

# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM  
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"L

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה  
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

## SPECIAL TOPIC

## Keep It Going

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן. (ויקרא כג, מ)

**You shall take for yourselves, on the first day. (*Devarim* 28:13)**

*These words of Torah were written by Moreinu Harav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt"l himself, in Tishri 5752*

Chazal explain the meaning of, "On the first day."

It is the first day for counting sins.<sup>1</sup>

Hashem doesn't start "counting" our sins until the first day of Sukkos. On Yom Kippur, our sins were forgiven, and we were cleansed. This purified state sticks with us even after Yom Kippur. However, the fear and trepidation of the *Yamim Nora'im* naturally fade as time goes on, and people tend to go back to their old habits. But this is only from the first day of Sukkos and on. On the days leading up to Sukkos we still feel the *kedushah* of Yom Kippur and this time is without sin.

Simply speaking, it is because the Jewish people are busy on these days with the many preparations for the coming *chag* which has very complex *halachos*. It takes a lot of time to find proper *arba minim*, especially if you want really nice and *mehudar* ones, and many people are accustomed to look around for the best, because they love *mitzvos*. Building the *sukkah* is also an involving and time-



<sup>1</sup> Midrash Tanchuma, Emor 22.

consuming task, and there are other preparations for the *chag* as well. There simply isn't time for *aveiros*.

However, the real reason is much deeper than that. It's not just because there is no time to sin. How long does it take to speak a little *lashon hara*? On the contrary, there is so much to do, and so little time to do it, that people tend to feel pressured, and this lends itself to anger and impatience, which leads to quarrels, both in the home and out.

The sinless state we enjoy between Yom Kippur and Sukkos is rather because we are so busy preparing for *mitzvos* that the blessed influence of Yom Kippur's sanctity sticks with us, so we are careful not to do *aveiros*. And *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, due to the great love and *deveikus* that we attained on Yom Kippur, does not look at the few sins that are committed on these in-between days.

This teaches us a great practical lesson: we can maintain the *taharah* of Yom Kippur and bring it into the whole coming year. The *Shechinah*, and all the *taharah* and *teshuvah* that accompanies it, doesn't have to fly away when the *shofar* is blown after *Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur. All the beauty that

Yom Kippur brought us, all the beautiful resolutions we make to improve ourselves – to strengthen our Torah learning and our deeds and our *davening* – we can keep it all going. From Yom Kippur to Sukkos, by preparing for the coming *chag*. And on Sukkos itself, by all its wondrous *mitzvos*. And from there to the rest of the year, if we will put in a little thought and attention.

Right in the middle of all the action preceding Sukkos, when the fear and the impression of Yom Kippur is still upon us, we should grab a few minutes to sit and think. Even better if we write it down. What resolutions did I make on Yom Kippur? What decisions did I come to? What do I need to do in order to implement these decisions?

And even after the *chag* is over, keep it up. Fortunate is he who continues to make this *chesbbon hanefesh* all year long, at least once a month. (It's good to set a fixed day for this, such as *Erev Rosh Chodesh*, or the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, as a remembrance of Yom Kippur which is on the 10<sup>th</sup>.)

This way we can keep the *kedushah* of Yom Kippur flowing through the whole year. This is such a tremendously wonderful thing!! ●

## The Meaning of Arba Minim

On Sukkos we see that our connection to *Hashem* is not dependent on Yom Kippur; our relationship with Him is not just through Divine judgment, but also through love and attachment.

The *lulav* corresponds to the spine, the *esrog* to

the heart, the *hadasim* to the eyes and the *aravos* to the lips. These are the parts of the body that connect a person to the outside world.

Our eyes see the world. Thus, *hadas* represents acquisition of knowledge and wisdom by means



of sight. When a person sees something and understands its nature, he connects to the wisdom that is inherent in it. The three *hadasim* symbolize the three *Avos*. The *hadasim* bring us to “see” the deeds of the *Avos* and connect to them. This is a proper seeing, this is looking straight ahead and not veering aside to foreign and unbecoming sights. The *avodah* it represents is to place our gaze on *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and not get distracted by other things.

*Aravah* corresponds to the lips, which are a part of the body that enables connection between one person’s spirit and another’s. “May He kiss me with the kisses of His mouth” (*Shir Hashirim* 1:2). This verse expresses the connection of one spirit to another.

We connect to *Hashem* and to Torah in this way. Mouth to mouth, with total dedication of spirit. When a person puts his whole spirit into *avodas Hashem*, he receives a new spirit from the Source of spirits: “May He kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.”

The lips represent the power of *tefilah*. When a person feels a need for something, he *davens*. Someone who has at least a little bit of *emunah* expresses his feelings through prayer. This is such a natural response that it doesn’t take a great effort to stand before the King and pray to Him. (Perhaps this is why the *aravos* have no taste or scent.)

A person’s attachment to *Hashem* in *tefilah* creates an absolute connection of spirit to spirit. This is *aravah*. And then comes *Hoshana Rabbah*, when we take *aravos* on their own, when we make an absolute acquisition on *tefilah*. Sukkos causes the power of *tefilah*, which we experienced on the *Yamim Nora’im*, to stay with us all year long, even on the mundane days of the coming year.

*Lulav* corresponds to the backbone. We live in a physical world that calls for actions performed by the limbs of our body. The backbone contains the spinal cord which connects our limbs to the brain and enables them to function. Thus, *lulav* is the main part of the *mitzvah*, because we live and function mainly in the physical world.

However, actions performed without the heart are lifeless, so we join the *esrog* to the *lulav*. The beauty and perfection of our physical actions is by putting our heart (the *esrog*) into them, thus giving our heart to *Hashem*. This connects the inner desire of the heart to the physical limbs of the body.

The *Arba Minim* represent the total connection of a person to *avodas Hashem*. The eyes and seeing, the lips and praying, the backbone and physical actions, the heart and feelings. Unifying them all connects a person to *avodas Hashem* in the most perfect way. ●



## The Sign of Victory

*These words of Torah were written by Moreinu Harav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt”l himself, in Tishri 5753*

*Chazal* say that one of the reasons we take a *lulav* on Sukkos may be understood by way of parable.

The soldiers of a certain country went to war, and

back home, the public did not know which side was victorious. When the returning soldiers came out proudly holding up their weapons in their hands, this showed that they were the victors. So writes Avudraham:

The reason we shake the *lulav* is to make it known that we defeated all the *mekatregim*, all the accusers;

It says in *Pesikta* that this practice is like those who were victorious in battle and hold a *lulav* in their hands.

This is the way of kings who were victorious and captured cities: they take a spear, with the emblem of their country hanging from it, and go up to the top of a tower, and wave it in every direction, to show that the king defeated all of them.

There is a very clear message here. They hold their weapons in their hands. They do not just wave the flag and emblem of the country on a pole. Because if the victor will throw down his weapons, and celebrate, in the end, the enemy will rise up again, and catch him defenseless and defeat him. This is why the victors wave a spear along with the insignia of the country. It signifies that the victory is a true and lasting one, as shown by the fact that they are still wielding their battle weapons.

So it is with our victory in *teshuvah*. When can we show ourselves as having won the great war of Yom Kippur? Only when the weapons we fought with, when our increase in *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim*, is still in our hands. This is symbolized by the *lulav* and the other species. They correspond to a person's heart, eyes, lips and spine. They signify that the entire person, with all his senses and feelings, belong to *kedushah*. They also show that we will keep the *mitzvos* wherever we turn: up, down and the four directions of the compass. Thus our victory is a true

and complete one.

Another analogy to bring out the same point is based on the Rambam's statement in *Shemoneh Perakim* that we should learn how to heal the soul from the ways we use to heal the body.

Accordingly, let's say one of a person's bones gets dislocated, and it remains in that state for a few months. Now it is no longer sufficient for the doctor to just move it back into place. The bone got bent out of shape in the meantime and now it will tend to slip out of place and get dislocated again. So after the doctor sets the bone where it belongs, he puts a cast on it, to hold it in the right place. Only after a long time can we be confident that the bone has become properly set in place and will stay there.

It is the same with healing the soul. On Yom Kippur we straightened out the crooked places in our hearts and did true *teshuvah*. But a lot of things for which we did *teshuvah* were matters that were bent out of shape and out of place for a long time, and we got accustomed to that state.

Therefore, the *avodah* of Yom Kippur does not end with the *shofar* blast at the end of *Ne'ilah*. We need to set times to continue working on the matters that we straightened out on Yom Kippur.

This is represented by the *lulav*. We are still holding our weapons in hand, although the war was already won. We still need to be on guard. Then our joy will be complete. ●



## Hoshana Rabba

Among Hoshanah Rabba's aspects is love. After we beat the *aravos*, we say, "May it be Your will... that the love will be awakened between them and You will kiss us with the kisses of Your mouth." Sukkos expresses love. The *Halachic* shape of a valid *sukkah* – two adjacent walls and a third, small one – forms the shape of an arm giving an embrace. The *sukkah* is

an embrace from *Hashem*.

Hoshana Rabba, the "Day of *aravah*," expresses love even more intensely. The shape of *aravah* resembles the lips. Hoshana Rabba is a kiss from *Hashem*, and a kiss is an even greater expression of love.

## What is a Kiss?

When it came time for Moshe *Rabbeinu* to leave



this world, Moshe's soul did not agree. It did not want to leave such a sanctified body. In the end, *Hashem* gave him a "kiss" and thereby took his soul (*Devarim Rabbah* 11:10). But what kind of a kiss was that? The soul of Moshe was forced to leave. Is that love?

When someone bestows good on another, the recipient has a debt of gratitude. In fact, he owes him everything, except for the gift itself. Let's say someone gifts his friend with a \$10 pen. The next day, he asks him for a loan of \$10,000. Gratitude obligates the recipient to grant the loan. But if the giver asks for the pen itself, the recipient doesn't have to give it back to him. The recipient owes him everything, but not the pen.

Moshe's soul didn't want to leave, and it didn't have to, because you can't force someone to give back a gift. So *Hashem* said, so to speak: You're right, you don't have to give yourself to Me. I am asking you to give yourself a gift. This was communicated through a "kiss." A kiss on the mouth is a mutual expression of love which is both given and received simultaneously. Thus, Moshe returned his soul to *Hashem* through a "kiss" of total love and devotion to *Hashem*.

Hoshana Rabba is a day of kisses. We "kiss" *Hashem*, so to speak, meaning that we devote and give ourselves totally to Him. This *mesirus nefesh*

doesn't mean that we actually give up our lives. It means that we totally dedicate ourselves to serve *Hashem*.



## A Custom

Beating *aravos* is a minhag originating with the *Nevi'im* (*Sukkah* 44a). It is not a legally binding obligation. *Aravah* resembles the mouth, it represents a kiss of total devotion, and *mesirus nefesh* of this type is not something that you can ordain and obligate. You can't force someone to give his very self. It is a "*minhag*," meaning that it comes from deep within a person.

This may be compared to a father who told his son to do some tasks for him. After the son finished all he was told to do, he gave his father a kiss. He was not asked to give a kiss – it came from the son himself.

On Rosh Hashanah we blew the *shofar*. On Yom Kippur we fasted. Then we built *sukkos* and dwelt in them, and took *lulavim*, too. After we finished all we were told to do, and we put down the lulav, and there was no more specific *mitzvah* we need to perform, our Jewish heart feels love and devotion for *Hashem*, and we give ourselves totally to Him through a kiss, through the *aravos* of Hoshana Rabba.

After this, *Hashem* kisses us back, and that is the day of Shemini Atzeres. ●



# Shemini Atzeres

*These words of Torah were written by Moreinu Harav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt"l himself, in Tishri 5753*

Early Torah sources say that just as the *Yamim Nora'im* are a special time of *avodas Hashem*, so are *Sukkos* and *Shemini Atzeres*. The difference between them is that the former set of holidays focuses

on *yiras Shamayim*, while the latter set focuses on *ahavas Hashem*, which is why they are called *zeman simchaseinu*. They are a time when we experience great joy in our closeness to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. On these days we need to really work on developing our love of *Hashem* and joy of serving Him.

This time of joy comprises two holidays: Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres, which stands on its own as a separate holiday, and for this reason we recite *shebecheyahu* in *Kiddush* on Shemini Atzeres night. Sukkos is actually a preparation for the great day of Shemini Atzeres, like *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* prepare us and lead us into Yom Kippur.

On the first nine days of the year, on *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, we assimilate *yiras Shamayim* into our hearts and souls. We reject and uproot the wanton pursuit of lusts and desires. But Yom Kippur is something else altogether. It is a time when a person is completely lifted up and out from this-worldly life. As *Chazal* say, the *Yetzer Hara* ceases on this day, and the Jewish people dress in white, and don't eat and drink, and forgo all hatred and competition. They rise to the level of angels.

Shemini Atzeres is similar. During Sukkos, we internalize the understanding that this world, too, can be turned into a place of joy over *kedushah*. When we enter the *sukkah*, we dwell in the shade and shelter of the *Shechinah*. We dedicate our lives to serving *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. However, even the nations of the world, whose way of life is ostensibly the opposite of *Hashem's* Will, are destined to unite in service of the Creator. Thus seventy bulls were offered as *korbanos* on Sukkos, corresponding to the seventy nations of the world.

Shemini Atzeres is something else altogether. Ultimately, the nations of the world will all fade

away. Only the *tzaddikim* of the Jewish people will be there, sitting and enjoying the radiance of the *Shechinah*. The day representing this ultimate reality is Shemini Atzeres. On this holiday there are no more seventy bulls. Only one bull is offered, corresponding to the Jewish people. This is a day of *deveikus* between the Jewish people and *Hashem*. It is like *Olam Haba*.

It is thus a mistake to think that on Simchas Torah and Shemini Atzeres, as long as we dance with the Torah and celebrate, we can also allow ourselves to unwind a little, *davening* with less *kavanah* and letting up a bit on the proper spirit of

*avodas Hashem*.

Just the opposite is the truth. Simchas Torah is the most awesome day of the *Yamim Nora'im*. Rosh Hashanah and *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and Yom Kippur are awesome, and Sukkos is the preparation to the most awesome day of all, Shemini Atzeres. This is when we are so connected to *Hashem* and so joyful over our relationship with Him that we jump and dance out of love of Torah and happiness over *avodas Hashem*.

It says in the *Zohar* that whatever we ask *Hashem* on this day is granted. This is compared to a king who freely grants the requests of his subjects on the day when he is overflowing with joy.

For this reason, we need to put extra special energy into our *davening* on this awesome day, and rejoice greatly over the Torah with a joy of *kedushah* that is unsullied by lightheadedness and wild behavior.

If we do so, the *kedushah* of the *Yamim Nora'im* will keep going throughout the coming year, and bring us pure *avodas Hashem*, as well as life and peace and all the *berachos*. ●



# STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RAV SHIMSHON PINCUS ZT"l



## Sukkos

Rav Shimshon shared a beautiful insight on *Chazal's* perplexing statement, "The first day of Sukkos is 'first for counting sins.'" It would seem logical that the count should begin on *Motzaei Yom Kippur* during *Maariv*, immediately after *Klal Yisrael* receives atonement for the year past.

He answers this with the parable of a man who suffers from an internal infection that causes unsightly spots to appear on the skin. The doctor prescribes a medicine that treats the infection, but a week later, the patient returns, complaining that his skin is still spotty. The doctor explains that the infection is completely cured, and the stains are benign, lingering aftereffects and residues of the old infection.

*Aveiros* transgressed during the four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos are "stains from the previous infection," residue of the previous year, explained Rav Shimshon. The new count commences on the first day of Sukkos.



## Chassan Torah and Chassan Bereishis

Every year, Rav Shimshon's father-in-law was honored with *Chassan Torah*, and Rav Shimshon with *Chassan Bereishis*. During the lavish *kiddush* preceding *hakafos*, Rav Mordechai Mann, his father-in-law, would address the congregants, and after his passing, his son-in-law succeeded him, utilizing the opportunity to summarize the lofty period of *Yerach HaEisanim* that culminates on Shemini Atzeres.

In his final years, Rav Shimshon participated enthusiastically in the *hakafos sheniyos* at *Yeshivat Ahavat Shalom* in Yerushalayim.

However, since he stringently avoided *melachos d'Oraysa* on *Yom Tov Sheini* even in *Eretz Yisrael*, and the distance from Bnei Brak to Yerushalayim was certainly greater than twelve *mil*, he always made a point of traveling by bus. Since the bus's floor is more than ten *tefachim* above ground, it is *Halachically* considered a "*makom p'tur*" as "there is no *techum* above ten *tefachim*." ●