

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

Sukkos Sums It Up

The *Midrash* teaches us that Sukkos continues the preceding days of judgment and sums them up.

“ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון וגו' – You shall take for yourselves [four species] on the first day [of Sukkos]”¹ – What is the verse speaking about? Yisrael and the nations of the world, whom *Hashem* judged on Yom Kippur. These and those came before the King for judgment, but we don't [yet] know who won the case.

This may be compared to two people who came before a king for judgment, and no one except for the king knew what the issue was between them. The king judged them, and people didn't know who won the case. The king then said, “Whoever goes out holding a spear in his hand, you may know that he won.”

Similarly, Yisrael and the nations of

¹ *Vayikra* 23:40.

This is Sukkos

the world come in for judgment on Yom Kippur, but people don't know who won. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* said, “Pick up your *lulavim* in your hands, so everyone will know that you won the case.”²

The Masters of *Avodah* said that the three weeks from Rosh Hashanah until Shemini Atzeres are one ladder on which we continually climb higher and higher. *Yamim Noraim* are the time we do *teshuvah* from fear. The days between Yom Kippur

² *Midrash Tanchuma Emor* 18.

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and Sukkos are days that are free of sin. And the seven days of Sukkos, together with Shemini Atzeres, are the time we do *teshuvah* from love.

Days of Fear and Days of Love

There is a question hanging over all this. *Yamim Noraim* were days of *yirah*. We reached very high levels during this period. Our *tefilos* and *berachos* were full of power and emotion, we recited them with the excitement of *kedushah*, until we reached the peak, which is *Tefilas Ne'ilah*. And the *shofar* was sounded at the end of *Ne'ilah*.

Where do we go from here?

It is written in early Torah sources³ that this blast of the *shofar* signifies the *Shechinah's* departure from our world and return to its hidden place high up in the heavens above. At this moment, the lofty level of spirituality we were on suddenly leaves us.

Accordingly, how does Sukkos pick up where the *Yamim Noraim* left off? Why is it the time of climbing even higher, from *yirah* to *ahavah*? On the contrary, the *Shechinah* left us behind, and now the whole lofty *madreigah* of *Yamim Noraim* is gone from us!

The answer is that *yirah* and *ahavah* are two very different things. Fear is induced by an external factor that acts upon a person. Whereas love comes from within a person's heart.

Yamim Noraim were a time of fear. They were a time of *דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראוהו בהיותו קרוב* – “Search out *Hashem* when He is present, call out to Him when He is close.”⁴ *Chazal* say that this verse refers to “the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and

Yom Kippur.”⁵ *Hashem* draws close to us and makes Himself available to us. The high *madreigah* we then attained is not really coming from us. Rather, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* draws close to us. He stirs up the fire of *yiras Shamayim* within us. He is acting on us. It may feel as if we are coming close to *Hashem*, but really it is He Who is coming close to us.

Let's say you are in a car traveling at high speed. You look out the window and it seems as if the trees on each side of the road are rushing toward you. It's hard to discern who is rushing toward who.

On *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, it's not we who are drawing close to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. It is *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Who is drawing close to us. On Rosh Hashanah, it looks like we are blowing the *shofar*, but really it is *Hashem* blowing the *shofar* for us. True, we blow the *shofar* here in this world, but then *Hashem* correspondingly blows the *shofar* in the heavens above, and that is where all the great spiritual influence comes to us from.

On Yom Kippur, we resemble angels.⁶ Who makes us like angels? The Arizal says that on Yom Kippur, *Hashem* wraps us in a *tallis*.

We are like a little child sitting in a car and going all the way from Monsey to New York in a relatively short time. It seems so amazing. How can a small child get all the way from Monsey to New York? Is he Superman? No, it wasn't him doing it. He just sat in the car and was transported from one place to another.

All the *madreigos* to which we rise, one after another, during *Yamim Noraim*, are not coming from us. We didn't do it; *Hashem* raised us up.

³ See the *Bach's* commentary on *Arba Turim, Orach Chayim* 624.

⁴ *Yeshayahu* 55:6.

⁵ *Rosh Hashanah* 18a.

⁶ *Yalkut Shimoni Devarim* 834.



On Sukkos You Do It Yourself

This may be compared to a toddler just learning to walk. When he takes his first steps, his parents hold his hands and “walk” him. But the time comes when they let go of him, and from now on, he walks on his own.

Yamim Noraim were a time of fear, of *yirah*. A person does things out of fear because he is afraid of what might happen, so he is forced to do those things. On *Yamim Noraim* we had no choice but to *daven* with *kavanah*.

Furthermore, *Hashem* was here with us. He was holding our hands.

But the day comes when that changes, and the day is Sukkos. The *shofar* was already sounded at *Ne'ilah* and the *Shechinah* left us. It returned to heaven. The fear abates. The Heavenly judgment is behind us. Now begin the days of *ahavah*. Love comes from a person's own heart. He does it on his own. This is why *ahavah* is greater than *yirah*. It is not something forced on us by external circumstance but rather something that comes willingly from a person's own heart.

Sukkos is actually a repeat of *Yamim Noraim*, as we see from the *Midrash* quoted at the beginning of this piece. The *lulav* is a weapon. It is shaped like a spear. In the victory parade after a war, the returning soldiers don't wave only their country's flag. They march through the streets carrying all their weapons.

Why?

To show that the victory is still in their hands! They have not put down their arms. They are still holding the weapons that earned them victory.

The victory of Sukkos is when we wave our weapons, which is the *lulav*. We are thereby showing that we are still holding on to the excitement and the emotions of *kedushah* of the *Yamim Noraim*.

If right after the war – right after Yom Kippur – we would put down our weapons until next year, that would be a sign that we failed. It would show that all the effort we made, all the excitement and all the high levels we attained, were just temporary and

we didn't really conquer anything.

We replay *Yamim Noraim* on Sukkos. But the difference is that on *Yamim Noraim* we received tremendous help from *Hashem*. He was here with us, holding us up, granting us *kedushah* and *tabarah* and everything else. But on Sukkos we do everything ourselves. Out of love.

On Sukkos we need to show that all those great *madreigos* we attained on *Yamim Noraim* really belong to us.

Chochmah, Binah and Daas

Tishri is the month of the world's creation. *Hayom haras Olam*, as we say in the *tefilos* of Rosh Hashanah. Every year, *Hashem* creates the world anew. And it says about the creation of the world:

ה' בְּחָכְמָה יָסַד אֶרֶץ כּוֹנֵן שָׁמַיִם בְּתַבוּנָה
בְּדַעְתּוֹ תְּהוֹמוֹת נִבְקְעוּ – *Hashem* established
the world through wisdom and set up the
heavens with understanding. With His
knowledge, the depths opened up.⁷

From this verse we learn that the world was created by means of *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*.

It says something similar regarding the building of the *Mishkan*, which contains within it all the forces of all the worlds, as explained in *Sefer Nefesh Hachayim*.⁸ About Betzalel, who built the *Mishkan*, it is written:

וַאֲמַלֵּא אֹתוֹ וְגו' בְּחָכְמָה וּבְתַבוּנָה וּבְדַעְתּוֹ –
I filled him... with wisdom, understanding
and knowledge.⁹

Here, too, we have *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*. Regarding this verse, *Chazal* say that Betzalel knew how to combine the letters by which heavens and earth were created.¹⁰

What is the meaning of *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*, simply speaking?

⁷ *Mishlei* 3:19-20.

⁸ 1:4.

⁹ *Shemos* 31:3.

¹⁰ *Berachos* 55a.

Rashi explains that *chochmah* is what a person hears from others and thereby learns, *binah* is what he understands on his own from the things he learned, and *daas* is *ruach hakodesh*.¹¹

Chochmah means knowing the facts, knowing the reality, knowing things as they are.

Let's take the following as an example. When a child is born to Jewish parents, he is a Jew. This is a fact. A Jew needs to learn Torah. This, too, is a fact. A Jew who learns Torah will be rewarded by *Hashem*. Another fact. A Jew who speaks *lashon hara* will be punished. Also a fact.

Knowing these things is *chochmah*.

Binah means coming to an understanding on one's own, based on facts that one knows. One derives a conclusion. According to what a person has heard and knows to be true, he understands that since he is a Jew, and since a Jew needs to learn Torah, and since someone who learns Torah is rewarded, therefore he must learn Torah and if he does he will be rewarded for it.

This person put two and two together and arrived at four. He derived a correct conclusion from the facts. He has *chochmah* and he has *binah*. But all this does not yet bring him to act accordingly, because he lacks *daas* to connect this knowledge to himself.

A person can know and understand that he needs to learn Torah, but he has factors that get in the way and prevent him from doing so. He has various wants and desires. He feels like playing. He enjoys hanging out and doing nothing.

He doesn't have anything to connect what he knows to what he is. There are two very different things going on inside him. *Chochmah* and *binah* tell him that he needs to learn Torah. But he feels like playing. The faculty that connects *chochmah* and *binah* to himself, in a way that motivates him to act accordingly, is what we call *daas*.

Daas is *ruach hakodesh*, as we quoted from Rashi before. This means that the person's spirit (*ruach*) is holy (*kodesh*). He doesn't just learn bits and pieces of information from others, he doesn't just process

what he learns; his own spirit is holy. *Daas* connotes connection. It means that the person, with the spirit of *kedushah* in him, connects what he learns to himself. When a person's *ruach* is holy, he is able to connect what he knows to what he is.

Three And Three

The three holidays of Tishri correspond to *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*.

Rosh Hashanah is the day when Adam was created, thereby completing Creation. About this it says, "*Hashem* established the world through *chochmah*," as quoted above. The creation of Adam was a special act of Divine wisdom, as we say, אשר אִשַׁר בַּחֲכָמָה יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם – "*Hashem* created the human being by **wisdom**."¹²

Yom Kippur is the special day of *teshuvah*, and about *teshuvah* it says, ולבבו יבין ושב ורפא לו – "His heart will **understand**, and he will repent and be healed."¹³ *Teshuvah* is a matter of *binah*.

And about Sukkos it says למען ידעו דורותיכם כי – "So that your generations will **know** that in *sukkos*..."¹⁴ This is *daas*.

Rosh Hashanah is a day of *chochmah*. On this day, a person comes to see reality as it is. This is by means of the *shofar*, which wakes him up and opens his eyes, as the Rambam writes:

The blowing of *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah... contains an allusion, which is: Wake up, you sleepers, from your sleep. And you slumberers, arouse from your slumber. Examine your deeds and do *teshuvah* and remember your Creator, you who forget the truth in the midst of temporal vanities and foolishly waste all your year on vanity and emptiness that doesn't help and doesn't save. Look at your souls and improve your ways and deeds. Each one of you should leave his evil way and his bad thought.¹⁵

12 *Asher yatzar* blessing.

13 *Yeshayahu* 6:10.

14 *Vayikra* 23:43.

15 *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4.

11 See *Shemos ibid*.

The *shofar* opens our eyes, wakes us up from our slumber, tells us that this world is not a place to just act however we please; we need to do *teshuvah*. There is judgment and there is a Judge. On Rosh Hashanah, three books are opened in heaven. And so forth. This is the message that the sound of *shofar* communicates.

This is the *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah: to wake up from our dreams and see the truth of the world.

Then Yom Kippur comes. On this day, “His heart will understand.” *Binah*. Until Yom Kippur, we knew that there is such a thing as reward and punishment, that there is such a thing as *mitzvos*, but what is the implication of all this? On this day we “understand” that these things obligate us. The world finds out what a Jew really is. He can be an angel! He has a role, and it is Torah and *mitzvos*, *teshuvah* and *maasim tovim*.

Then, at the end of the day, the *Shechinah* leaves, and we are left with the beautiful memories of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But what we don’t have yet is *daas*, to connect Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to ourselves and our lives.

This is what Sukkos is for. “So that your generations will know.” *Daas*. This is *ruach hakodesh*, a sanctified

spirit. A Jew leaves his home, his mundane life, and sanctifies his *ruach*. He goes to take shelter in *tzila d’Mehemnusa*, he shares his dwelling place with the *Avos*. He holds in his hand a *lulav*, *esrog*, *hadassim* and *aravos*.

The spine of the *lulav* resembles a person’s spine, and the *hadass* resembles the eye, and the *aravah* resembles the mouth and the *esrog* resembles the heart.¹⁶

By taking the *lulav*, a person holds his spine and heart and eyes and lips in his hand, and says: ‘הודו לה’ – “Give praise to *Hashem*, for He is good!”¹⁷

This is *daas*. The person relates everything to himself, to his own being. This is *teshuvah* from love, *teshuvah* that comes from the heart, from the person himself, from his sanctified spirit, his *ruach hakodesh*.

On Sukkos we connect what we know to what we are. We replay all the *kedushah* and *taharah* that we attained on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and we bring it into our lives. This is the most profound connection there is. ●

16 *Vayikra Rabba* 30:14.

17 *Hallel* prayer.

Back to Perfection

We were created just right.

וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיְנַחֵהוּ בְּגֵן עֵדֶן
לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ – *Hashem*, G-d took Adam
and placed him in *Gan Eden* to work it and
guard it.¹

Hashem created Adam absolutely pure, without

any sin or imperfection. Evil existed only outside of him, in the *Nachash*. However, all this was *Hashem’s* gift to Adam. Adam did nothing on his own to attain such a lofty state.

If so, what was the purpose of the world? Why was it even created? The world can fulfill its purpose only through the deeds of human beings. Only if we work and toil to eventually come to a state of perfection does the world reach its goal.

1 *Bereishis* 2:15.

This is why Sukkos comes after *Yamim Noraim*. Because *Yamim Noraim* is when we are created anew. We are steadily built up anew, starting on Rosh Hashanah, continuing to Yom Kippur, when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself purifies us and refines us, and we reach a state like *Adam Harishon* was originally in. After all this, we are standing at a point that corresponds to Adam at the time of his creation. We are completely pure because *Hashem* created us anew and wiped away all trace of sin.

What now?

Sukkos is the Next Step

This is when a new system of *avodah* begins. This time, we are the ones doing it. We perfect the world with a lofty *kedushah* that will bring it to its ultimate goal and purpose, *mei'ein olam haba*.

In a certain way, all the *avodah* of *Yamim Noraim* doesn't really count. It was an awesome *avodah* indeed, but it was facilitated by tremendous *siyata d'Shmaya*. – *דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראוהו בהיותו קרוב* – *Hashem* was here with us. We didn't draw close to *Hashem*; on the contrary, He drew close to us.

This is certainly true of Yom Kippur. Clearly, we don't effect the *kaparah* of Yom Kippur. The day itself brings atonement. "Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven."²

After this purification, we returned to the original point of Adam, and now Adam himself, the human being himself, enters the realm of *avodah*. Now we perfect the newly created world and bring it to its ultimate goal.

And the following rule applies:

If a person sanctifies himself a little,
Hakadosh Baruch Hu sanctifies him a lot.
If he does so below, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*
sanctifies him above.³

So there are really two parts to the additional *kedushah* that now comes. There is the *kedushah* that

comes from our side, and there is the much greater *kedushah* that comes from Above.

The *kedushah* that comes from our side is what the *lulav* is all about. The Four Species represent four key parts of the human body and thus symbolize the human being as a whole. We take the *lulav* and wave it, and circle the *bimah* with it, and this is all to arouse us to great love and joy in *Hashem*.

The *kedushah* that comes from *Hashem's* side is represented by the sukkah. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* sanctifies us by surrounding us with supernal *kedushah*. This is the sukkah. All we need to do is come inside and dwell there, and tremendous *kedushah* descends upon us from Heaven, without us performing any action.

The whole spiritual system beginning with Rosh Hashanah was to build a new human being who will be straight and just right as G-d originally created him. When we say in Rosh Hashanah prayers *זה היום תחילת מעשיך* – "This day is the beginning of Your deeds," this actually refers to the sixth day of Creation, on which *Hashem* created Adam. This system began on Rosh Hashanah and concluded on Yom Kippur, when we became clean and pure and beloved to *Hashem* as when Adam was first created.

However, as we explained above, Adam as he was created did not constitute the purpose and goal of the world. It says clearly in the *pasuk* that *Hashem* placed Adam in *Gan Eden* *ולשמרה ולעבדה* – "to work it and guard it." *Chazal* say that *לעבדה* refers to positive *mitzvos* and *לשמרה* refers to negative *mitzvos*. This implies that Adam's *avodah* was not yet completed. He had a system of *avodah* to follow until the goal would be accomplished and everything would be perfected. This system is what we do from the day after Yom Kippur through Shemini Atzeres.

Lulav

The *lulav* together with the other three species symbolizes the structure of the human being as a whole, as we explained above. And the rule is that a structure as a whole is composed of seven parts. This is why there are seven pieces to the *Arba Minim*.

² *Mishnah, Yoma* 8:9.

³ *Yoma* 38.

There are three *hadassim*, two *aravos*, one *lulav* and one *esrog*. The Four Species represent the spine, heart, eyes and lips of the human being. The *Arba Minim* as a whole thus symbolizes the human being himself.

The goal is for us to awaken and uplift ourselves to *Hashem*, and receive from there additional *berachah*, and bring it to us, to the human being. There is a lot to this matter, but we will focus on just a drop from the sea of what there is to say.

We just mentioned that the goal of *lulav* is for us to aspire to Above and lift ourselves up to *Hashem*. Where is this “Above”?

It is written:

נָשָׂא לְבַבְנוּ אֶל כַּפַּיִם אֶל קַל בְּשָׂמַיִם – We will raise our hearts to our hands, to G-d in heaven.⁴

Where is this שָׂמַיִם, this heaven, this sky?

Simply speaking, we know that heaven is not literally straight above, because the world is round, so heaven encompasses it and surrounds it on all sides. If we look at it from a simple, tangible standpoint, heaven surrounds us on the four sides and above and

below.

Hashem made the heavens, the sky, in such a shape to show that He, Who is called “the One Who dwells in heaven,”⁵ regarding Whom it says, “To You I raised my eyes, to the One Who dwells in heaven,”⁶ actually surrounds and encompasses the whole world. Heaven, what we call “Above,” is in fact on all sides and everywhere around us. So when we take ourselves, by taking the *lulav*, which symbolizes ourselves, in order to uplift ourselves to G-d in heaven, we need to uplift ourselves to every side and every direction.

When we say “Above,” it means beyond ourselves. The natural world shows that this is so, because the blessings that come from heaven don’t come only in the direction of up to down. They come from all directions. The rain is from above, and the depths are from below. *Parnassah* is from here, and *sechel* is from there. Thus we fulfill, “We will raise our hearts... to G-d in heaven,” in all possible directions. ●

⁵ *Tehillim* 2.

⁶ *Ibid* 123.

⁴ *Eichah* 3.

Simchas Torah Is Beyond Words

It is a universal custom among the Jewish people to make *hakafos* on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah.

The Arizal explained the deeper levels of meaning in very many different *mitzvos* and *minhagim*. He wrote detailed explanations even of the custom to beat the *aravos* on Hoshana Rabba. But he wrote nothing at all about the meaning of *hakafos* on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah.

We do know that after the Arizal finished his

hakafos – which he would do in *Maariv*, *Shacharis*, *Musaf*, *Minchah* and *Motzaei Hachag* – when he passed by a *shul* where they were still doing *hakafos*, he would go in and join them.

We see how important the *hakafos* were to the Arizal, so it is surprising that he wrote nothing of their deeper meaning. It is also surprising that *hakafos*, which would seem to be relevant only on *Yom Tov* itself, are practiced on *Motzaei Yom Tov* as well.

On Hoshana Rabba we make seven *hakafos* with the *lulav*. When we finish them, we don't add an extra *hakafah*. We finished the *mitzvah* and that's it. But when we make *hakafos* with a *Sefer Torah*, there is no such thing as "we finished the *mitzvah* and that's it." We make seven *hakafos*, and again and again and again.

Song is Greater than Words

When we make the *hakafos* during Sukkos with the *lulav*, we recite *Hoshanos*. We don't sing them; we recite the words. But on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah when we make *hakafos* with the *Sefer Torah* it is accompanied by songs and melodies.

Song expresses something very deep. There are various emotions that we express to *Hashem*. We thank Him and we plead with Him. When we plead, we say *Hosha-na* ("Please save!") and when we thank, we say *Halleluyah* (which is the essence of the *Hallel*.) When a person cannot express the deep emotions he feels, either because he doesn't know how or because he is so overflowing with feeling that he can't express it in words, he breaks out in song.

When a Jew takes the *Arba Minim*, which symbolizes the taking of his heart, eyes, lips and backbone, and he circles the *bimah*, he feels great happiness. But he still manages to recite the *Hoshanos*.

When he holds a *Sefer Torah*, it's beyond him. All he can do is dance and sing.

The meaning of *hakafos* is so powerful that it can't even be put down on paper. There is simply no way to describe

what happens in the world when Jews dance and make *hakafos* to rejoice over the Torah.

The *chagim* are over. There is no more *shofar*, no *lulav* and no *sukkah*. But *Simchas Torah*, joy over the holy Torah, is not confined to a specific holiday. When it comes to the Torah, you never "finish the *mitzvah* and that's it." You can finish the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* or *lulav* but you can't finish the *mitzvah* of learning Torah. So we dance and circle and sing endlessly.

We can make *hakafos* with the *Sefer Torah* in every *tefilah* because Torah is not limited to a specific time. It is non-stop *deveikus*.

Even after we make *Havdalah* and recite *Hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol*, we can keep on celebrating, because with Torah there is no separation between sacred time and mundane time. Torah is limitless and endless.

Hashem showers us with "candies" when we dance and celebrate over His holy Torah. He grants us the *ahavah*, *achvah*, *shalom v'rei'us* of Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. And we ask Him to send us also the "candies" of abundant *parnassah*, of the ability to learn Torah with physical and emotional health, and to have blessing and success in all our undertakings. The *Zohar* states that all the gates are open on Shemini Atzeres.

May *Hashem* help us to all rejoice together in *simchas haTorah*. ●

