

SUKKOS 5784

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KOL NIDREI IN TEL AVIV

Rav Sternbuch bewails the unprecedented event in which some people through intimidation and mockery prevented a public Kol Nidrei gathering from taking place in Tel Aviv. This was an act of blasphemy, for which one must tear one's garments. Rav Sternbuch already heard from Rav Elchonon Wasserman more than 80 years ago that he was not able emotionally to set foot inside Tel Aviv because of the *chilul Shabbos* taking place there.

Yom Kippur is the one day which every Jew traditionally felt some affinity with. Rav Sternbuch is deeply perturbed at the paucity of audible rabbinic protests about this most terrible *chillul Hashem*. One person claimed that politicians have already disavowed and protested the actions of left-wing activists, but Rav Sternbuch responded that what is needed is a protest of Hashem's honor, and that has not been heard.

When hearing about the spiritual calamities taking place in *Eretz Yisroel* Rav Sternbuch's Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Mosche Schneider would sometimes shed tears for the sorrow of the *Shechina*, and he was particular about making protests, whether or not they made any practical difference, because that is our duty. However, Rav Sternbuch notes that Rav Schneider never had to contend with an event of this nature.

Some people say that these actions have nothing to do with us, and the main thing is to focus on our own *avodas Hashem* and that of our children. This is a mistake. Firstly, the *tumah* created by these actions has a supernatural effect on the whole Jewish nation, and in the merit of making protests the power of *kedusha* increases. Hashem is surely waiting to see what His nation is doing to protect His honor.

We have to blame only ourselves for what happened, because it could only have happened because we are weak. We do not know what the coming year potentially has in store for us, and if we are not worried, that means that our *emuna* is deficient. Every Jew must realize that any calamities in *Eretz Yisroel chas vesholom* will spread to the whole world eventually, and we have to increase our *emuna* so that we will have the strength to face any eventuality, may it not happen.

Hashem should have mercy on His nation, about which it says: "You are the children of Hashem your G-d", and accelerate the redemption speedily and without spiritual or physical travails.

WHY JOY ON SUKKOS

Sukkos is termed "*zman simchoseinu*", and therefore this was the *Yom Tov* on which *simchos beis hashe'ovo* took place with musical instruments and so on. The

commandment of “*vesomachto bechagecho*” applies to every *Yom Tov*, so why was *Sukkos* singled out as the *Yom Tov* of joy par excellence?

The simplest answer is that during the *yomim noro'im* of *Rosh Hashonoh* and *Yom Kippur* we merit obtaining *teshuva miyiroh*, and then on *Succos*, during which we acquire *ahavas Hashem*, we attain *teshuva me'ahavo*.

Complete and genuine joy stems from a holy source, and that is what we feel after the atonement obtained on *Yom Kippur*. That also appears to be the reason why a *choson* obtains atonement for his sins of the day of his marriage, because in order to feel joy properly, one's sins first have to be atoned for.

Similarly, *Simchas Torah* takes place at the end of *Sukkos*, and not on *Shovu'os*, the day on which the Torah was given, because it is specifically after *Hoshana Rabbo*, the day on which the process of atonement is completed, that a person can feel sufficient joy in preparation for *Simchas Torah*.

The *Sefas Emes* writes that the greater the atonement that a person obtained on *Yom Kippur*, the greater will be the joy that he feels on *Succos*. If his *Yom Kippur* was “dry” and without emotion, his *Sukkos* will be likewise.

Having said that, the *Brisker Rov* would say that although he felt confident that he had fulfilled the *mitzvos* of *sukka* and *arba minim* properly, he felt less confident that he had fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *vesomachto bechagecho* completely. Clearly then, fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *simcha* on *Sukkos* properly is no easy task.

The *Rambam* (*Sukkah* 8:14) stresses that only the greatest *gedolei Yisroel* participated in *simchos beis hashe'ovo*. This is because only their joy is complete and genuine, stemming as it does from a completely spiritual source.

Any Jew whose *neshomo* is active feels great joy when performing *mitzvos*. And especially when praying, during which the *Shechino* is close. When one is learning Torah and delving into it, one senses the limitless greatness of the Creator, and one's heart overflows with joy at the merit of serving Him. *Bnei Torah*, in particular, feel boundless joy, since the Torah is *mesamchei lev*, especially when one has the merit of being *mechadesh* a *chiddush*, or explaining a *severo*. By contrast, the *neshomos* of *am haratzim* are somewhat deficient, and therefore they did not participate in *simchos beis hashe'ovo*.

Furthermore, by feeling and expressing joy on *Succos* more than any other *Yom Tov*, we demonstrate that our acceptance of the yoke of Torah on *Yom Kippur* did not take place through coercion and lack of choice. Some outsiders pity an observant Jew, assuming that he lives a somber life full of restrictions in every area of life. To counter such notions, we exhibit our joy, because not only do we merit eternal joy in the afterlife, but we are the only ones that feel genuine joy in this world, and it is us who pity those still leading an animalistic and meaningless way of life, who are thereby missing out both in this world and the next.

Another reason why *Sukkos* is the *Yom Tov* of joy, is to afford us an opportunity to have any unfavorable decrees that were decreed against us *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom*

Kippur overturned before the delivery of the *pesokim* (notes of judgment) on *Hoshana Rabbo*. When we serve Hashem with joy we enjoy a special closeness to Him, and are considered to be like his sons. Sons always have an open door to see their father. Moreover, the *soton* cannot make accusations against us, because a father will not agree to hear bad words said against his sons, apart from which such accusations are only made within the context of a trial conducted by a king against his subjects, and will not be heard in the context of a father-and-son relationship. Therefore, through the joy of *mitzvos* on *Sukkos*, we are able to overturn evil decrees, and silence and prevent the *soton* from making accusations against us.

In fact, whenever a person or family member is in distress at any time of the year, he should endeavor to cleave to Hashem with joy, so that he will be considered to be like a son of Hashem, and merit having evil decrees overturned.

SUKKOS DURING WWII

Whilst speaking about the importance of feeling joy in all circumstances on *Yom Tov*, and especially on *Sukkos*, Rav Sternbuch recalled how Rav Elchonon Wasserman who was in London on the second day of the last *Shavuot* before World War II was in such a joyous state of mind that he started singing and dancing uninterruptedly for about one and a half hours like a young man. He sang the words “*Ov Horachamon, shma koleinu, helf shoin alle Yiden, zol schoin sein di geulo. Moshioch zol schoin kummen*” (“Merciful Father, Listen to our prayers, Help all Jews, Let the redemption come already, Let *moshiach* come already”).

During World War II Rav Sternbuch was learning in Rav Moshe Schneider’s yeshiva. Most of the boys’ parents and family members had remained behind in Poland or Hungary, and were under constant threat of death. Rav Sternbuch recalls how these boys came to the Rosh Yeshiva on *Sukkos* and told them that it was impossible for them to feel joy on *Yom Tov* when they did not know whether their parents were alive, and even if they were, they were surely suffering greatly from hunger or other forms of torture, so how could they possibly feel any joy. Rav Schneider was greatly moved and said, “Hitler, may his name be erased, may perhaps take this world from us, but he cannot take away our afterlife. We will fulfil Hashem’s *mitzvos* with *hidur* (splendor), even if we should walk in the valley of death, even in our last moment inside a fiery furnace, we will still be happy to be Jews, and under no circumstances will we let the Nazi oppressor take away our *simchas hachag*”. He insisted that the yeshiva *bochurim* feel special joy at being part of Hashem’s treasured nation. He did not let them stand on the side, but rather brought them into the circle of dancers. In our times too, concludes Rav Sternbuch, with all the troubles that we are enduring, we will nevertheless feel boundless joy at being connected to and cleaving to Hashem: “Blessed is our G-d, Who has separated us from those who go astray”.

MIZTA’ER AND HACHNOSAS ORCHIM

Rav Yaakov Yechiel Weinberg, the *Seridei Eish*, told Rav Sternbuch that one *Sukkos* he went to visit Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzhinsky. The latter did not go down to his *Sukka*. Since it was cold, and due to his state of health, he had the status of a *mizta’er* (someone who suffers) who is exempt from the *Sukka*. However, Rav Weinberg himself did go down to the *Sukka*,

since he was well. Much to his surprise, Rav Chaim Ozer then went down to the *Sukka* to eat with Rav Weinberg, and he asked Rav Chaim Ozer why he had changed his mind. The latter replied that a person suffering from the weather conditions outside is exempt from the *mitzvah* of *Sukka*, but not from other *mitzvos*. Therefore, as long as his guest had not yet gone down to the *Sukka*, he remained exempt from sitting in it, but as soon as he had gone down, he became obligated to fulfil the *mitzvah* of *hachnosas orchim* by being with him and making his stay pleasant. The cold conditions prevailing outside did not exempt him from this *mitzvah*.

It is said about the Chofetz Chaim that when he invited poor people from Radin to eat at his home on Friday night, he would delay singing *Shalom Aleichem* because the angels could wait, whereas his guests were hungry and it was forbidden to keep them waiting. He would make *Kiddush*, wash his hands, begin the meal, and only then invite the angels into his house by singing *Shalom Aleichem*. In the same vein, the Chofetz Chaim rules that on the first night of *Sukkos* one must wait a while for the rain to stop before making *Kiddush* and eating in the house. However, if there are guests, one should not wait at all, because each moment that the host does not feed his guests he may be transgressing the prohibition of *bal te'acher* (the obligation not to delay the performance of *mitzvas hachanosas orchim*), and that overrides the obligation to wait for the rain to stop in order to make *Kiddush* in the *Sukkah* (see *O.C.*, *siman* 639, *Sha'ar HaTziyun*, 67).

NISUCH HAMAYIM

Why was *Nisuch Hamayim*, which formed part of the *Simchas Beis Hasho'eva* in the time of the *Beis Hamikdosh*, performed with water? What is the special joy surrounding this *mitzvah*? Even water, which is seemingly the most basic component available in nature, having no special taste, sight or smell, only exists by virtue of the Word of Hashem. The special joy of *nisuch hamayim* is due to its message that there is no nature in the world, but only miracles. This realization leads one to fulfil the famous statement of the Ramban at the end of *parshas Bo*: “The only purpose of creation is for man to thank G-d Who created him”.

USHPIZIN

The Zohar says that the *Ushpizin* only come if they are invited. Perhaps this is not referring to reciting the words “*Ulu Ushpizin*” (“Come O guests *etc.*”), but rather to preparing oneself to become worthy of hosting them by emulating the traits characterizing each guest: *chesed* in the case of Avrohom, self-control and fortitude in the case of *Yitzchok*, and accepting the yoke of Torah in the case of Yaakov. By doing so, we demonstrate that we want to become completely close to Hashem and break all the barriers separating us from Him. Even if we do not fulfil this completely, not being on the level of the *Ushpizin*, by showing that we yearn to attain those levels, we can merit to host the *Ushpizin* in our *Sukkah*.