They come down here to this world even though there is a *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) here, which makes it painful for them to come down here. *Chazal* say that the souls have difficulty coming down here to this world, where there is an evil inclination – and this is referring to Succos, where the *tzaddikim* descend to this world, to the *succah*, in order to see the unified level of *Klal Yisrael*, where the righteous and the wicked are all united through the concept of the *succah*.

Furthermore, all of the souls in the world are all together on Succos, because Succos is a time of judgment over water, and this connects all souls together, because the rain is needed by everyone.

During the rest of the year, there is “*nefilas apayim*”, which is also known as *tachanun* (supplication, where we cover our faces), which is a prayer that rectifies the souls who have fallen into the depths of sin, “*She’ol*” [However, this rectification does not connect everyone together all at once, because is *nefilas apayim*, the opposite of *giluy panim*].

217 “*Ushpizin*” – lit. “*Guests*” – the seven righteous individuals who come to the *succah* (on alternating nights) are: Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid.

218 *Zohar parshas Emor*, 103b

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But of Succos, where there is the revelation that there is *giluy panim* everywhere, it is said, “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin, and if one sinned, he shall repent and be atoned.” It is explained in many *sefarim hakedoshim* that Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur is the time of *teshuvah m'yirah* (repenting out of fear) and Succos is *teshuvah m'ahavah* (repenting out of love)²¹⁹, which is the higher level that returns everyone [and through the *teshuvah m'ahavah* on Succos, one can reach the point of “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin”].

Thus, on Succos, everyone is returned, and this is what is meant by the “*giluy panim*” of Hashem - which connects everyone together, all at once. For this revelation, the seven shepherds are willing to descend from Heaven onto this earth.

Seventy “Faces” To Torah – The Revelation of Hashem In All Possible Angles

There are “70 faces” (facets of understanding) in Torah. The “70 faces” of Torah are parallel to the 70 *korbonos* brought on Succos. The end of Succos celebrates the “completion of Torah”, which includes both the Written Torah and Oral Torah; the depth of completing the Written Torah is to celebrate the “70 faces” to the Torah. The root of these 70 is in the 7 *Ushpizin*, which connects all Jews together, where all possibilities of all faces are all revealed, in the Torah; all “70 faces” to the Torah. There is then “*giluy panim*” in all possible angles. This awakens the light of the giving of the Torah, where there was “*giluy panim*”.

The Spiritual Light on Succos

Based upon the above, we can now understand the following deep, awesome insight.

Succos is called “*ohr makif*”, “enveloping light”.²²⁰ Since *ohr makif* is so great that we cannot reach it and comprehend it, we need a *succah* to “shade” us from its powerful spiritual light, just like we need shade from the afternoon sun, when it is at its zenith. That is another reason why the *succah* is called “*tzeila d'mehemenusa*”, “in the shade, of faith”.

But there is also a deeper understanding to this, as follows.

Usually when light comes in through outside, the light that remains outside is the larger part of the the light, and the light that comes inside is a far lesser amount of light. Only a little bit of light from the outside can enter the inside of a room, through a window or opening. But in the *sefarim hakedoshim*, there is totally opposite approach, a more inner understanding, of how to understand the entry of spiritual light [“*ohr makif*”, enveloping light]: The part of the light that enters inside is actually the larger amount of light (and hence more important), whereas the part of the light that remains outside is the “smaller” amount of light (and less important).

On Succos, where there is “*ohr makif*” (enveloping light), this is not like light that comes from the outside, where only a small part of light enters inside and the greater part of the light remains outside. Rather, since the depth of Succos is the point of “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin”, which is a point that is in the depths of the *neshamah* - when this light found in the *pnim* (inside) of the *neshamah* is revealed, the light is so great that it extends outward.

²¹⁹ *Imrei HaRim (Chiddushei HaRim): Succos*

²²⁰ *Arizal: Shaar HaKavanos: derushei Chag HaSuccos, derush 3; further explained in Sfas Emes: Likutim: Succos, p.105*

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That is the inner meaning of the “*tzeila d’mehemenusa*” of the *succah*. Paralleling this concept, the 7 *Ushpizin* are also not coming “in” to the *succah* from the “outside” - rather; they are on the inside of the *succah*, and their illumination extends outward from the *succah*.

That is also why the “70 faces” to the Torah (revealed on Succos, as explained earlier) are called 70 “*panim*”; the word “*panim*” is from the word “*poneh*”, to turn, and also from the word “*pnim*”, “inside” – which means that whatever is in the *pnim*/inside, can be revealed outward.

That is Succos: The festival of Succos is the “*pnim*”, the inner dimension, which is being revealed outward. Succos contains the “*pnim*” (innerness) or the *panim* (face), which is revealed outward - like someone smiling at his friend, from deep within. That is the depth of Succos, and it is for this revelation that the seven *Ushpizin* are willing to descend from Heaven to!

In the upper realms, there is less inner light (*ohr penimi*) but more enveloping light (*ohr makif*). But since “truth sprouts from earth”, the perfected man can only come from this earth, there is light that comes from within man, and it can spread outward to those around oneself, where it becomes an “enveloping” light, *ohr makif*.

This is the meaning of the concept of *tzeila d’mehemenusa*, and to this level, the seven *Ushpizin* come down from Heaven for, on Succos, which is like a crack in our dimension that allows all the heavenly light to shine.

The *succah* shields us from the light coming from within ourselves, not from the outside. It is not like the difficulty in looking at the sun. We make a *succah*, a *tzeila d’mehemenusa*, so that the light shouldn’t spread past the *succah* into the surroundings and burn everyone from its high level of spiritual radiation. There can be so much spiritual “light” coming from within, that it spreads outward. On Rosh HaShanah, this light is covered, but on Succos, the moon is full, so the light is full, and it spreads outward. So that the light shouldn’t spread too far and burn everyone in its surroundings, we have the *succah* which contains it and thereby restricts this light into the *succah*.

The light of Succos reveals the level of “*panim*” [the *giluy panim*/revealed Countenance of Hashem] in all angles – above (represented by the *s’chach*), in all sides (represented by the walls of the *succah*), in between (the airspace of the *succah*), and below, (represented by the ground of the *succah*). When there is *giluy panim*, the spiritual light is coming from the inside. The light is not coming from the outside into the inside – rather, the light is coming from the inside, and spreading outward. This revealed light in all six directions of the *succah* represents the concept that the *he’aras panim* (the radiant countenance) of Hashem can be found everywhere, in every possible angle of every dimension.

Hashem's Light Is Everywhere

In clearer and simpler terms, when a person sees Hashem in everything, he sees the *panim* (“Face”) of Hashem in everything, whether in light or in darkness, as it is written, “*To speak in the morning of your kindnesses, and of your faith at nights*”. It is to see Hashem in every place, even where there is darkness [difficulty].

Yaakov made *succos* (huts) to camp in, and *Chazal* teach that he made one *succah* for day and one *succah* for night. The *succah* he made at night represents “*your faith at nights*”, that even at nighttime, in darkness, there is the light of the *succah*.

The light of the *succah* is not light coming from the outside into the *succah*, but a light that comes from within the space of the *succah*. The *succah* itself is filled with light, its ground has *giluy panim* in it, and this light spreads outward.

The Depth of “Stay With Me, One More Day”

One can also return to this light on Simchas Torah, where we make a celebration in honor of “the completion of the Torah”.

Of the last day of Succos, Hashem says, “Stay with Me, one more day”.²²¹ The depth of this matter is that it is a day where when one can see that Hashem is found in all six directions – above, on all sides, in the space between, and even in the ground; when one realizes that there is nowhere else to go other than being near Hashem.

This is the meaning of “Stay with Me” – it does not mean simply that we will leave Hashem afterwards, but that we can reach the very depths of the festival of Succos, which is to be near Hashem and with Him; to be enveloped by Hashem (the concept of *ohr makif*, the “enveloping light), to feel surrounded by His *panim*/Face, so to speak.

The word “*succah*” is from the word *Yiskah* (the other name of Sarah), from the term “*sochov b’ruach hakodesh*”, “enveloped by the holy spirit”, which sees in all six directions. Succos reveals the idea that when we see nothing else around us in all six directions other than the Presence of Hashem, we are “staying” with Hashem Himself.

The Enveloping Light On Succos

That is the inner essence of Succos.

Just as we can understand that man wears clothing, and he is above his clothing, even though his clothing surrounds him, so too on Succos, if we reach the inner essence of Succos, we can reach the understanding that although the *succah* envelopes man, it is really the inner light which can spread outward from man and envelope him. Every day, we have the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*, which surrounds a person, and this can remind us of this concept.

The root of this concept is when we stood by Har Sinai, where the mountain was suspended in the air above us and it surrounded us, where we were forced to accept the Torah. The Maharal explains that it was not simply that we were forced to accept the Torah. Rather, when the mountain was suspended in the air above us, the entire people had such clarity then, when they were trapped under the mountain, and this clarity enveloped them and enabled them to receive the light of Hashem’s Torah. That is Succos.

²²¹ *Rashi to Vayikra 23:36*

Throughout the year, especially on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, there is *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, accepting the yoke of Heaven, upon us. On Succos, there is a different level: we are surrounded by the *succah*, which resembles being surrounded and enveloped by Har Sinai, when the mountain was suspended above us. Succos is an extension of this concept, where the mountain of Har Sinai is suspended above us – which, as it is clear to any sensible person, is really referring to the light of Torah, a light that constricts us to its place. The *succah* also constricts the light to its place, so that it shouldn't spread outward.

"Ain Od Milvado – Even In The Emptiest Space In The World"

When one reaches a palpable sense of *Ain Od Milvado* ("There is nothing besides for Him"), that Hashem is everywhere, even in the "*chalalo shel olam*", "even in emptiest space in the world" – one can then reveal the truest level of "*panim*", which is the *ohr panim* (the light of the Face/Countenance) of Hashem, which we express in the words, **כִּי בְאוֹר פְּנֵיךְ נָתַתְנוּ לָנוּ**, "*For in the light of Your Face, You gave to us, Hashem our G-d*". That is the light of Succos!

The root of Succos is in the act of Creation, when Hashem made the heavens and the earth. We have Yom Kippur as a time of atonement, and afterwards we have Succos, where we return to a semblance of Hashem creating the world, which consists of the heavens and the earth. Succos is "*tzeila d'mehemenusa*", similar to the word "Betzael", who knew the secret of how to combine the letters of the heavens and earth. Building a *succah* is therefore a semblance of building the heavens and earth which Hashem made.

The Serpent told Adam and Chavah that man is a builder of universes. Although it was using this argument in order to convince them to sin, there was a kernel of truth to this argument, in that man has the power to build words, to build heaven and earth together - through building the *succah*.

The essence of Succos is that there is *Ain Od Milvado* within all of *chalal*/space; as in the teaching of the Sages, "*Ain Od Milvado*, even in the empty space of the world". There is "*Ain Od Milvado*" [or *giluy panim* of Hashem] even in the *chalal*/space of the *succah*.

Therefore, the entire world is nothing but a giant amount of concealment (*hester*) that hides Hashem's light.²²² The *succah* conceals and constricts the light of Hashem; the *succah* itself is not the light of Hashem, it is just the "*tzeila d'mehemenusa*", "the shadow of faith", because, from a deep understanding, it is but a "shadow" of the light of Hashem, and not the light itself.

The *succah* conceals the *ohr*/light of Hashem, by keeping it contained in that space and not letting it spread past the walls of the *succah*. In that sense, it conceals Hashem's light, keeping it within the *succah* alone. In the future, the light will be allowed to spread everywhere.

²²² For further insight into this matter (and how to go beyond the view of "*hester panim*"), see Tefillah #0120 – Finding The Shechinah

In Conclusion

The more we merit, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to contemplate and recognize the meaning of “*Ain Od Milvado*” (There is nothing besides Him), we will merit the light of Succos to come from within our own inner light, and not from the outside. It will then spread outward, and then the spiritual light of Succos will become a light that envelopes all of the surroundings.

In the future, this light will extend into the rest of the world. That is the depth of why the gentiles in the future will kick the *succah*, because Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath then, which means on a deeper level that the light will spread into all of the surroundings, and it will be unrestrained [as the *Gemara* there says, the righteous will be healed by this light, whereas the wicked will suffer from it; hence, the gentiles will kick the *succah* in the future, because they will not want this light]. This will be the “new light of Zion” that will illuminate the world.²²³

²²³ For more on the topic of the “*ohr panim*” of Hashem, see *Tefillah* #0166 – *Leaving The Disparate View*

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“Moed” - A “Meeting” With Hashem

Yom Tov is called *moed*. *Moed* comes from the word *vaad*, which means “gathering” or “meeting.” Who are we meeting with? With Hashem! When a person makes up to meet with his friend, they make up that they will meet in a certain place. Where is the place that Hashem would meet us in? In the *Beis Hamikdash*. In the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, there was a *mitzvah* three times a year to go up to the *Beis Hamikdash*. It was an eye-to-eye meeting with Hashem, just like when two friends meet each other and make eye contact.

Nowadays, we have no *Beis Hamikdash*. Where then can we meet with Hashem? *Yom Tov* is our meeting with Hashem. It continues to exist, long after we no longer have a *Beis Hamikdash*.

Hashem is fully ready to meet us – He is everywhere. Nothing is holding Him back. The only thing that prevents a person from meeting with Hashem is his very *self*. If a person manages to remove the barrier holding him back – his very self – he would then be able to meet Hashem, wherever he is. *The Mesillas Yesharim*²²⁵ writes that a person who is constantly connected with Hashem is considered to always be walking with Him, even as he lives here on this physical world.

When a person is always connected to Hashem in his life, even though he has no *Beis Hamikdash* to meet with Him, he himself has become like a *Beis Hamikdash* – and he can meet with Him.

Every *Yom Tov* has an inner power in it that enables a person to meet with Hashem. A person has to receive the inner point of each *Yom Tov* which will connect him with Hashem. On *Succos*, what is that inner point of *Yom Tov* that can connect a person with Hashem?

Removing the Barriers

On *Shabbos Chol HaMoed Succos*, *Chazal* established that we read the book of Koheles.²²⁶ This is not a coincidence that we read Koheles specifically on *Succos*. There must be some connection between the book of Koheles and the theme of *Succos*; otherwise, why would *Chazal* establish that we read Koheles on *Succos*?

Shlomo Hamelech begins the book of Koheles with, “*Hevel havalim* (“futility of futilities”), so says Koheles; *hevel havalim*, everything is *hevel havalim*.” Rashi brings from *Chazal* the following: “Koheles is making an announcement and saying that all of Creation is futile; he says “*hevel*” seven times in the possuk, corresponding to the seven days of Creation.”

The commentators are perplexed: How could Shlomo HaMelech say such a thing?! How could he say that Hashem’s Creation is all futility and vanity? The depth of the matter appears to be as follows. The world is called “*olam*”, from the

²²⁴ This chapter is adapted from *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Vol. V, p.277 – 280.

<http://www.bilvavi.net/english/bilvavi-part-5-277-succos-and-koheles>

²²⁵ chapter 26

²²⁶ *Ecclesiasties*

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word “*he’elam*” – “concealment.” This world really conceals Hashem from being revealed to us. The world – this world of *he’elam* – was created in seven days; in other words, there are seven levels of *he’elam*. A person’s job on this world is to remove all the *he’elam* – to remove all the barriers between him and Hashem – and come to reveal Hashem. All of a person’s *avodah* is essentially to show how all of creation is one big *he’elam*.

When a person comes to really feel that all of Creation is *hevel* - in that it conceals Hashem from us – he personally reveals Hashem in his life. He essentially enters the state of before Creation, in which there was no *he’elam* yet; he will be able to become constantly attached to Hashem as a result. Anything which deters a person from being attached with Hashem is a kind of *he’elam*. When a person manages to remove that barrier from upon himself – he views everything as *hevel*, since it’s all getting in the way of revealing Hashem onto the world – he will be able to always become attached to Hashem. This is the inner point that one can reveal on *Succos*. This is the way how one meets with Hashem on the *Yom Tov* of *Succos*.

Reb Chatzkel Levenstein *zt”l* once said that it’s not enough for a person to read the book of Koheles written by Shlomo Hamelech; every single person has to write the words “*Hevel havalim...everything is hevel havalim*”, and these words have to be ingrained in one’s blood. A person has to feel clearly in his heart that this world is completely *hevel* – it leads us astray from Hashem. This is the *avodah* of *Succos*: write your own personal *sefer* Koheles!

Before and After the Beis Hamikdash

When the *Beis Hamikdash* existed, a person had special Heavenly assistance to reach utter closeness with Hashem and get past all the barriers of this world. He would bring the *korbonos* (sacrifices) and eliminate the physical aspect of the animal, transforming the physical into the spiritual. He would reveal G-dliness in what was previously something totally physical, something that was a kind of *he’elam*.

Now that the *Beis Hamikdash* isn’t around, we have to accomplish this very same goal, but through the abilities of our soul. We need to eradicate the *he’elam* of this world and instead to come meet with the Creator of the world – the state of total attachment with Him that existed before creation, when there was no *he’elam* yet.



HOSHANNAH RABBAH

15 | Separating From “Erev Rav”²²⁷Understanding The Depth Behind Hoshanah Rabbah

On *Succos*, we take four species²²⁸, one of which is the *aravos*²²⁹. The *aravos* serve two purposes. They are part of the four species, and they are also used as “*hoshanos*”²³⁰ [the additional pair of willow branches that we take on the day of *Hoshanah Rabbah*].

On the seventh day of *Succos*, *Hoshanah Rabbah*, in the *Beis HaMikdash*, we would circle the *Mizbeiach* (Altar) seven times and then bang the *Hoshanos* on the side of the Altar. There is an argument in the *Gemara* if the *Hoshanos* were shaken along with the other Four Species or not. *Succos* is for 7 days. The 7th day of *Succos*, though, is different than the other days of *Succos* entirely; it is a day that is all about the *Aravos/Hoshanos*. We would circle the Altar for 7 times on the 7th day of *Succos* with the *hoshanos*, and it had special *halachos*.

The 7th day of the week is Shabbos, which comes after the 6 days of the week. Shabbos is from the word *shevisah*, to rest, and it is also called *yom hashvii*, the seventh day. We have Shabbos and we have the three festivals; Shavuos is one day, while Pesach and *Succos* both have a seventh day. What is the difference between the 7th of Pesach and the 7th of *Succos*, though? The 7th day of Pesach is a *Yom Tov*, whereas the 7th day of *Succos* is *Hoshanah Rabbah*, which is not a *Yom Tov*; as we see that we may perform work on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. It has some *halachos* similar to *Yom Tov*²³¹, but it does not have the status of an actual “*Yom Tov*”. Shabbos is called “*shvii*” (the seventh), and it is also called “*zecher l’maaseh Beraishis*”, a remembrance of the act of Creation.

Where else do we find the concept of “*shvii*” in time? We find a concept of *shvii* on Pesach and *Succos*, which each have 7 days of *Yom Tov*. But there is a difference: On Pesach, the seventh day is a *Yom Tov*, whereas the seventh day of *Succos* is not a festival like Shabbos or *Yom Tov*.

The 7th day of *Succos*, *Hoshanah Rabbah*, therefore, reveals an entirely novel concept to us.

Gentiles and Succos

The *Gemara* states that a non-Jew who keeps Shabbos is liable to the death penalty²³². Shabbos is called the “inheritance of the Jewish people”, which the gentiles have no connection with, and therefore, they have no right to keep it. But what about *Yom Tov* (the festivals) - do the gentiles have connection with any of our festivals?

With Pesach and Shavuos, we see clearly that gentiles have no connection to these festivals. Pesach is about the redemption from Egypt, in which the Jewish people were made into the nation of Hashem, which clearly has nothing to do

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228 *Lulav* (palm branch), *esrog* (citron), *hadadim* (myrtle branches), and *aravos* (willow branches)

229 Willow branches; “*aravos*” is plural for “*aravah*”

230 On the seventh day of *Succos*, which is called *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we bang five *Aravos* on the ground after we recite *Halel* and *Hakafos*.

231 See *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim* 664 and *Mishnah Berurah* *ibid*.

232 *Chagigah* 13a

with gentiles. Shavuot is about the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people; it also has nothing to do with the gentiles. When it comes to the festival of *Succos*, however, we find that the gentiles do have some kind of connection with it.

1) First of all, the 70 *korbonos* brought on *Succos* are parallel to the 70 nations of the world, as the *Gemara* said. This was not merely to ward off the impurity of the nations. It shows us that they have some connection to *Succos*, because if they would have no connection to *Succos*, then there would be no need to have the 70 *korbonos* on *Succos*!

2) A second proof is that it is brought in the book of *Zechariah*²³³ that gentiles in the future who brought *korbonos* will merit to rejoice in Yerushalayim. So we see that gentiles can have a connection with *Succos*.

3) Even more so, the *Gemara*²³⁴ states that the gentiles will want reward in the future, and Hashem will give them an “easy *mitzvah*” – *sukkah* - which they won’t be able to keep. This hints to us that gentiles do have some connection with *Succos*. Hashem will allow the gentiles to enter the *sukkah* on *Succos*, so it must be that they do have some connection to it.

4) Our Sages state that each of the festivals are parallel to one of our *Avos*. *Succos* is parallel to Avraham *Avinu*, for Avraham had the Clouds of Glory, and the *Succos* are in remembrance to the Clouds of Glory. *Succos* is also parallel to Yaakov *Avinu*, who made *Succos* (huts) when he camped. Of Yaakov the possuk says, “*U’lmikeneihu, asah Succos*”, that when he camped, he made *Succos*/huts for his family. The Sages state that the gentiles in the future will serve the Jewish people, so we see that they will connect with us. The *Gemara* states that the Jewish people are called *adam* (man), while gentiles are not called *adam*; if they are not *adam*, what are they? They are called “*miknehu*” (possessions), for in the future, they will become the possessions/servants of the Jewish people. The concept of *sukkah* is connected with the possuk “*U’lmikneihu, asah Succos*”, thus, once again we see that there is some connection between *sukkah* and gentiles.

5) Furthermore, the *Zohar* says that the three guests who came to Avraham were told to wait under the “shade” of the tree, and this alludes to the “shade” of the *sukkah*, so again we see that gentiles have a connection with *sukkah*.

The question is, though: What do gentiles have to do with the *sukkah*?

When the guests came to Avraham *Avinu*, the Midrash says that they looked like “*aravayim*”, Arab nomads. The word *aravayim* is from the word “*aravah*”. From all the four species, the *aravah* is considered the least important [as the Sages compare the *esrog* and *lulav* and *hadasim* to the righteous, and the *aravos* are compared to the wicked]. Yet, although the *aravah* is the least prominent, it is still part of the Four Species; it can connect to the other species and become lifted together with them. If gentiles have a connection with *sukkah*, it must mean that they also have a connection with the Four Species.

This we can see from *aravos*. The *aravos* have no taste and no smell, as *Chazal* say; they correspond to the wicked people of the world. Yet, we take the *aravos* with the Four Species in one *agudah*/bundle and we shake all of them together, so that the *aravos* can become rectified.

Thus, we see that the nations of the world (represented by the *aravos*) are able to connect themselves to the Jewish people.

Hoshanos/Aravos and “Erev Rav”

²³³ One of the books of “*Trei Asar*” of the Prophets.

²³⁴ *Avodah Zarah* 3a

Sukkah is called “a remembrance of the redemption from Egypt”. When we left Egypt, the Torah says that “*Erev Rav*” (the Mixed Multitude) also came with us. The *Erev Rav* connects themselves to the Jewish people, who are called the *agudah achas* (one bundle). The *aravos* represent the *Erev Rav* souls who annex themselves onto the *agudah* (bundle) that is Yisrael.

The *Yom HaShvii* (seventh day) of *Succos* is called *Hoshanah Rabbah* – why is it called so? Why do we call it *Hoshanah Rabbah* specifically? The simple meaning of this is because we take many *hoshanos* on this day; we have a *ribuy* (plethora) of *hoshanos*, hence, it is called “*Hoshanah Rabbah*.” But there is also a deeper reason.

The *Shulchan Aruch* states in the name of the *Rokeiach* that on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we remove the knot binding together the Four Species. Normally, the Four Species must be tied together, but on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we remove the binding of the Four Species [which symbolizes a breach in our *agudah achas* – caused by the *Erev Rav* amidst us].

But what causes the disconnection from amongst ourselves in the first place? What causes the disparity amongst us that we need to bind ourselves together? It is due to the presence of the souls of the *Erev Rav* within the Jewish people. The Sages state that *Erev Rav* married the women of the tribe of Shimon. They mixed with us, and their mixture into our nation breaks the unity of the Jewish people.

There is the *Erev Rav*, and there is also a small group of Egyptian souls that converted, who are called “*Erev Zeir*” [whom Yosef circumcised]. The *aravos* of the first six days represent the *Erev Zeir*.²³⁵ The *aravos* of *Hoshanah Rabbah* represent *Erev Rav*; for the word “*rav*” is the same concept as the word “*rabbah*” (they both mean “many”).

There are five groupings of *Erev Rav*²³⁶, and we take five *aravos* on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. It is because on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, a new mixture enters us: the *Erev Rav*. The *aravos* of *Hoshanah Rabbah* represent the mixture of the *Erev Rav*, who connect themselves to the Jewish people.

Hoshanah Rabbah – The “Seal Within A Seal”

Thus, *Hoshanah Rabbah* is called the “seal within a seal” (*chotam b'toch chotam*). On Rosh HaShanah, our decree is written, and on Yom Kippur, we are sealed. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we are “sealed within a seal”, similar to the *halachah* that wine must be sealed within a seal [or else it becomes *yayin nesech*, wine which is suspected of being used by a gentile for idol worship].

Why isn't one seal enough, though? Why it is necessary for us to have to be sealed again within the seal?

“The seal of Hashem is truth”. There are levels of truth – *emes* (truth), and *emes l'emitah*, a more refined level of truth. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we are within the seal [being that we were already sealed on Yom Kippur], but we are still not sealed from the *Erev Rav*, because the *Erev Rav* connects themselves to the Jewish people; they are amidst us, so it is not enough if we are merely sealed once. *Erev Rav* is within the bounds (*techum*) of the Jewish people; thus, one seal/*chotam* is not enough to be sealed from them.

Therefore, we need another “*chotam*” **within** the *chotam*”. (*Chotam/techum* have the same letters). That is why we need *Hoshanah Rabbah* to save us from the influences of the five kinds of *Erev Rav*.

²³⁵ Editor's Note: It seems that the souls of “*Erev Zeir*” requires a lower kind of rectification, for they are not as evil as *Erev Rav*; for we only take two *Aravos* in the first six days. Whereas the *Erev Rav* souls require five *Hoshanos* to rectify them, which implies that it is harder to rectify them.

²³⁶ *Tikkunei HaZohar* 41b

Banging The Hoshanos On The Ground

This is the deeper meaning of why we bang the *hoshanos* on the ground. Why do we bang the *hoshanos* on the ground? The simple understanding is that when we bang them on the ground, it causes the Heavenly sustenance to descend from Heaven down to this lowly earth.

But there is also a deeper understanding, as follows.

The first time in the Torah where the term *succos* is mentioned is by Yaakov Avinu, when Yaakov made *succos* (huts) for his flock. However, the root of the concept of *succah* is first mentioned by Avraham Avinu, by the tree of Avraham Avinu, which was like a “*succah* for shade” that all wandering passerby could come under and rest by. The “*succah*” of Avraham Avinu came before the *succos* which Yaakov made, so it is the root of the concept of *sukkah*.

By the tree of Avraham Avinu which provided shade for passerby, which served as the root of all of *succos* to come, we find that although Avraham converted the gentiles who came to him, he did not convert everyone. *Chazal* state that the guests would first take shade under the tree outside his tent. If the tree allowed the guest under its shade, it was a sign that the guest was proper, and then Avraham would allow him to become converted; but if the tree did not take the guest under its shade, it was a sign that the person was not worthy.

We find two root “trees” in the Creation: the *Eitz HaChaim* (the Tree of Life), and the *Eitz HaDaas* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil). By Avraham’s guests, only those who were worthy were allowed by the tree to come under its leaves. Avraham’s tree corresponds to the *Eitz HaChaim*. The guests who weren’t worthy were rooted in the *Eitz HaDaas* (which is the root of the *Erev Rav*), thus, the “*Eitz HaChaim*” did not allow them under its shade.

The tree of Avraham, which provided shade (for worthy guests), is reminiscent of a *sukkah*, which is called the “*tzeila d’hemunasa*” (to sit under “the shade of *emunah*”) – otherwise known as the *Shechinah* (Hashem’s Presence on this world); otherwise known as the “*Eitz HaChaim*”.

On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we take five *aravos* and bang them on the ground, which is the earth – in other words, we take the “tree” (of the *Eitz HaDaas*) and we bang it on the earth. This is referring to sin, for sin is associated with the element of earth (the root of trees), and the harbinger of the curse of death upon mankind.

Of a Torah scholar, it is written, “*And his leaves will not wither.*”²³⁷ The Torah scholar resembles a perfect tree, whose leaves do not wither; this corresponds to the *Eitz HaChaim*. When we bang the *hoshanos*, the leaves fall off, and this corresponds to the leaves of the *Eitz HaDaas*, the tree whose leaves can ‘wither’.

The *Erev Rav* corresponds to the leaves of the *hoshanos* which must be banged on the ground, so that the leaves fall off. This shows that we need to ‘knock off’ the ‘leaves’ of *Erev Rav* from amidst us.

Thus, the *aravos* that we take on the seventh day of *Succos*, so that we can bang *hoshanos* with them, have a special role which the *aravos* of the first six days aren’t able to accomplish. The *aravos* of *Hoshanah Rabbah* which are banged on the ground contains the power to separate the *Erev Rav* from us, who wish to latch onto us.

The *Erev Rav* is the root of all the nations of the world, which want to connect to the Jewish people. Whereas the other nations of the world are given some degree of connection with us [such as on *Succos*, where *korbonos* are brought for all 70 nations of the world], the *Erev Rav* may not ever be allowed into our nation.

²³⁷ *Tehillim 1*

On Pesach, we left Egypt, and that was when the *Erev Rav* first came to mix with us. At Shavuot, right after we received the Torah, they mixed with us again to cause the sin of the Golden Calf. On *Succos* once again they come back once again to connect with us, but on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we are given the power to separate them from amidst us.

Thus, when the *aravos* are banged on the ground on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we separate them from us by sending them back down to the earth.

The Seal of Hoshanah Rabbah and The Seal of the Bris Kodesh

Hoshanah Rabbah is called a “*chotam b'toch chotam*”, a seal within a seal. The *Bris Kodesh* (or *Bris Milah*) is also called “*chotam*”, the sign that is stamped into our flesh, “*And on the covenant which You have sealed in our flesh*” [as we say in *Birchas HaMazon*].

Erev Rav mixed with Yisrael by marrying the women of Shimon, meaning, they attempt to connect with Yisrael through the *Bris Kodesh* [because marriage is called “*bris*”]. The fact that the *Erev Rav* connects to Yisrael through *Bris Kodesh* is what causes damage to our *Bris Kodesh*. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, though, we have a “*chotam b'toch chotam*” – the seal within a seal – we seal ourselves from even the *Erev Rav*.

Hoshanah Rabbah: Rectifying The Gentile Nations of the World

Shabbos, besides for being called Shabbos, is also called *shvii*, the seventh day. The festivals which have seven days are Pesach and *Succos*. The 7th day of Pesach is called *shvii* because it's a *Yom Tov*, and also because it is called “*Shabbos hi lachem*”; it is forbidden from labor, just like Shabbos. It is a *Yom Tov* on the level of Shabbos. But the 7th day of *Succos*, *Hoshanah Rabbah*, which is also called a *Yom Tov*, is not on the level of Shabbos, because it is permitted to work on *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

What, indeed, is the difference? If a gentile keeps Shabbos, the *Gemara* says that he is liable to death. This shows us that a gentile has no connection with Shabbos. On *Succos*, however, there is a “seventh day” which is not Shabbos – *Hoshanah Rabbah* – which enables a gentile to connect to *Yisrael*. They can connect to us either for good purposes or for evil purposes.

Hoshanah Rabbah is thus the point in time that enables the gentiles of the world to come into the Jewish people and connect with us, whereupon they can be uplifted and rectified. The evil side of this, however, is the *Erev Rav* coming in. The holy side of this is the converts which Adam and Sarah enabled.

So *Hoshanah Rabbah* contains both evil and good kinds of connection. The good part of it is the fact that gentiles have the opportunity to connect with the Jewish people and become rectified, but the evil side is that *Erev Rav* is coming in, who cannot be rectified and who must not be allowed entry.

Thus, on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we need to separate from the *Erev Rav* coming in to us through the many *hoshanos* that we bang. At the same time, it is the time which enables converts to come into the Jewish people; as we see that the souls of the converts can come under Avraham *Avinu*'s tree, the “*Eitz HaChaim*”, and become rectified.

Herein lays the light of the redemption: *Moshiach* comes from converts, from Dovid, who is from Rus, a convert.

Succos – The Connecting Point Between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur

In the seventh month of the year, Tishrei, we have Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and *Succos*.

The world is judged four times a year – Pesach, Shavuos, Rosh HaShanah, and *Succos*. That is one revelation of Tishrei: Rosh HaShanah is the root day of judgment, and the three festivals are branches of the judgment of Rosh HaShanah.

Yom Kippur is about atonement, and it extends into Rosh Chodesh, which is called *moed*, and the Sages said that Rosh Chodesh is a time of *kaparah*, atonement, because on Rosh Chodesh the moon is lessened.

So we have two roots of judgment: Rosh HaShanah, the root judgment of the three festivals (which each have specific judgments), and Yom Kippur, which is the root of Rosh Chodesh. Yom Kippur and Rosh Chodesh are both about atonement. On a more subtle note, however, there is *kaparah* also on Rosh Hashanah, as the shofar is blown to cover up sin from the Satan.

Even more so, however, it is *Succos* which connects Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur. What is the connection? Rosh Hashanah is the time of judgment; therefore, *Succos* is related to Rosh HaShanah. *Succos* is the time of judgment over water. *Succos* is also a continuation of Yom Kippur, so it is a time of atonement: Yom Kippur was when we were atoned from the sin of the Golden Calf, which was caused by the *Erev Rav*. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we are atoned from the *Erev Rav* - through banging the *hoshanos*.

Thus, *Succos* contains two different aspects: it is part of the three festivals and therefore it is a judgment, which makes it similar to Rosh HaShanah, but it is also a time of an atonement, similar to Yom Kippur; it is an atonement from *Erev Rav*, and it is the time to ward off the effects of the *Erev Rav*.

This is the depth behind the time of *simcha* (joy) that is *Succos*. There are ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which are about getting sealed for the judgment. *Succos* combines Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur together because *Succos* is a time of both judgment and atonement, which enables us to have *simcha*. Thus, we have seen here another facet of understanding in the concept of the “*chotam b'toch chotam*” that is on *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

Hoshanah Rabbah – Combining The Seal of Rosh HaShanah With The Seal of Yom Kippur

Another facet of understanding to the concept of “*chotam b'toch chotam*” is as follows: there is another *chatimah* taking place, even after we have been sealed on Yom Kippur.

On Rosh Hashanah, there is a *chatimah* (seal) on the *tzaddikim* (for a good year) and the wicked (for a bad year), and on Yom Kippur there is a *chatimah* on the *beinonim* (the average people). On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, though, there is a “*chotam b'toch chotam*” - meaning, the *chatimah* of Rosh Hashanah is combined with the *chatimah* of Yom Kippur.

On Rosh HaShanah, we sing, “*If we are like children, have mercy on us like a father on his children, if we are like servants, have mercy on us like a master on his servant*”. Either we are like a *ben* (child) to Hashem or we are like an “*eved*” (servant) to Hashem, but either way, we asked to be sealed. On Yom Kippur, we have either been sealed as a “*ben*” or as an “*eved*”.

When it comes *Hoshanah Rabbah*, there is a “*chotam b'toch chotam*” – meaning, the levels of “*ben*” and “*eved*” are combined, through the inner seal that takes place on *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

A Seal Within A Seal: The Point Of No Sin

There is yet another facet of understanding to this concept of “*chotam b'toch chotam*”, as follows.

The *Gemara* says that Adam delayed his *Bris Milah*; he was born circumcised. The fact that he delayed his *Bris Milah* is linked to the sin. In other words, he only had one *chotam* on his flesh. A “*chotam b'toch chotam*” on his flesh would imply that when there is no possibility for evil.

There is *orlah* (foreskin) on the *Bris Kodesh*, which we remove, and there is also *orlah* on trees, which forbids the fruit of the first three years to be eaten. Connect this with the fact that there was a tree outside Avraham's tent, which was like the *Eitz HaChaim*, which only allowed proper guests. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, when there is a “*chotam b'toch chotam*”, it represents the level in which it is not possible for there to be any damage to the *Bris*.

Thus, the “tree” which we see under in *Succos* – the *sukkah* - is not affected by *orlah*. An *esrog* is the only fruit which has the same taste as the bark, therefore it has no *orlah*. This refers to a tree which has no *orlah*, the tree of Avraham *Avinu*, the *Eitz HaChaim*, the *sukkah*.

The “*tzeil*” (shadow) of the *Eitz HaDaas* is the *tzeil* that symbolizes death, whereas the “*tzeil*” of the *Eitz HaChaim* is like the “*tzeil*” of *sukkah*. The *esrog* is a fruit which has no *orlah* - like the *Eitz HaChaim*.

The Aravos of Succos: Rectifying The Nations

Of the Four Species, it is the *esrog* which is a fruit. The *lulav* is not a fruit, but it bears fruit. The *hadasim* have a scent, while the *aravos* have no taste and no fruit. The Sages revealed that *aravos* represent the wicked, who have no Torah and no *mitzvos*, and that they are rectified through taking them together with the other species, which symbolizes that they can have become connected to the Jewish people and become rectified.

On *Succos*, we are judged on the water. Water has no taste – which really means that it is above taste. We make a blessing of *shehakol* on water, which says that everything belongs to Hashem. Water symbolizes “everything”, that “everything” belongs to Hashem. Thus, when we are judged on *Succos* for the water, we are being judged for the *klal*, for the collective unit of things.

A gentile asked one of the Sages, “When is the entire world happy?” The Sage answered, “When it rains.” When it rains, the whole world is happy. On *Succos* we are judged on the water, and on *Succos* we have happiness; it is universal happiness, because the entire world needs water. *Succos* is a joy about water - and the *aravos* grow near the water. So the judgment on water is not just about *Klal Yisrael*; it is about the *klal* (collective unit) of the entire world.

Every day we make a blessing that we are not a gentile. A woman makes the blessing, “That You made me according to His will”. This alludes to the concept behind the *shehakol* blessing we make on water that everything is according to Hashem's will.

Succos is the judgment on water. Rosh HaShanah is judgment over all the people in the world, Yom Kippur is an atonement only for the Jewish people, and *Succos* comes to connect Rosh HaShanah with Yom Kippur together, so that there can be an atonement for the rest of the world as well; thus, *Succos* is the concept of how converts can enter the Jewish people, that it is possible for the nations of the world to become elevated.

'Erev Rav' Is Rectified Only Through Being Destroyed

But there is *Erev Rav* too coming along with them, who also wish to connect with the Jewish people. We are not allowed to let them come in. Therefore, on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we bang the *hoshanos*, to nullify the *Erev Rav*, the root of the nations. The only way to rectify them is to destroy them, so we send them back to the “earth”, by banging them on the ground.

This is contrast with the rest of the nations of the world, whom we can accept, and these are rooted in the converts that Avraham took in. This is the depth of why the rest of the nations of the world can be atoned for on *Succos*.

On the last day of *Succos*, we bring 7 *korbonos*, parallel to the 7 root nations of the world, which each became 10 nations; that is how the 70 nations were formed. These 7 root nations can be allowed to convert. Thus, the 7th day of *Succos*, *Hoshanah Rabbah*, represents the idea of converting the 70 nations of the world and elevating them to holiness. This is another depth behind the “*chotam b'toch chotam*” on *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

In contrast to Yom Kippur which atones only for *Klal Yisrael* and not the gentiles, *Succos* connects the gentiles to *Klal Yisrael*, so that they can be atoned for. The gentiles will go to the *Beis HaMikdash* in the future, as the possuk in *Zecharya* says, so we see that the nations will become rectified.

This is revealed through the concept of *Hoshanah Rabbah*, through the “*chotam b'toch chotam*”, which represents the point that is above all *cheit* (sin) - the point in time before there was even a possibility of sin: the point of before Creation. This is the original, pure light which can rectify the nations of the world in the future. Thus *Hoshanah Rabbah* represents that idea of rectifying the entire world.

But the *Erev Rav* cannot be rectified [in the normal sense]. They can only be ‘rectified’ when we destroy them. And so, we bang the *hashanos* on the ground on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, to nullify the effect of the *Erev Rav*, to symbolize how their rectification will only lay in their destruction.

Succos thus reflects the concept of returning all of the nations [except *Erev Rav*] of the world to the perfected level of Creation before the *cheit* – and that is the pure point which rectifies them.

The Depth of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah

In the future, the gentiles will be rectified, as the verse in *Zecharyah* says. However, *Klal Yisrael* will still be more important than the gentiles, even when the gentiles are pure again.

This is the secret behind *Shemini Atzeres*. The *Midrash* states that on *Shemini Atzeres*, Hashem tells us to remain with Him for one more day. The deeper meaning of this is because on the 7th day of *Succos*, we have unified the gentiles with Yisrael, and when the 7 days are over, now comes the next level: *Shemini Atzeres*, which contains *Simchas Torah*.

There are two kinds of *simcha* (joy) found in the month of *Tishrei*. On Yom Kippur, we received the second pair of *Luchos*, which can be considered to be a degree of *Simchas Torah* to us. And we also have the actual *Simchas Torah* that is on *Shemini Atzeres*. So there are two kinds of *Simchas Torah* that we have.

What is the difference between the two kinds of *Simchas Torah*? The *Simchas Torah* that we have on Yom Kippur was that the second *Luchos* rectified the sin of the Golden Calf. But the *Simchas Torah* of *Shemini Atzeres* comes after *Hoshanah Rabbah*, after we have been sealed in the “*chotam b'toch chotam*”, which is the level that is beyond any possibility of sin.

The Sages said, “Praiseworthy is the one who never sinned” – this refers to the inner light, the original light that was around before Creation, the point in the soul in which there is no possibility of sin. The revelation of this point is on *Shemini Atzeres*, after we have the “*chotam b’toch chotam*” of *Hoshanah Rabbah*; it calls for a new kind of *Simchas Torah*, which we have on *Shemini Atzeres*.

The *simchah* that we have on *Simchas Torah* is called a “*simcha l’gomrah shel Torah*”, a joy upon completing the Torah. When we make a blessing in the morning to learn the Torah, we ask Hashem, “*V’haarev na*”, that Hashem should make the words of Torah sweet to us. The sweetness of Torah learning, which is called “*areivus*”, is especially what can counter the *Erev Rav*, the evil souls in Creation who wish to take us away from the Torah.

On *Simchas Torah/Shemini Atzeres*, it is revealed the light in which there is no sin, thus, it is the time where we make a *simcha* over the completion of the Torah. After *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we can come to the level of *Simchas Torah*.

The *Shemini Atzeres* we have in today’s times is a lower kind of “*shemini*”, for on the eighth day there is a *bris*, which removes *orlah*. But the perfect level of *Succos* [which will be in the future] is to have a kind of *Shemini Atzeres* in which the concept of *shemini* is not about removing *orlah* - rather, it will be a level of “*shemini*” which reveals the “*gomrah shel Torah*”.

The “*shemini*” of the future will be about this. Concerning the future, it is written [in the Shabbos Zemiros] that *sasson* and *simcha* (joy and happiness) will remove all *yagon* and *anacha* (worry and groans). The word for being “joyous”, *sameich*, has the same letters as the word *chamesh*, which means “five”, because it will counter the “five” kinds of *Erev Rav*²³⁸.

This will not just be *sasson*, a deep joy; it will be the original heavenly light, the light of *shmini* - which was around before Creation. The Sages revealed that Shabbos is really the eighth day, because there was a Shabbos that came before the world. This is not a Shabbos in the sense of resting from labor. The Shabbos that came before the world is like *Hoshanah Rabbah*, where there is no *shevisah* (rest) from *melachah* (labor). The root of this is before creation, in which there was no *melachah* yet. That power is what will rectify the entire world in the future.

Klal Yisrael is essentially that power that preceded the world. It is *Klal Yisrael* in the future will rectify all the other nations. Thus, we see that even though all the nations will be perfected in the future, the nation of *Yisrael* will still be above them.

The *Shemini Atzeres* of the future will reveal that even in the future, when there will be no possibility of sin, the nation of *Yisrael* is still above the nations. For on *Shemini Atzeres*, Hashem requests that *Yisrael* stay with Him for one more day after *Succos* ends, alone with Him. And when that perfected level of *Shemini Atzeres* comes in the future, it will be revealed the perfect level of “Hashem, the Torah, and *Yisrael*, are one.” That will be the perfected level of *simchah* on *Succos* which is followed by *Shemini Atzeres*.

²³⁸ Refer to the shiur of Amalek In-Depth

16] Atonement of Hoshanah Rabbah For Yisrael & Yishmael²³⁹

The Hoshanos Contains All Aspects of Torah

There are two different kinds of “*aravos*” (willow branches) that we take on Succos. We take *aravos* on the first six days of *Succos*, with the Four Species that we shake, and on the seventh day of *Succos* (“*Hoshanah Rabbah*”) we take another pair of *aravos*, which are called the “*hoshanos*”. In the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*, on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, they would encircle the Altar with these *aravos* and bang them on the side of the Altar.

The *Gemara* says that the custom of *hoshanos* in the *Beis HaMikdash* was either a *minhag neviim* (a custom of the prophets) or a *yesod neviim* (firmly established by the prophets). According to Rabbi Yochanan, *hoshanos* are a *halacha l'Moshe m'Sinai* (oral law received from Sinai which was not recorded in the written Torah), which was forgotten and later remembered. According to a third opinion in the *Gemara*, the *hoshanos* are a *minhag neviim*.

The depth behind this argument is that *hoshanos* includes all the levels of the Torah – Biblical law, Oral law, Rabbinical law. The Sages weren't just arguing if *hoshanos* are a *halacha l'Moshe m'Sinai*, *minhag neviim* or *yesod neviim*. Rather, the depth of this matter is that the concept of the *hoshanos* “unifies” together all of the levels of the Torah – Torah law, *Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai*, and *minhag neviim*.

Let us try to understand how the *aravos* [the *hoshanos*] “unify” together all the parts of Torah.

Yishmael Was Judged With Water: The Judgment of Hoshanah Rabbah On Water

The *Gemara* teaches that there are four times a year where the world is judged²⁴⁰; on the festival [of Succos], there is a judgment on water. Where else do we find judgment with water? We find the world was judged with “a lot” of water, and times where there is judgment involving “a little” water. The world was judged with “a lot of water” by the Flood, where the world was sentenced to become filled with a lot of water. We also find an instance where someone was judged to have “a little” water: Yishmael. When Yishmael was sent out of Avraham's house into the desert, Avraham sent him with a little flask of water. In this sense, Yishmael was “judged” with “a little” water.

Sarah wanted to expel Yishmael from the home, when she realized that Yishmael was laughing excessively with Yitzchak and trying to have an evil influence on him. *Chazal* explain that Sarah foresaw that Yishmael would be the cause of making the Golden Calf. Yitzchak represents the concept of *tzechok d'kedushah*, holy laughter (as Yitzchak is from the word *tzechok*/laughter), whereas Yishmael is associated with *tzechok d'kilkul*, evil laughter.

Yishmael was the evil offspring of Avraham. Avraham represents the element of water, for Avraham epitomized kindness, and kindness is symbolized by water, which nourishes and sustains. Thus Yishmael is the “ruined water” who came from Avraham. Here we see further how Yishmael is further associated with water – the evil, impaired, ruined kind of water.

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Avraham was afraid to send away Yishmael, but Hashem told him to listen to Sarah, telling him that only Yitzchak is the main son, and not Yishmael. Sarah saw through *ruach hakodesh* (and this is also the root of how there was *ruach hakodesh* by the *simchas beis hashoeivah* on Succos) that Yishmael would be a bad influence on Yitzchak, and Hashem agreed with her view on the matter, and told Avraham to listen to Sarah's opinion on the matter. Since Sarah's vision was the root of the *ruach hakodesh* on Succos, the time of Succos is when the world is judged with water, which Yishmael was judged with.

Chazal say that the verse “*And his leaves will not wither*” refers to Avraham *Avinu*, whose “leaves” did not wither – whose offspring remained righteous, including Yishmael. From here, we learn that Yishmael did *teshuvah* at the end of his life. Even though Avraham sent Yishmael away from his home, sending him away with only a little water that would not be enough to keep him alive, and even though Yishmael was expelled from the home because of his bad influence on Yitzchak, we see that Yishmael still did *teshuvah*.

On Succos, the world is judged with water, and this judgment is more specifically on Hoshanah Rabbah. On Rosh HaShanah, the judgment is “written”, on Yom Kippur it is “sealed”, and on Hoshanah Rabbah there is a *chotam b'toch chotam*, a “seal within a seal”. This is also hinted to by the *cheimas mayim* (jug of water) which Avraham sent with Yishmael, which stands for the acronym of “*chotam b'toch chotam*”.

The well-known time to do *teshuvah* is in between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, but there is also another time to do *teshuvah*, as explained by the *Arizal* and others: between Yom Kippur and *Shemini Atzeres*. The day immediately preceding *Shemini Atzeres* is *Hoshanah Rabbah*; thus, *Hoshanah Rabbah* is where the sealing takes place. Yishmael did *teshuvah* at the end of his life, and so is *Hoshanah Rabbah* the end of the year. Thus, *Hoshanah Rabbah* is the time that shows us that even Yishmael can do *teshuvah*.

This reveals a new facet to *teshuvah*. Clearly, the *teshuvah* of the Ten days of Repentance is a different level of *teshuvah* than the *teshuvah* of Hoshanah Rabbah. During the Ten Days of Repentance, it is a time of *teshuvah* uniquely for the Jewish people. Only the nation of Yisrael receives atonement on Yom Kippur, and not the other nations. But *Hoshanah Rabbah* is a day where we have increased *tefillah* (prayer), which is the trait of Yishmael, for Yishmael increasingly prayed with his mother Hagar in the desert to be saved; this is the *teshuvah* (and subsequent atonement) that the nations of the world can attain – through increased prayer.

Therefore, there is a concept that the gentiles can do *teshuvah*, which began with Yishmael, who did *teshuvah*. Yom Kippur is a time for *teshuvah* only for the nation of Yisrael, whereas *Hoshanah Rabbah* is a time of *teshuvah* for the nations of the world, symbolized by Yishmael's *teshuvah*.

Yishmael – The Root of the Erev Rav

Sarah saw that Yishmael was laughing with Yitzchak. *Chazal* explain that when Sarah saw Yishmael laughing and trying to be of bad influence to Yitzchak, she saw a vision of the future, where the “*Erev Rav*” (Mixed Multitude) will influence the Jewish nation to fashion the golden calf.

How did the *Erev Rav* mix with the Jewish people in the first place? *Chazal* state that the members of the *Erev Rav* married women of the tribe of Shimon. The word “Shimon” has the same root as the word “Yishmael” [because they are both from the term *shemiah*, to “hear”]. On the side of holiness, in the Jewish people, there was “Shimon”, and on the side of evil, there is “Yishmael”.

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When Sarah saw Yishmael laughing with Yitzchak, she saw that the *Erev Rav* will come through the tribe of Shimon, the descendants of Yitzchak, because once Yishmael could mix with Yitzchak, she knew that it would produce a descendant with similarities to Yishmael.

Through Shimon, the *Erev Rav* was allowed to enter and influence the Jewish people, thus, Shimon was like a force of “Yishmael” within the Jewish people.

Teshuvah – Returning All of The Disconnected Parts To Hashem

What indeed is the connection between the concept of *shemiah*/hearing, with the concept of mixing in foreign influences? Hearing is *shemiah*, which can also mean to “gather”, to connect and unify people together. Yishmael did *teshuvah* at the end of his life, and Hashem also “heard” his prayers in the desert, “*b’asher hu sham*”, “for he is there” – these are both rooted in the same matter. The connection is, that when something becomes separated from its root, it can be returned to its root. That is the concept of *teshuvah*: returning the separated parts to their root.

The word “*teshuvah*” is from the words “*tashuv hei*”, “return to *hei* (Hashem)”, and the letter “*hei*” is also equal to the number 5, alluding to the 5 *aravos* that we take on *Hoshanah Rabbah* and bang them on the ground. That is the “*tashuv hei*” that is revealed on *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

On Yom Kippur, this concept is also revealed, with the 5 *tefillos* on Yom Kippur. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, this concept is revealed through the 5 *aravos/hoshanos* we take, and this symbolizes the *teshuvah* of Yishmael, where Yishmael returns to his source. On Yom Kippur, the Jewish people returns to Hashem, through the 5 *tefillos* of Yom Kippur, and on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, through the 5 *hoshanos*, there is another kind of return to Hashem.

Hoshanah Rabbah Symbolizes a Deeper Mutual Connection in the Jewish People

During the first days of Succos, we take the Four Species together, in one *agudah* (cluster). Each of the four species symbolize four different kinds of Jews (those strong in Torah and in good deeds, those strong in Torah but not in good deeds, those strong in good deeds but not in Torah, and those who have neither Torah nor good deeds). What connects all Jews together? *Chazal* state that the *agudah* (cluster) binds all of the Four Species together. On Succos, all of the Jewish people become bound together, symbolized by the knot that binds together the *lulav*, *esrog*, *hadasim* and *aravos*; and it reveals the concept that all the Jewish people are in one “*agudah*”, one cluster, who all wish to do the will of Hashem with a complete heart.

Concerning *Hoshanah Rabbah*, though, it is brought in *Shulchan Aruch* that we take off the upper knot from the *lulav* on this day. What is the reason for this custom? The reason for this is because on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we do not need the *agudah* to unify us all together.

On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, instead of taking the Four Species together, instead, we take only the *aravos*. Why do we replace the four species with only the *aravos*? We put aside the four species and take the *hoshanos*, according to one opinion; and according to another opinion, we shake the *aravah*. But in either case, on *Hoshanah Rabbah* we take the *aravos* alone. The deep understanding behind this is because it is really the *aravah* which unifies all of the Jewish people together. The *aravah* reflects the concept of *areivim zeh l’zeh*, that the Jewish people are all mixed with each other; that there is a mutual unity between all of the Jewish people.

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During the first six days of Succos, the unity of the Jewish people is expressed in taking all of the four species together, in one cluster. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, the unity of the Jewish people is expressed through just the *aravos* alone, the *hoshanos*, which shows us that there is a deeper level of unity.

The Reason For Increased Prayers On Hoshanah Rabbah

What is this deeper unifying power that is contained in *Hoshanah Rabbah*? It is because on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we are all united together, through the power of the *aravah/hoshanos* alone, which parallels the concept of *shemi'ah*/hearing, in the sense that Hashem is especially attentive to hearing our prayers on this day.

Thus, on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we make sure to pray especially with fervor, with an audible voice, so that we can be “heard”. For this reason, on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we have increased prayer. The increased prayers of *Hoshanah Rabbah* are because the One Who hears us all is unifying us all together. When Hashem listened to the voice of Yishmael praying, “*b’asher hu sham*”, “for he is there” – it shows that He “hears” all of the nations [when they pray to Him].

Hoshanah Rabbah Reveals a Unity Between All the Nations

This is another way to understand how the festival of Succos reveals a connection between all of the nations in the world [there are many other correlations as well]. This is how Succos unifies everyone together: the concept of Hashem listening to Yishmael, “*b’asher hu sham*”, when He heard his prayers, reflects the level of *teshuvah* on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, where all the nations of the world can return to their Source and thereby become unified again, under their Source, when they are all being heard together.

The fact that Yishmael did *teshuvah*, which is the concept of the unique level of *teshuvah* on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, reveals to us a new facet of understanding about Succos. It shows us that there is a deep dimension where the Jewish people, the nation of Yishmael, and the rest of the nations, can all become unified together.

Everyone in the world comes from Avraham *Avinu*, who epitomized kindness, who is symbolized by the element of water. Avraham sent Yishmael with a little jug of water. Sarah expelled Yishmael from the home because she foresaw that he would be of bad influence to Yitzchak. But Yishmael did *teshuvah*, and he returned to his root. This shows us that Succos is a time to have a unique revelation of *emunah*.

Hoshanah Rabbah Is Above the Level of Succos

There is a *Mishnah* in Tractate Succah which states that on Hoshanah Rabbah, we do not take away the *sukkah*, but we take away the utensils from inside the *succah*, to show that it is the final day of the festival. If there are no utensils in the *succah* to remove, the *Gemara* says that one should remove the *s’chach* of the *succah*, to remind himself that he will not be eating in the *succah* for the second days of Succos.

Thus, *Hoshanah Rabbah* reveals a level that is above the level of *succah*. During the first six days of Succos, we shake the *lulav* in the six directions, parallel to the six directions of the *succah*; and on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we remove the knot on the *lulav* and we remove the *s’chach* from the *succah*, which symbolizes a new revelation, as follows.

Succos Represents the View of Sarah Imeinu, and Hoshanah Rabbah Represents the View of Avraham Avinu

We mentioned earlier that the concept of Succos is rooted in the *ruach hakodesh* of Sarah, who was called *Yiskah*, from the words “*sakah b’ruach hakodesh*”, she “saw through the holy spirit”, which is a hint to the word *succah*. Sarah told Avraham to expel Yishmael from the home, because she saw he will be of bad influence. But why didn’t Sarah foresee that he would do *teshuvah*? If she had *ruach hakodesh*, why couldn’t she see the end of Yishmael, which ended with *teshuvah*?

The answer to this is that her *ruach hakodesh* was showing her a lower dimension, which sees up to six dimensions, and therefore all she could see was the fact that Yishmael would be of bad influence to Yitzchak. Indeed, she was correct. But through the seventh day of Succos, which is above Succos/the six directions – the day of *Hoshanah Rabbah*, which reveals a seventh dimension that is above the normal six directions – there is a point where Yishmael returns to Avraham *Avinu*, where Yishmael does *teshuvah*.

This was the depth of why Avraham was afraid want to send away Yishmael; he saw this deeper seventh dimension, where Yishmael will do *teshuvah*. Avraham’s fear of sending away Yishmael was actually a sign that Yishmael would be returned to him. Hashem told Avraham to listen to Sarah, but that doesn’t mean that Avraham was completely wrong. Both Avraham and Sarah were correct. Sarah’s view towards Yishmael represents the level of the first six days of Succos, parallel to the normal six dimensions. Avraham’s view towards Yishmael, his fear of sending him away, was actually a catalyst that helped Yishmael do *teshuvah*. Yishmael eventually influenced Hagar, when she became known as Keturah, whom Avraham remarried after she repented.

The Teshuvah of Yishmael Reflects the Teshuvah on Hoshanah Rabbah

This idea that Yishmael did *teshuvah* was enabled by the unique power of *teshuvah* that is on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. Yishmael returned to his root, Avraham *Avinu*, when his prayers were heard by Hashem.

That is the power of *Hoshanah Rabbah*, which reveals a new level of hearing/connection. What enables this connection? The descendants of *Yishmael* are called *aravim* (Arabs), from the word “*aravos*” – and as explained above, it is the *aravos/hoshanos* we take on the seventh day of Succos which reveals a power to unify. This is the point where the ruined offspring of Avraham *Avinu*, Yishmael, can be rectified and returned to the house of Avraham, to holiness.

Chazal state that the verse “*And his leaves will not wither*” refers to Avraham, whose offspring did not wither, for even the “leaf” that fell from him, Yishmael, did *teshuvah*.

We bang the *aravos* on Hoshanah Rabbah, until the leaves fall off (either totally, or mostly). With the regular *aravos* we take on Succos, which we do not bang, we want the leaves to stay. Yishmael represents the leaf that fell away from Avraham, for he was sent out of Avraham’s home. The regular *aravos*, where we want the leaves stay, represents how Yishmael is the leaf that can still remain connected, even after it has become separated from its source. Yishmael will ultimately be returned to holiness, because he is still connected to Avraham, through his *teshuvah*.

The Depth of Banging the Hoshanos on the Ground and the Teshuvah of Yishmael

Even more so, we find that Yishmael did *teshuvah* at the end of his life, but this was after Avraham was *niftar*. Avraham was his source, his wellspring of “water”, which enabled him to survive in the desert. We bang the *hashanos* on the ground

because only after Avraham went into the “ground”, when he was buried, did Yishmael do *teshuvah*. Yishmael did *teshuvah* and returned to his root only after Avraham left the world. Therefore, Yishmael’s return to holiness is only when the *hoshanos* are banged onto the ground. But why is this so? And why is the banging of the *hoshanos* considered to be the “*teshuvah*” of Yishmael?

Chazal say that Yishmael was circumcised when he was 13, therefore, he merited to dwell in *Eretz Yisrael*, especially in the final days. Yishmael is represented by the *aravah*, which are called *arvei nachal* (willows that grow by the stream). In a person’s body, the *nachal* (stream) is represented by the *Bris Kodesh* (his place of circumcision), for *Bris Kodesh* is a person’s source of life, his inner wellspring. Yishmael has a merit in the land of *Eretz Yisrael*, in its earth, because he only did *teshuvah* when Avraham died and went back to the “earth”; because Yishmael only merits *teshuvah* when he is banged on the “earth” through the *hoshanos*.

The fact that “*Yishmael*”/*aravos/hoshanos* is banged on the earth, by the time of *hoshanos*, is to show that he has a merit in the “earth” of *Eretz Yisrael*; Yishmael merits *Eretz Yisrael* because he was circumcised [soon, it will be explained the nature of Yishmael’s connection to *Eretz Yisrael* and why it is incomplete].

The Depth Behind The Differing Customs of How The Hoshanos Are Banged On The Ground

When banging the *aravos*, there are differing customs. The *Tur* says to bang it inside a “*kli*”/vessel, but the *Arizal* says to bang it on the ground without a *kli*/vessel. What is the deep meaning behind these two views?

Eretz Yisrael is called “*Eretz HaTzvi*”, “land of the deer”, because it is a land which will expand in the future, just a deer runs, which is a kind of expansion. Yishmael only merits *Eretz Yisrael* on a level of “*kli*”/vessel [an external connection to *Eretz Yisrael*], and therefore, Yishmael’s connection to *Eretz Yisrael* is only to the “*kli*” of *Eretz Yisrael*, which is limited, and not to the “*Eretz HaTzvi*” aspect of *Eretz Yisrael*, which is its eternal and unlimited aspect.

This is the deeper reason of why the *Tur* says that the *hoshanos* must be banged only in a *kli*/vessel, and not directly on the ground. Just as a *kli* is measured and thus limited, so is Yishmael’s share in *Eretz Yisrael* limited, for he is only connected to the “*kli*” aspect of *Eretz Yisrael*. For this reason, Yishmael only has temporary control over *Eretz Yisrael*, because Yishmael can only connect to the “*kli*” of *Eretz Yisrael*, its limited aspect, and not to its unlimited aspect, “*Eretz HaTzvi*” (which only the Jewish people received, through Yitzchak).

When Avraham remarried Hagar as Keturah, who was brought to him by Yishmael, what was Hagar now to Avraham? She was only a “*kli*” to him. Avraham did not continue through Yishmael, he continued only through Yitzchak, as Hashem said to him, “*For Yitzchok shall be called your offspring*”, and Yishmael was no longer regarded as the offspring of Avraham. Therefore, Hagar’s children were not a continuation, and even after she later married Avraham as Keturah, she was still not a continuation to Avraham, so she was nothing more than a *kli* to Avraham. The *Gemara* says, “A woman does not consent to be betrothed by a man unless she first makes herself into a *kli* (“container”) to him”. But all she could be to him was a *kli*.

But Yitzchak, who was called the offspring of Avraham, unlike Yishmael who was expelled, is the eternal continuation of Avraham. Sarah, therefore, who bore Yitzchak, was therefore not just a *kli* to Avraham as any woman is to her husband, but a source of continuation for him, for she is the mother of Avraham’s continued descendants.

Thus, when we bang the *hoshanos* on the ground, according to the *Tur* that it must be banged within a *kli*, this reflects Yishmael, and according to the *Arizal* that it is banged directly on the ground, this reflects Yitzchak. Either of these opinions is true and holy. The *Tur*’s custom that *hoshanos* should only be banged within a *kli*/vessel, is referring to the lower

level, “Yishmael”, who can only be a *klil*/vessel to the “ground” of *Eretz Yisrael*, its “limited” aspect, and not more than that. The *Arizal*'s custom is reflecting the higher level, “Yitzchak”, who has the intrinsic connection to *Eretz Yisrael*, to its unlimited and “expanded” aspect [which will be in the future, when it will expand], and that is why the *Arizal* says to bang the *hoshanos* directly on the ground, without being inside a *klil*/vessel.

We explained here that *aravos* on Hoshanah Rabbah represents a connection between Avraham and Yishmael. The Jewish people began with Avraham, and they also separated from Avraham, through the separation that occurred between Yitzchak and Yishmael. We have explained that on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, through the concept of the *hoshanos*, there is a return to this connection of Yishmael to Avraham, rooted in the fact that Yishmael did *teshuvah*.

On the other hand, on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we also bang the *hoshanos* on the ground until the leaves fall off, to show that the nation Yisrael is ultimately separated from the nations.²⁴¹

Hoshanah Rabbah on Shabbos: A New Dimension of Teshuvah

Hoshanah Rabbah is called “*shvii shel chag*”, the seventh day of the festival of Succos, but is not just the seventh day of the festival. The Talmud [in *Sukkah 32b*] says that the *aravah* taken on Shabbos is called “*aravah shel shiva*”. The *lulav* is not taken on Shabbos, but the “*aravah shel shiva*” was taken on Shabbos, because we are not concerned that a person will carry it outside the *techum Shabbos* (boundary to carry within, on Shabbos). So on *Hoshanah Rabbah* it's possible to have *aravos* without *lulav*, when it's Shabbos.

This shows us that Shabbos reveals a concept of *aravos* without the *lulav*. In a regular Shabbos, there is *eruv techumin*, where one may only carry within the *techum*. But when *Hoshanah Rabbah* falls on Shabbos, the *aravah* may be taken and there is no reason to suspect it will be carried out of the *techum*, and the deeper understanding of this is because it is within its own *techum* (boundary), like a *techum* within a *techum*, similar to the term “*chotam b'toch chotam*” (seal within a seal) which is *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

Hoshanah Rabbah, which is called the “*chotam b'toch chotam*”, “seal within a seal”, reveals a level where there is no reason to suspect that one will leave the *techum shabbos* with his *lulav*. This is the unique power of the “*aravah*” on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. When *Hoshanah Rabbah* falls on Shabbos, where *aravah* was practiced, it reveals a new facet to Shabbos. The seventh day of Succos, when it falls on Shabbos, reveals this new dimension on Shabbos.

The word “Shabbos”, besides for meaning rest, is also from the word “*teshuvah*”, “return”. When *Hoshanah Rabbah* falls on Shabbos, the *hoshanos* were taken on Shabbos because this is there is as special power of *teshuvah* on Hoshanah Rabbah, and in this level of *teshuvah*, there is no concern that a person will sin, and that is the depth of why he may take the *hoshanos* on Shabbos and there is no concern that he will carry outside the *techum*.

This level of *teshuvah* revealed on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, where there is not even a suspicion that a person will sin, is a reflection of the level of the *teshuvah* of Yishmael, and the return of the nations, where all the nations including Yishmael return to the house of Avraham where they come from; Avraham made converts from the nations, and this shows us that all the nations are unified under Avraham.

The Teshuvah of Hoshanah Rabbah: Returning To the Perfect Shabbos

²⁴¹ See the *derashah* of Succos 038 – *Hoshanos – Separating From Erev Rav*

The *teshuvah* of *Hoshanah Rabbah* is the time that is called “*chotam b’toch chotam*”, “seal within a seal”, where everything becomes “sealed”. It “seals” all that has come after Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos.

What does it accomplish? It is a return to the Shabbos of *Olam HaBa* (the World To Come) which Adam never reached, because of the sin. It is a return, a “*teshuvah*”, to the Shabbos of *Olam HaBa*, had Adam never sinned, which would have been the complete “seventh” day of Creation. That perfected level of Shabbos is for the Jewish people as well as all the nations. A gentile who keeps Shabbos is liable to capital punishment, but that is only in the current level of Shabbos. In contrast, the future Shabbos will be kept by even the gentiles.

The Atonement on Hoshanah Rabbah: The Place Itself Atones

The *aravos/hoshanos* on *Hoshanah Rabbah* are banged on the ground, which is like a “return” to their place. The *hoshanos* remain in their place, and they are not shaken, in contrast to the Four Species, which are shaken. The Four Species are shaken and moved, in contrast to the *hoshanos*, which were placed on the side of the Altar, and the place itself beside the Altar atoned. Moving and shaking the Four Species, as well as encircling the Altar with the *hoshanos*, reflects a lower level of atonement, where the place itself does not atone. Placing the *hoshanos* on the side of the Altar, where the place itself atones, reflects the higher level of atonement, which is the *teshuvah* of *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

The *teshuvah* of *Hoshanah Rabbah* reveals the *teshuvah* which began on Rosh Hoshanah. The *hoshanos* are not shaken like the *aravos* on the *lulav*; rather, they were placed on the side of the Altar, and they are like the “*aravah shel shiva*” that could be taken on Shabbos, the *aravos* of *teshuvah*, from the word *Shabbos*, and *teshuvah* returns one to his place. Thus the *hoshanos* were put on the side of the Altar and remained there, in place, to symbolize this idea.

There is a *halachah* on Motzei Yom Kippur to immediately start building the *succah*, to show that we are going into exile. The *succah*, and the first six days of Succos, is compared to the situation of exile. But this is from the perspective of the six thousand years we are in, which is the exile, represented by the six directions we shake *lulav* in, on the first six days of Succos. But *Hoshanah Rabbah* reveals the seventh dimension, which will be after these six thousand year years, where there is no exile, no six directions; where we remain in place, and the place itself atones, with no need to move from place.

Thus, the six directions of Succos reflects the exile, which is an atonement achieved through movement; in exile, we move from place to place. But *Hoshanah Rabbah* is a deeper level of atonement, where the place itself atones, where there is no exile, and this is the *teshuvah* return to the perfect Shabbos.

"B'Asher Hu Sham" – "For He Is There"

This idea, that on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, the very place itself atones – reflects the concept of "*b'asher hu sham*", when Hashem judged Yishmael for being "there", in a place where he was repenting. That is the power of the *aravah* on *Hoshanah Rabbah* – a new level of atonement for the Jewish people, where the place alone atones. This is a deep revelation about the atonement of *Hoshanah Rabbah*. The atonement of Yom Kippur is possible because the Satan has no permission on this day; the evil inclination has no control. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, there is an evil inclination, but the place itself atones.

This is a higher level of atonement than on Yom Kippur. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, there is a rectification even for the wicked, through the *aravah* of *Hoshanah Rabbah*, which represents the wicked. The *aravos* represent the Arabs – Yishmael - who was judged "*b'asher hu sham*", for where he was, when Hashem accepted his *teshuvah*.

The word "Yishmael" is also from the word "*sham*", "there", alluding to how Hashem judged him in the place he was in - "*b'asher hu sham*". There, in that place, he did earnest *teshuvah*; in spite of the fact that his descendants would later cause suffering to the Jewish people, Hashem accepted his *teshuvah*, because in that place where he did *teshuvah*, he was with Hashem, and Hashem looked at this "place" alone, which atoned for him. That is the unique atonement and *teshuvah* of "*b'asher hu sham*", which is the very concept of the *teshuvah* available through *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

The Depth of Praying on Hoshanah Rabbah For Rain

This concept is also what enables us to pray for rain, on *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, when we pray especially to receive rain, on a deeper level, we are praying from the level of "*b'asher hu sham*" – "there" – we are referring to the source of the waters, and not where the waters come to. If we are praying from the place where the waters descend to, which is here on this earth, then we are not deserving. But if we are praying to receive the waters from the source where they come from, "*sham*", "there", where the upper waters are, in Heaven – we are then deserving.

Since the *aravos* on *Hoshanah Rabbah* contains this special atoning power of "*b'asher hu sham*", we are able to *daven* for rain on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. We are not *davening* on Succos for rain from the place we stand in on this world. If we would be, that would not be the level of *b'asher hu sham*, and we wouldn't be deserving. Rather, we are asking for rain from where it comes from in Heaven, which is "*sham*" – there, not here.

[There are higher waters, which are rain of blessing, and lower waters, which are destructive rain]. On Succos, when the world is judged for water, this is not referring to the "lower waters", but the "higher waters". The "higher waters" we pray for on Succos are waters of blessing, unlike the "lower waters", which are waters that bring destruction, of which *Chazal* say are cursed waters that ruin the festival. We are praying to receive the "higher waters", which refers to the level of "*b'asher hu sham*", for the higher waters are "*sham*" (there) in Heaven.

Praying From Our Soul's Root – Our Point of Mutual Unity In The Jewish People

When we *daven* to Hashem, we *daven* with our mouths, from our lips. But there is also a deeper way to *daven*: when we *daven* from our “*shoresh haneshamah*”, the “root of all the [collective] soul” [from the point where the entire Jewish people are unified together].

The two *aravos* we take together with the *lulav* on Succos are parallel to the two lips; thus the level of Succos represents the normal level of prayer, where we *daven* from our lips. But there is a verse, “*With their lips they honor Me, but their hearts are far from Me.*” Therefore, praying with our lips alone is the incomplete level.

But on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, the *aravos* are all taken together, alluding to the unity of the Jewish people, “*areivim zeh l'zeh*”, for all Jewish souls are rooted in one unit. When we pray from this unified place, it is the level of “*b'asher hu sham*”, where our prayers are not coming from our lips, but from our unified essence, the root of all our souls. With such prayer, a person's prayers may be answered by Hashem even before he calls out to Hashem, as in the verse, “*Before they call out, I answer.*”

This is the level of the higher unity, called “*areivus*”, revealed through the *aravos* of *Hoshanah Rabbah*. This is the depth of the connection between *Hoshanah Rabbah* and water, where we pray for water, from its source, alluding to the concept of *b'asher hu sham*, “there”. This is the “seal within a seal” on *Hoshanah Rabbah* – it refers to the concept that Hashem judges us based upon the place we are in, “*b'asher hu sham*”, for being “there”, in our original, upper, heavenly source. There, in the source, everything is pure, clean, and good – thus when one is “there”, everything will be good.

The Rectifying “Waters” of Hoshanah Rabbah

Moshe was saved by water, which symbolizes the “higher waters” of Heaven that can save a person; unlike the “waters of strife” which prevented Moshe from entering the land. The waters that saved Moshe's life alludes to the rectifying “waters” of *Hoshanah Rabbah* which can save a person, which is the “*sham*” (there) of “*b'asher hu sham*” – for a person to return to his upper, heavenly source, “there”. It is that place which reveals the highest level of atonement which seals the entire Jewish people for a good year.

17 | The Shattering of Limitations

Hoshanah Rabbah – The “Seal Within A Seal”: The Shattering of Limitations

There is a secret depth behind why we bang the *aravos/hoshanos* on the seventh day of *Succos* (*Hoshanah Rabbah*). It is really a matter which needs understanding: why do we set aside a special day on *Succos* to awaken mercy that we receive rain, and why do we specifically use the willow branch, which is the species that represents the wicked, who have no taste (Torah) and no scent (*mitzvos*)?

But the depth is as follows. The fact that the *aravos* have no taste and no scent is but the external aspect of the *aravos*. The inner dimension of *aravos* is that their absence of taste and scent is, itself, the very taste and scent of the *aravos*!

When we pray for mercy on our water on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we are referring to the original waters that were created on the first day of Creation, where there was nothing but “the spirit of G-d” that hovered over the face of the waters.”

The Sages say that the “spirit of G-d” here refers to “the spirit of Mashiach”.²⁴³ These were the waters of the spiritual dimension (“*ayin*”) and not of the physical dimension (“*yeish*”). And it is precisely the *aravos* which awaken the original waters of Creation, for the *aravos* have no taste and no scent, thus they contain “nothingness”, which is the key to the spiritual dimension. Its nothingness, (“*ayin*”) is essentially its taste and its scent.

This is the secret that lies behind the words of the Arizal²⁴⁴ that there is a *piska tava* (good message) given over on *Hoshanah Rabbah* which takes effect on *Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah*. The *piska tava* is essentially the external layer of the seal, whereas the seal that was signed on Yom Kippur is the inner seal. Together, the seal of *Hoshanah Rabbah* and the seal of Yom Kippur form the *chotam b'toch chotam*, the “seal within a seal”.

The seal represents a boundary, a limit, for the word *chosam* is from the word *techum*, “boundary”. On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, where the dimension of *ayin* is revealed, all boundaries become integrated with the limitless dimension.

Thus, the *chotam b'toch chotam* is essentially the point where boundaries are nullified. When the boundaries are nullified, when limitations are shattered, we can then taste and smell the dimension of *ayin* [which we cannot taste and smell with our physical senses]. And then we can merit a “*chasimah tovah*” – a “good signature”.

When we perceive the seal of Yom Kippur as a limitation that cannot be broken, that itself awakens judgment upon ourselves. But when our physical dimension (*yeish*) joins with the spiritual dimension (*ayin*), when our limited dimension merges with the limitless dimension, we are then able to truly have a “*piska tava*”.

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243 Beraishis Rabbah 2:4

244 Shaar HaKavanos: Succos, derush 6

Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah: Two Dimensions Joining Each Other

This concept continues into *Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah*, of which “the end is contained in the beginning”²⁴⁵; the finishing of the Torah, which commences with beginning the Torah.

The finishing of the Torah represents our limited dimension. From this viewpoint, the Torah is referred to as “*Toras emes*”, “the Torah of truth”, and the “seal of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is truth” – which means that we are confined to certain limitations. But when we consider the concept of “the end is contained in the beginning” – the fact that as soon as we finish the Torah, we begin the Torah – this reveals to us the concept that the limitless dimension beyond our own time and space can pour into our own limited dimension. This point is known as “*emes l’amitah*”, the absolute level of truth – and this is the point that describes the “*chotam b’toch chotam*” of *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

The concept of the “*piska tava*”, which appears after the signature that was written and sealed during Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, is essentially the point that reveals the root of the *chotam b’toch chotam*; it is the point of *hiskalelus* (integrating) with Hashem.

The “seal of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is truth”; when we reveal the point of *emes l’amitah* (absolute truth), we see that there are levels to the truth, and that not all truth is the absolute truth. What is *emes*/truth, and what is *emes l’amitah*/absolute truth? The limited dimension we normally are contained in is a truthful dimension, but there is a more inner dimension that is beyond it, where there are no limitations; that is the *emes l’amitah*.

Thus, our limited dimension we are normally in is not the *emes l’amitah*, although it is certainly *emes*. The *emes l’amitah* is the point where the limitless dimension meets with our own limited dimension and it is shined upon it.

This is the secret of the “*chotam b’toch chotam*”. The “seal of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*”, which is essentially the *chotam b’toch chotam*, is the *emes l’amitah*. It is the point where the limitless dimension is revealed upon our own limited dimension, and this is how what the *chotam b’toch chotam* accomplishes. It shows us that our own limited world is ultimately a part of a higher, limitless dimension, which shows us that there is more to the truth that we see. It is because we really do not understand the truth at all, for all truth is ultimately bound up with Hashem, and “no thoughts can comprehend Him”.²⁴⁶

This is the depth that is behind these 22 days of *Tishrei* that spans Rosh HaShanah through *Shemini Atzeres*. Since Rosh HaShanah, we are being drawn closer to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*’s embrace²⁴⁷. But Succos is the time where we actually become integrated (*miskalel*) in Hashem, for the *sukkah* is where we sit in the *tzeil* (shadow) of Hashem. It is the point of *ayin*, which we cannot grasp or comprehend in any way; it cannot be physically sensed.

The secret of these days is that they reveal to us the concept of *hiskalelus* in Hashem, where we can see that everything is really *ayin* (nothingness), and as Shlomo HaMelech says in *Koheles*: “For everything is *hevel* (nothing).” And when *ayin* becomes integrated with the Creator, it is revealed the depth of “*Ain Od Milvado*” – that there is nothing besides for Hashem.

²⁴⁵ Sefer Yetzirah 1:6

²⁴⁶ Psach Eliyahu

²⁴⁷ Arizal: Shaar HaKavanos: Yom Kippur, derush 4



SHEMINI ATZERES
&
SIMCHAS TORAH

*Vignettes From Bilvavi On Succos*²⁴⁸

18 | Leaving The Succah

We have just left Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and *Succos*. On *Succos*, when a person takes the Four Species and he sat in the *sukkah*, if he feels even a little holiness, he could feel a connection to the Four Species and to the *sukkah*. It is hard to leave behind the *sukkah* and the four species. If someone didn't feel that it was hard to disconnect from it, he is simply not sensitive to the spiritual.

But if someone did feel that it was hard to part from the *sukkah* and from the four species, he now has an *avodah* to go deeper than this. He can be aware that "Although I have parted ways from the *succah* and from the Four Species, I am not parting ways from the presence of the *Shechinah* which had settled upon the *sukkah*!"

We cannot invalidate the difficulty in leaving behind the holy objects used in our performance of *mitzvos*. There is a well-known story about the Vilna Gaon on his deathbed, when he was holding tightly onto his *tzitzis* and he cried over how much he did not want to part from it. But it is this pain of disconnection which brings a person to the true perspective. A person leaves the *sukkah* and he will miss it, and he certainly needs to feel pained at leaving it. But we also know that the *Shechinah* comes to dwell on the *sukkah*, as the *Gemara* says; and a person can always remain connected to it.

This is the depth about life. When it comes to disconnecting from the materialism of this world, one needs to disconnect from it slowly and sensibly. It is painful for a person to detach from it, but that is man's *avodah*. He must eventually reach the point where it does not feel painful for him to be disconnected from This World, and that will be the root his spiritual success on this world.

The next stage in the *avodah* is to disconnect even from our connection to the spiritual, such as the example of leaving the *sukkah* behind. At first a person must certainly feel that it is painful to leave behind a *mitzvah*; he had been connected to it and now he is leaving it, so it should certainly feel painful. He must feel that he will miss the *sukkah* when he leaves it. But after he feels this pain, he must then realize that this pain can bring him to the more inner understanding: although he is leaving behind the *sukkah*, he is not becoming disconnected from the *Shechinah* that came to the *sukkah*.

This is only one example, but there are many more examples of this concept. When a person loses a parent, this is very hard and painful for him; he is aware of the loss. But along with the pain, he can come to understand who his real "Father" is – his eternal Father whom he will always have. He has then succeeded in using the parent-child relationship as a *moshol* (parable) to get to the *nimshal* (lesson).

This deep way to live life enables a person to detach from the materialism of This World, from the view of the body, and to instead use the "tools" and "garments" which Hashem has given us, as a way to disconnect from everything else that is other than Hashem, Torah, and *Klal Yisrael*; so that we can channel the power of absolute connection towards a complete, true connection with Hashem.

²⁴⁸ from *The Weekly Shmuess_007_Lech Lecha – Disconnecting*

19 | Succos and Shemini Atzeres – Two Levels of Closeness With Hashem

The Inner Meaning Behind The Four Species and the Sukkah

In the *Yom Tov* of *Succos*, the main *mitzvos* are to shake the four species and to sit in the *sukkah*. (Aside for the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*, when we had the *mitzvah* of *nisuch hamayim*²⁵⁰ in the *Beis Hamikdash* on *Succos*).

The *mitzvah* of the four species involves the concept of movement: we shake them and move them around. On a deep level, this act symbolizes how we want to “move” away from evil - and instead “move” ourselves closer to Hashem. By contrast, the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *sukkah* involves no movement at all; we sit in it, and don’t move at all. This symbolizes a different aspect of our *Avodas Hashem*: the point of “non-movement.”

In other words, there are two steps in our *Avodas Hashem*. In our *Avodas Hashem*, sometimes we have to “move” - and sometimes we don’t “move”.²⁵¹

Succos of Today and Succos of the Future

There is a *halachah* on *Succos* that we have to sit specifically in the “shadow” (“*tzeil*”) of the *sukkah*. This is the *sukkah* of nowadays – we sit in the *sukkah*’s shadow, which symbolizes how Hashem’s radiance is concealed from us.

However, in the future, *Chazal* state that the *sukkah* will be made from the skin of the *leviathan* (whale) – it will be a *sukkah* of entirely spiritual light. The *Sukkah* of the future will be the perfect *sukkah*, in which “all passerby” (“*kol ha’eizrach*”) will be enveloped within it; a hint to this is that the word “*eizrach*”, “passerby”, is rooted in the word “*zerichah*”, “light.” This alludes to the *sukkah* of the future, which will be totally a spiritual light. The depth behind is because the *sukkah* is not just about dwelling “in the shadow” of the *sukkah*, but to dwell in the light of Hashem.

Dovid Hamelech says, “*Hashem is my light, and my salvation.*” *Chazal* expound on this verse that the words “*my light*” is referring to Rosh Hashanah, while the words “*my salvation*” is referring to Yom Kippur. *Succos*, which is the continuation of this, is the actual revelation of “*my light*”, Rosh Hashanah – it is entirely Hashem’s light.

²⁴⁹ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/succos-0001-Succos-shemini-atzeres-2-levels-closeness-hashem>

²⁵⁰ The offering of the water libation

²⁵¹ Editor’s Note: Refer to *Succos_07_The Jew’s Inner Self*.

(The *Rov* has been brief here in this fundamental concept; we will elaborate here to give more background. Generally speaking, the lower mode of *Avodas Hashem* involves “movement”, such as the six days of the week, when we move and work, representing the mundane. On *Shabbos* we don’t move, because we do not work; thus non-movement is always seen as the higher aspect of our *Avodas Hashem*.

The concept of non-movement is also explained more in *sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh: Shabbos Kodesh*, as well as in *sefer Da Es Hargoshosecha* (“Getting To Know Your Feelings”). This footnote does not nearly exhaust the topic; it is a very vast subject which the *Rov* frequently discusses, and the references we have given here are the main sources where the *Rov* discusses it at length. Refer also to the *pdf* of *Search For Serenity*, an adaptation of *sefer Da Es Menuchasecha*.

It is only nowadays that the *sukkah* is like a “shadow”, because since there is evil in the world, the evil places a “shadow” on the “light” of Rosh Hashanah and dims it from its full effect. But in the future, there will be no more evil, and then *Succos* will no longer be a concept of “shadow”; it will rather be a concept of complete spiritual light.

Shemini Atzeres – The D'veykus With Hashem Above All Spiritual Light

Even higher than the level of *Succos*, though, is the level of *Shemini Atzeres*, which is the day of complete unity between Hashem and the Jewish people. It is a power that is above even the spiritual light revealed through Rosh Hashanah and *Succos*.²⁵²

Chazal say of this day that Hashem said, “Remain with me one more day”. This is the great desire of Hashem toward His people, and it was there even before Hashem created light on the first day; this great desire that He has to us returns on *Shemini Ateres*.

²⁵² Editor's Note: See *sefer Sifsei Chaim: Moadim (Vol. I)* who explains how the spirituality of *Shemini Atzeres* is deeper than the first days of *Succos*. On *Succos*, we have the mitzvah of *sukkah* and the four species, because we are given these tools on *Succos* to reach closeness to Hashem through them. However, *Shemini Atzeres* is a higher connection we have with Hashem, as it is the culmination of the entire *Yomim Noraim*; thus, it doesn't require us to sit in the *sukkah* or to shake the four species, because it is more of a direct connection with Hashem.

20 | 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 *Succos* 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*²⁵⁴ 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 כ, 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.²⁵⁵ A king – or the heart of a person – is not bound to the regular rules.

²⁵³ This chapter is adapted from *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Vol. V, p.284-286.

<http://www.bilvavi.net/english/bilvavi-part-5-284-joy-shemini-atzeres-simchas-torah>

²⁵⁴ groom and bride

²⁵⁵ *Pesachim* 110a

This is the joy of *Simchas Torah*; it represents the heart of a person, which is 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 *Succos* is to realize how all of the world and nature is futile, to erase our attachment to this world (see the chapter before)²⁵⁶.

After a person has hopefully nullified his attachment to this world – and there are seven traits inherent in nature²⁵⁷ – 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.”²⁵⁸ 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*” (שמחה) and “*chamesh*” (חמש) have the same root letters (ש, מ, ה); there is a rule in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that whenever there is a root word²⁵⁹, there are two opposite meanings to it. In our case, this will apply as follows. *שמחה Simcha* 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.

חמש Chamesh 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*?

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.

²⁵⁶ Hence, we read *Koheles on Succos*, which talks about how futile this physical world is.

²⁵⁷ the seven *middos*: chessed, gevurah, tiferes, etc.

²⁵⁸ *Shemos* 13: 18

²⁵⁹ *shoresh*

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.²⁶⁰ 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.

²⁶⁰ In the Hebrew sefer, the author calls this “going from the *“ohr makif”* (“surrounding light”) to an *“ohr penimi”* (inner light).

21 | Alcoholism on Simchas Torah & What We Can Do About It

The Increase of Alcohol In Our Times

The truth is that we all have a need to drink [intoxicating beverages]. We see from the Torah and from the words of *Chazal* that we all have times in which we must drink. On *Yom Tov*, we have a *mitzvah* to drink a *reviis* of wine; on Pesach, we drink the Four Cups, and on Purim, we have a *mitzvah* to drink until we are totally intoxicated. These are the specific times of the year in which we drink alcoholic beverages.

In previous generations, when our ancestors lived in the colder countries of the world - such as Europe - they were very accustomed to drinking [to warm their bodies]. Therefore, because they were accustomed to drinking, many of us carry on their *minhag* to drink, and this also includes eating certain kinds of meat and fish that they ate. There all kinds of *minhagim* like this.

But in our times, the situation of drinking has gotten out of hand. Anyone familiar with the situation today is well aware of how the *minhag* to drink has become so extreme and abused.

Much of the drinking these days, especially in the last couple of years, has gotten way overboard, and it has nothing to do with keeping the *Halachah* of drinking on *Yom Tov* or with the *minhag* of our ancestors to drink alcoholic beverages. Unfortunately, *Simchas Torah* today has become like ‘Purim’ to many young people. People are spending tons of money so they can be able to drink alcohol at night.

It has become ‘acceptable’ for people to sit and drink together. The large variety of alcoholic beverages today is not only taking place in the far countries of the world such as Africa. It is even in the most *Chareidi* supermarkets! There are whole sections of the supermarket just for alcoholic beverages, and it is not being sold to people who need to have enough to drink “a *reviis* of wine” for Shabbos. It is being sold to many people who simply drink for the sake of drinking. It is a very painful reality.

We can all recognize people whose entire *Simchas Torah* is about getting drunk, and it has nothing to do with wanting to fulfill any *mitzvah*.

There is a kind of desire for drinking that stems from fire in the soul, in which a person seeks to drink because he is seized with a feeling of inner emptiness, but we aren’t discussing this right now; we will discuss it later. We are discussing a desire for drinking that does not come from feeling a **temporary** emptiness, but rather a desire for drinking in which a person desires to drink on a regular and permanent basis.

Drinking has become a staple in his life to this kind of person. Such addictive drinking stems from “earth” (permanence) of-“water-of-water-of-water” (the desire to experience the pleasure of drinking),

This is a particular problem that has become dominant in our current generation, in which many people are feeling empty all the time, and not just every once in a while; people are feeling empty on a regular basis and are seeking to relieve this emptiness they keep feeling.

There are a few people who are really immersed in Torah and in holiness and with good *middos*, but sadly, most people, even in the Torah world, feel an ongoing inner emptiness in their life. There is therefore a very big pursuit of physical gratification in this generation, and a desire to drink on a regular basis.

When a person pursues the desire for drinking on a regular basis, the person is really disconnecting from himself. Some people are only drinking because they are influenced by their surroundings that are into drinking, but most people who drink are drinking because they keep feeling an inner emptiness in their life.

In the previous chapter, when we addressed addictions, we mentioned the solution of pulling away in steps from the addiction. But that solution won't help so easily to stop addictive drinking.

The Solution: Building Our P'nimiyus (Inner Dimension)

The desire for drinking is affecting even people who keep Torah and mitzvos – that is, those whose Torah learning hasn't yet penetrated into their being. Therefore, they feel an inner emptiness from their life.

The addiction to drinking can therefore be present even in a boy in *Yeshiva* who is smart and brilliant in his Torah learning, because he can still feel very empty inside himself from having any real inner content. His heart might be empty, even though his brain works very well and he knows how to learn Torah very well.

Let us point out that the desire for addictive drinking has come into the Torah world from the outside world; it did not originate from within the Torah world. It has now recently entered the Torah world, and it is a painful reality that will be here until *Moshiach* comes.

When a *frum* person who learns Torah and keeps mitzvos is addicted to drinking, the problem will not be solved by simply trying to slowly pull away from the desire in steps (as it was explained in the previous chapter). This is because it doesn't solve the ongoing inner emptiness that he is feeling.

Since the source of the problem is that the person feels empty in his life, we will need to show him how he can build his *pnimiyus* (inner world).

This is a vast subject, but generally speaking, building one's *pnimiyus* will involve three things. (1) He needs to exert his mind in Torah (which he is already doing, and he must keep doing that), (2) and he needs to be willing to really work on his *middos*, and (3) he needs to begin to put his heart into what he does.

We will not delve into this now, as it will get us off-topic, but this is the basic outline of the solution: the permanence of his addictive desire for drinking will get countered by building an inner kind of permanence in his life.

22 | Deep Joy On Simchas Torah

The Joy of Simchas Torah

On *Simchas Torah*, there is *simcha* over the completion of the Torah. But does everyone have the same happiness? If a person only has enthusiasm in his learning, but he doesn't use his brain much to think in-depth as he learns, he is not truly connected to his learning.

Compare this to someone who spent a year learning Torah in-depth, and now it comes *Simchas Torah*. Is his happiness a feeling of enthusiasm? It's much more profound; he is enjoying now the fruits of his efforts, a year well spent on learning Torah.

When someone knows how to dance and jump up and down by *Hakafos*, he can do the same each thing each year; it doesn't show that anything in his learning changed since a year ago. If he was so enthused from the Torah, why doesn't he continue to learn Torah as soon as they close the Aron? Why does he keep jumping...? If someone keeps jumping, it shows that his entire learning comes from enthusiasm, and not because he is so connected to his learning...

But a person who dances on *Simchas Torah* after a full year's worth of learning in-depth has a much more profound kind of happiness. He doesn't have to feel enthused, because he has a more inner kind of happiness. He's connected to his learning - so he's automatically happy towards his learning. People want *simcha* (joy) and *chiyus* (vitality) in their *Avodas Hashem*. But often this is a desire for superficial *chiyus*. It is not being truthful.

Compare this to the difference between a baby versus someone getting married; or someone dancing on *Simchas Torah* who learned Torah during the year, versus someone who didn't learn Torah during the year. The difference between them is vast.

May we merit from Hashem to understand that *Avodas Hashem* become properly built, and that our feelings of enthusiasm, joy, and our other feelings are only built through the power of utilizing our intellect. Using our intellect is what gives us the power of subtle understanding, which helps us understand and develop profound feelings that last – as opposed to feelings that are temporary feelings of elation and excitement.²⁶³

This is the true *simcha* we can have in our *Avodas Hashem*.

²⁶² from *Rosh Hashanah_025_Changing The Mind*

²⁶³ To further develop this concept, see *Getting To Know Your Feelings, Part 2, Chapters 1-9*.

23 | Before & After Simchas Torah

The Elevating Power of the Festivals

If a person is immersed in Torah during the rest of the year, the festivals can help a person raise the bar in his Torah learning.

It is not only Shavuot and Simchas Torah which gives a person a stronger power of learning Torah. The festival of *Succos* can also do it; when you read Koheles on *Succos*, you can realize how futile the world is (as Koheles says), and that in turn strengthens your desire for Torah learning. On Pesach, which is the time of our freedom, we can realize the statement of *Chazal* that “there is no free person except a person who learns Torah.” The festivals come to strengthen a point in you that’s already active. Rosh HaShanah and Purim can also accomplish it.

That is the sensible way to view the festivals, but most people have a different attitude about it. When we enter a high spiritual time, such as *Yomim Noraim*, we realize that it’s a higher level than our normal place, and can feel like an exile. It makes a person feel like he’s imprisoned from his regular routine. So not only is it hard to deal with the “fall” after *Yomim Noraim* ends; it’s hard to enter in the first place, because it feels imprisoning, for we are entering higher levels.

Frustration On Simchas Torah (and afterwards)

Here is another simple example. On *Simchas Torah*, anyone who has learned a little Torah during the year will feel some joy on this day as he’s dancing by *Hakafos*. He feels elated after each *Hakafah*. But he’s feeling deep down, “Why can’t I love the Torah this much during the rest of the year as well?” He feels an inner contradiction in himself. Others experience a different problem: they enjoy *Simchas Torah* and they rise to high levels of loving the Torah on this day, but the day after *Simchas Torah*, they find themselves back to routine, and they wonder where all their high levels went.

Obviously, this frustration is not experienced by those who don’t live an internal kind of life. Such a person doesn’t even feel the changes, and he has no problem making the transition from *Simchas Torah* to the next day. But the more a person is sensitive to his inner spiritual world, the more he can feel the difficulty, of making the transition between the festivals to the normal routine of the year.

Lessening The Frustration

What, indeed, is the correct way to go about it? A person must be aware that before the festival, he will not feel as elevated, and that the festival will elevate him, and after the festival ends, he will go back to the regular routine of the year. In other words, he must know beforehand that it will be like this.

²⁶⁴ from *Fixing Your Fire-Conceit.005.Knowing Your Capabilities*

This is not because a person should simply despair from trying to acquire higher levels and to avoid the pain of the disappointment. It is because one must be aware that we simply cannot be on higher levels all the time. We can be aware that the elevation we feel on the festivals is temporary, and that it is not meant for the rest of the year to be on this level.

The point is to become aware that there's a part of ourselves that can jump to higher levels, but that doesn't mean we need to stay at those higher places we jump to. In this way, when the festivals end, instead of feeling a great fall from our level where we feel like we've fallen flat on the ground, we can fall away lightly from it, which will lessen the impact of the fall.

Before, During, and After

This concept is not only applicable with the festivals. It is an inner perspective towards living life, which applies to all aspects of spiritual growth.

Another application of it is when it comes to getting married. On the day of a person's wedding, he feels elated. The wedding is filled with holiness and aspiration. The next day, the newlywed returns to routine. But instead of feeling frustrated at this sudden transition, he should make himself aware from beforehand that there will be a point of "before" the wedding, and "after" the wedding, and the wedding itself.

Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to Heaven for 40 days, where he resembled an angel, and he did not touch food or drink, but then he came back down, where he continued to eat and drink. If a person were to try fasting 40 days, he would be a sinner, because he is endangering his life. Similarly, *Klal Yisrael* was told to abstain from marital relations for three days, to prepare to receive the Torah. These were high levels that a person normally cannot do.

One must be aware that the higher levels we can reach are only for the time being, but after that, we need to return to routine, and there is nothing wrong with this, for it is supposed to be this way.

24 | Internalizing Succos For the Rest of the Year ²⁶⁵

Carrying Over the Yom Tov into the Year

In the *Shemoneh Esrei* of the Three Festivals (*Succos*, Pesach and Shavuot), we say, “And lift us, Hashem our G-d, the blessings of Your festival, for life and peace, happiness and gladdening.”

There are those who explain²⁶⁶ this prayer to mean that we are asking Hashem to let the blessings of *Yom Tov* carry over into the rest of the year. “Blessing”, *berachah* in Hebrew, comes from word *beraicha* – a pool, connoting that we want Hashem to pool upon us His sustenance²⁶⁷; in other words, we want to be affected by the special power of the *Yom Tov* for the rest of the year as well.

It is well-known that not only is *Yom Tov* an opportunity for immense holiness and growth, but even *Chol HaMoed* is a holy time; *Chazal* forbade certain activities on *Chol HaMoed* so that we can be free to rejoice in festivity and have time to learn Torah.²⁶⁸

Having free time on *Chol HaMoed* is not simply meant to have free time – although that is certainly true in the simple sense; it is really because having this extra time on our hands give us the opportunity to have a calm and relaxed soul, so we can focus on more on serving the Creator and learning the Torah. When a person is busy with various matters other than *Avodas Hashem* and learning Torah, his soul is less open to receive matters of holiness. But on *Yom Tov*, a person is able to learn how to acquire spirituality, *Avodas Hashem* and learning Torah – and all of this is because on *Yom Tov* we are disconnected from materialism.

(It is not a total disconnection from materialism, only partial; as we see that certain labors are permitted on *Chol HaMoed*, in certain situations). *Yom Tov* can show us that even after *Yom Tov*, our *Avodas Hashem* and our learning of the Torah should be from a disconnection from the material world, a disconnection from how the rest of the world thinks – and from this, we come to truly learn the Torah and have true *Avodas Hashem*.

Accessing the State of Yom Tov Even During The Year

Yom Tov is supposed to affect us and fuel us up with spiritual energy to last until the next *Yom Tov*. We need this burst of spirituality to keep us going. The days of *Yom Tov* are few, in comparison to the rest of the year which is much longer; if a person doesn't get affected by *Yom Tov*, he won't be able to acquire any matter of holiness during the rest of the year.

Let us think into how *Yom Tov* can affect our soul for the rest of the year.

²⁶⁵ This chapter is adapted from *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh: Succos, chap. 1*.

<http://www.bilvavi.net/english/droshos-after-holydays>

²⁶⁶ *Bad Kodesh on Moadim (Rav Baruch Dov Povarski)*, p.416. See also *Birchas Moadecha (of Rav Margolin) on Tishrei*.

²⁶⁷ See *Rabbeinu Bachye, Parshas Eikev, 8:10*.

²⁶⁸ *Yerushalmi Moed Kattan, 9a*.

On *Yom Tov*, a person is calm and relaxed from the busyness of the world. His mind is settled and he is a bit calmer than he is normally; each to his own level. On *Chol HaMoed*, we buy only food that we will need for *Yom Tov*, and not more than that. We are frugal and satisfied just with that amount of shopping. We also don't do any work on *Chol HaMoed* unless it will cause us to have a loss. Most stores are closed. Of course, a person might use the relaxation of *Chol HaMoed* for the wrong purposes and waste his time, *chas v'shalom*; but that is a different problem which we are not currently discussing.

It is impossible to live in *Yom Tov* during the year – that is, in the external sense. But in our inner world of the soul, we can live in a state of calmness that we have on *Yom Tov*, even when it's not *Yom Tov* – if we gain the proper kind of mind to do so.

When *Yom Tov* ends, we go back to our prospective jobs. Even a *Kolel avreich* has his jobs; life is full of responsibilities that surround us all day. Anyone who is married and has children has responsibilities to his family. He has to make sure that his wife and kids have a roof over their heads; that they have food, clothing, doctor visits, etc. That is one side of our life. But there is another side going on in our life – the fact that we are in between one *Yom Tov* and the next.

The Ramban writes that *Sefiras HaOmer* is like *Chol HaMoed*, and that Shavuot is like the *Shemini Atzeres* (of Pesach). By the same token, perhaps we can say also that the days in between Shavuot and *Succos* – and from *Succos* to Pesach – are like one big *Chol HaMoed*, the bridge that connects one Yom to another. There is a holiness we can gain from our “*Chol HaMoed*” year-round.

In Between Yomim Tovim

Perhaps we can say also that *Yom Tov* is like a Shabbos, while the rest of the year is like the six days of the week. We find that Pesach is called “Shabbos”,²⁶⁹ and Yom Kippur is called “*Shabbos Shabboson*.”²⁷⁰ This is because our whole essence is that we were redeemed from Egypt so that we could become a nation to receive the Torah, and we also know that every *Yom Tov* is *zecher l'yetzias mitzrayim* – to remember our redemption from Egypt. Shabbos is also *zecher l'yetzias mitzrayim*. If so, *Yom Tov* and Shabbos can be compared to each other. The rest of the year, by contrast, is like the six days of the week.

The six days of the week are blessed by Shabbos.²⁷¹ Perhaps we can also say that the days in between each *Yom Tov* are sustained by the blessings of the *Yom Tov*. Just like we have a concept of the afternoon²⁷² and a concept of “*bein hashemashos*”²⁷³ (twilight) – times “in between” that serve to connect different times – so can we say that the days in between Yomim Tovim are what connect the previous *Yom Tov* to the next *Yom Tov*. If so, the rest of the year is in a sense like a *Yom Tov* of its own; it is a certain time, a bridge between the Yomim Tovim.

What are the days of the rest of the year like? They are not like *Yom Tov* itself, but they resemble *Chol HaMoed* – the time which connects one part of *Yom Tov* to the next. *Chol HaMoed* is the lower level of *Yom Tov*, and so can we say that the rest of the year is a lower level of *Yom Tov*, serving to connect *Yom Tov* to another.

269 *Menachos* 65b

270 *Vayikra* 16: 31

271 *Zohar II, Yisro*, 88a

272 *Rashi, Shemos* 12: 6

273 *Avos* 5: 6

The *Gemara*²⁷⁴ says that when Haman wanted to get the Jews in trouble, he pointed out to Achashveirosh that the Jews are always busy keeping *Yom Tov*; “today is Shabbos, today is Pesach.” This hints to the fact that the Jewish people are always in a “*Yom Tov*” – because the whole year is really like a *Yom Tov*! (Just that it is on a lower level than the actual *Yom Tov*.)

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

The Yomim Tovim given to us are not simply defined by their individual concepts they represent, but they are more than that: they reflect the level we are at during the time that the *Yom Tov* sets in. That is why we daven in *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Yom Tov*, “*You chose us from all the nations*”, and we also mention in the davening how *Yom Tov* is *zecher l’yetzias mitzrayim* – that only the we, the Jewish people, merited to leave Egypt, while the other nations did not merit this special event. *Yom Tov* expresses how the Jewish people were formed into a nation, and how Hashem chose us as His nation.

The world stands on three pillars²⁷⁵, and so does the Jewish people stand on three things – the three Yomim Tovim²⁷⁶. The Yomim Tovim help the Jewish people survive for the rest of the year. There is much to learn from each aspect of *Yom Tov*.

For example, on *Chol HaMoed*, one is only allowed to purchase items that are necessary for *Yom Tov*.²⁷⁷ We can learn two things from this. Firstly, we see that you only need to buy things for your house that you need right now, and not to shop for things you’ll only need in the future. Secondly, you have to be frugal and only buy things that you really need, not luxuries.

This is how someone lives throughout the rest of the year as well, when he has a deep connection in his soul with the Creator – he takes the lessons of *Yom Tov* with him for the rest of the year as well.

Yom Tov – Our Meeting With Hashem

Yom Tov is called *moed*, which comes from the word *vaad* (meeting). The place where we would meet with Hashem was the *Beis Hamikdash*, and from it a Jew would derive vitality from it for the rest of the year by visiting it three times a year.

The *Shechinah* was there. Now that it is gone, we express our loss 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.*”

What do we mean that we have been exiled from our land? We are able to stand in *Eretz Yisrael* today. How are we exiled from it?

Simply, it is because the incredible holiness of *Eretz Yisrael*, the holiness of the *Beis Hamikdash*, has gone away. There is a discussion if the land of *Eretz Yisrael* still maintains its sanctity even though we have no *Beis Hamikdash*.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ *Rashi, Megillah 13b*

²⁷⁵ *Avos 1:2 and 1:17*

²⁷⁶ *These are called Shalosh Regalim, the “Three Festivals”: Pesach, Shavuos, and Succos.*

²⁷⁷ *Tur, Orach Chaim, 130.*

²⁷⁸ *See Megillah 6a and Rambam Hilchos Beis HaBechirah 6: 16*

But there is a deeper meaning behind the *tefillah* we are saying. We have been exiled and distanced from our land, in the sense that we are far from the great spiritual revelations that one would experience on *Yom Tov* by the *Beis Hamikdash*. That spiritual light would illuminate the entire *Eretz Yisrael*.

Although this reality still continues to exist in our inner world, it isn't revealed out in the open in the world we see, and thus we are "exiled" from our land. So although a person can be in *Eretz Yisrael* today, he is still exiled from it – he is missing what *Eretz Yisrael* used to be like.

When a person went up to the *Beis Hamikdash* three times a year, he saw the *Shechinah*. What does this mean? It means that he revealed in his heart a deep connection with Hashem, an utter awareness of His existence. It was called "*aliyah l'regel*," (ascending on *Yom Tov*) – going up to the *Beis Hamikdash*. It was an ascension in the sense that one who ascended spiritually from *Yom Tov* would stay at that high level, and he was able to maintain it and not to fall from it back to routine.

This is the meaning of the possuk, "*Who will ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who will stand in His holy place*"²⁷⁹ – in other words, the possuk is praising the one who would gain from the holy spiritual elevation of *Yom Tov* and maintain his level throughout the rest of the year.

Yom Tov- The Shechinah Within

The Torah is eternal, and thus whatever it imparts is eternal. If there is such a concept of *Yom Tov* in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash* – when the *Shechinah* was revealed out in the open – then that concept, that point, continues to exist. We have no *Beis Hamikdash* today, but we still have *Yom Tov*, and we can have *aliyah l'regel* every *Yom Tov*, even nowadays. This is what we ask for in the Shemoneh Esrei of *Yom Tov*: "*V'hasieinu es birkas moedecha*", "And carry over the blessings of Your festivals..."). Our *avodah* on *Yom Tov* is that we ask Hashem to let the holiness of *Yom Tov* carry into the rest of the year, in spite of the fact that our level of revelation isn't the same as it used to be.

It is written, "*And I will dwell amongst them.*"²⁸⁰ The *Alshich* explains that the possuk is saying that Hashem dwells in the heart of each Jew! In our own heart within us, we can still have *aliyah l'regel* three times a year, on *Yom Tov*²⁸¹ – and see Hashem, so to speak; on our own level. We can access the *Shechinah* in our hearts, three times a year – each *Yom Tov* – and extend it to the rest of the year. But in order for this to happen, we need to know what *Yom Tov* really is.

If a person came to a stronger recognition of Hashem's existence on *Yom Tov*, then the Torah he learns during the rest of the year will become more internalized in his mind and heart, as a result. If someone is truly searching for Hashem, the Torah he learns will become the real Torah – "*For from Zion comes forth Torah, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem.*"²⁸² The true Torah of Hashem becomes revealed to a person, in his heart, when he earnestly pursues Hashem.

Thus, the inner implication of *Yom Tov* is for one to connect to Hashem in his heart. What will result from this? "*For Hashem gives wisdom, from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.*"²⁸³

279 *Tehillim* 24:3

280 *Shemos* 25: 8

281 *Yom Tov* here refers uniquely to the Three Festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succos.

282 *Yeshayahu* 2:3

283 *Mishlei* 2:6

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

If someone reaches this on *Yom Tov*, he has gained immensely; now it is his *avodah* to continue that growth into the rest of the year. This will fulfill the meaning of what we daven for on *Yom Tov* – “And carry over the blessings of Your festivals...”

But if a person didn't try to grow from *Yom Tov* in the way described here, and he didn't come to have a new feeling of a relationship with Hashem from the *Yom Tov* – then there is no point for him to wait to see if he will be inspired for the rest of the year. He hasn't invested in anything over *Yom Tov*, so he won't see any of the profits during the rest of the year. Only if a person is clear what he has gained from *Yom Tov* can he hope to maintain his inspiration for the rest of the year.

So first, a person has to make sure that he has gained from *Yom Tov* in the first place – before he seeks to let *Yom Tov* carry over into the rest of the year. Even if he has felt a small amount of recognition of Hashem over *Yom Tov*, at least he has gained somewhat, and he has now what to grow upon for the rest of the year.

On *Simchas Torah*, a person has to have at least felt a minimal amount of closeness towards the Torah. One has to feel the *Yom Tov*, to feel the *Simchas Torah*, to feel *Shemini Atzeres* – of which Hashem said, “Remain with me one more day.”²⁸⁴ He has to feel that it was hard to part from Hashem after such a period of closeness, just as Hashem finds it hard to leave us at the end of *Succos*. He has to have felt that he has the opportunity to feel the reality of Hashem for at least one more day.

The Custom In Kelm of “Asiri Kodesh”

Let us think into how we can hold onto our gains from *Yom Tov* for the rest of the year.

In Kelm, there was a custom called “*Asiri Kodesh*.”²⁸⁵ Every ten days following Yom Kippur, people who lived in Kelm would make for themselves a mini Yom Kippur and check to see if they had kept to the resolutions they made last Yom Kippur.

They started this custom because they realized that most people are only able to hold onto their inspiration during *Yomim Noraim*, and a few are able to keep the inspiration going until after *Succos*, but not beyond that; *Asiri Kodesh* made a person do some introspection every ten days and ask himself if he was still keeping to his level he reached on *Yomim Noraim*.

We can learn from this something very important: how to hold onto our gains from *Yom Tov*. If we really want to have a good year, we need to see after *Yomim Noraim* and *Succos* if we are still feeling that closeness to Hashem we felt during these holy times. For every ten days that go by – or once a week, for those who are able to – we should set aside time and see if we're keeping to the level we were on during those days.

“*Who will ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who will stand in His holy place.*” This is not just a possuk, it is telling us the *avodah* we need to do throughout the year: we need to see where we are holding. We all know that Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, *Succos* and *Simchas Torah* will once again be here next year, and that we will once again return to making

²⁸⁴ See Rashi, *Vayikra* 23: 36

²⁸⁵ lit. “Tenth Day Is Holy”.

resolutions, developing our will for spirituality, to have yearnings for spirituality, to dance again on *Simchas Torah*. We will do it all again next year – with the help of Hashem.

But are we losing all of this, *chas v'shalom*, as the year goes on – and then we are just beginning again from scratch next year? Are we going to start over again next year simply because we have lost all those yearnings?

The truth is that the reason why many people can't keep their resolutions for the new year is because they don't believe in themselves enough. They didn't believe to begin with that they were able to keep to what they took upon themselves. But this is really a denial of the words of *Chazal*. If *Chazal* established that we daven in *Shemoneh Esrei* the *tefillah* of “*V'hasieinu*”,

it must be that it is definitely possible for us to keep to what we took upon ourselves for the coming year; even if we can't keep to them as perfectly as we had hoped to, we can still keep to them on our own level.

The Advice of the Ramchal

If someone doesn't seek advice on how he can keep to his resolutions, we all know that it will be pointless for him to try to keep to them. There is one single advice we have for this, from the *Ramchal*, (author of *Mesillas Yescharim*) in sefer *Derech Eitz Chaim*. He writes as follows²⁸⁶:

“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 much results. 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.”

What the *Ramchal* is saying is not just inspiration for Elul. It is something to think about the entire year. 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 have to learn how we can protect what we have gained from *Yomim Noraim*.²⁸⁷

Make A Self Accounting

The *Ramchal* has taught us that that the essential tool we need is to set aside time for self-introspection. It can be every ten days; once a week is even better, and if one can do it every day, that's the most preferable. During the time you set

²⁸⁶ This has been loosely translated and is fairly literal to the text.

²⁸⁷ See also *Kedushas Levi: Shavuos*, and also *Ramban: Emunah UBitachon*, chap. 19

aside, make the following self-accounting: “On Rosh Hashanah, I reached a certain level. Have I succeeded in keeping to it? How much have I kept to it? If I haven’t kept to it, what can I do to make sure I keep to it?”

Hashem has decreed on each person on Rosh Hashanah whatever has been decreed upon him. But it is upon us to make sure that we aren’t among those who don’t keep to their words. We all know that the coming year will have its full amount of responsibilities, challenges, and difficulties. It will definitely not be that simple to keep to the level we reached *Yomim Noraim* during the year. But we at least need to have a hope that we *can* succeed; of course, we cannot blindly trust ourselves that we will for sure see success, but we must try to at least be *eligible* for success. What a person has to do is designate for himself times of quiet in which he can make a self-accounting. We must bring our life to a halt and think about the purpose of life. We must be truthful with ourselves, and remember what we said to Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. You can write down what you said this way you don’t forget it; take out the paper and read it during this time of quiet you set aside for yourself. One has to see if he’s really keeping to what he took upon himself, and if he sees that he isn’t, he has to ask himself: “How will I face Hashem next Rosh Hashanah...? One should be aware that he has free will to decide if he will be among those who merit the blessings of *Yom Tov* for the rest of the year, or if *chas v’shalom* he will not be among those who merit it.

How To Avoid The Sleepiness of the Winter

Anyone who doesn’t follow the *Ramchal’s* advice can testify that he has never succeeding in keeping to his resolutions he made during *Yomim Noraim*. But if someone follows the *Ramchal’s* advice and he sets aside time to think about what’s important, he will definitely see results. If someone sees a different piece of advice in another *sefer*, that’s wonderful. But in Kelm, and in other places, they followed the *Ramchal’s* advice, which is that one should set aside time to bring his life to a halt and see if he is keeping to his *Yomim Noraim* level. We hope that those who are reading this feel that this advice is simple and true; it is the words of our great teachers, and nothing has been added here to their words. Anyone who is truthful with himself knows how necessary it is to make this self-accounting.

These words are not meant to merely be an inspiring lecture. Inspiration is for Elul and *Yomim Noraim*, and it doesn’t last for the winter, when people get sleepy and lethargic. If we want to avoid becoming sleep-like to our spiritual situation during the winter, we need to make sure we are keeping to our level throughout the rest of the year. During *Aseres Ymei Teshuvah*, a person is supposed to act above his normal level.²⁸⁸ For the rest of the year, however, we go back to our normal level. The high level of spirituality of *Yomim Noraim* has ended – each person, on whatever level he is at. But if we want to at least be on the true level we are supposed to be on, than we must take with us a point that we will have from the beginning of the year until its end. May Hashem merit us that we should be able to set aside time to think about the purpose of life²⁸⁹, and that we should maintain our level for the rest of the year – and that we shouldn’t be among those who only wait for the next Elul to become inspired.

²⁸⁸ *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim: 203*

²⁸⁹ For more specific guidance on how to make a *cheshbon hanefesh*, see *Bilvavi Vol. IV, chapters 3-5*.



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