

בסייעתא דשמיא

על דשא

AL EI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit" a of Gur

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Sukkos · Shmini Atzeres

Simchas Torah

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לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



Understanding the Essence of the Sukkah

Let us examine a number of the halachic ordinances pertaining to the building of a sukkah, and draw out the message that they hold for us.

The Meaning behind the Sukkah's Walls

The Gemara (*Sukkah* 4b) invalidates a sukkah which is built upon a platform which has area that is large enough for a sukkah (7 *tefachim* by 7 *tefachim*) and which has no walls (the *sechach* rests upon a frame, without full walls). This is true even if the platform is ten *tefachim* high, and we might invoke the principle of *gud asik*;¹ still the sukkah is invalid. Rava explains that a sukkah requires *mechitzos hanikaros*, walls which are visible as enclosing walls. It is likely that the reasoning behind Rava's requirement is the very underpinning of the mitzvah of sukkah, the reason given by the Torah: למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכות את בני ישראל – *So that your generations know, that I domiciled the Bnei Yisrael in booths*. Since this knowledge is given as the reason for Sukkos, the sukkah needs to

be visible and noticed. It is for this reason, also, that the Gemara disqualified a sukkah that has its *sechach* more than twenty *amos* above its floor.

The deeper message is this: the purpose of the sukkah is to instill in us the feeling and understanding of the true reality that the Jewish People dwell in the Shade of Hashem, the *צילא דמהימנותא*. This means that Hashem is our protector, and not the various physical protections which we may employ. This is true the entire year, but this fact is generally hidden, covered by layers of our everyday lives. On Sukkos, we designate a place to retreat from the attractions and delusions of the physical world, a place whose very walls are vested with Hashem's name. The sukkah helps us divorce ourselves from

1 This principle is used to extend an existing wall higher (or lower, in a similar principle) than it physically reaches. Halachah may recognize an imaginary wall as if it were real, if certain criteria are met.

the forces which cause us to forget that we are really under Hashem's wings. In order to drive home this recognition, it is important that we are able to recognize the walls. The

heart is influenced by what the eyes see. If this feeling, the feeling of being enveloped by Hashem alone, is to permeate our souls, the walls need to be *mechitzos hanikaros*.

Fortifying the Home Before Extending its Protection

Further in the Gemara, we find a fascinating distinction. The above halachah holds true in the case of a platform, but it is not so in the seemingly similar case of a roof. When a sukkah is built on a roof, one may invoke the principle of *gud asik* to extend the walls of the building to be considered walls of a sukkah. These walls are acceptable as *mechitzos*, since they are clearly identified as walls to those inside the house (*mechitzos hanikaros ba'bayis*).

Here, too, there is a deeper meaning, a true lesson for us, an idea which we have highlighted in the past using the example of mezuzah. The Rambam² writes concerning mezuzah: "The mitzva of mezuzah is a constant obligation for every person. Whenever one enters or exits, he encounters the Oneness of the Name of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and he will recall his

love and wake from his slumber and stupor, from being caught up in the

If a person has no boundaries in his own home, he has no hope for protection against the challenges of the street

follies of the times. He will know that there is nothing permanent but the knowledge of the *Tzur Olamim*³. Immediately he will come to his senses and walk in the righteous path." Now, the tests which a person confronts are generally when he leaves his home and engages the larger world. Would it not be more

² *Hilchos Mezuzah* 6:13

³ Lit. "Rock of all worlds," a reference to Hashem as everlasting and reliable.

effective to place the mezuzah on the left side of the door, so we will be reminded of Hashem as we exit to the dubious environment of the outside?

The answer is that in order for a person to be able to remain strong when he is confronted with challenges outside, he must first and foremost secure his own home. You cannot neglect to maintain standards in the home and then expect that when you leave your home, you will successfully meet the challenges you may encounter — that you will be strong enough to overcome any temptation the street will throw your way. It is simply not feasible. The mezuzah is at your right upon entering your home, because the first step to protecting yourself outside is to build a fire of *kedushah* inside the home. If one remembers that his home is just a transient abode, and that his permanent residence is in the World to Come; if he remembers the spiritual aspects of life, and remembers his Creator; then without doubt “he will come to his senses and walk in the righteous path.”

This is the message inherent in this halachah. We are entitled to

use *mechitzos hanikaros ba'bayis* to extend upwards and thus furnish walls for the sukkah, using the principle of *gud asik*. As long as one has walls enclosing his home, he can hope to extend those walls outside of his home. If a person has no boundaries in his own home, he has no hope for protection against the challenges of the street.⁴ And it is not enough just to keep the street out of the home by means of these fences, and to expel the bad influences of the street. We must ignite the flame of feeling towards *kedushah*, *avodas Hashem*, and towards remembering the *Ribono Shel Olam* within the home. Then, we can be optimistic that when faced with a challenge we will be well equipped to overcome it.

Let's take it a step deeper. We can learn from this halachah that we must not rely solely on the rarified environment of our yeshiva, *shtibel*, or friends to be our spiritual safety net. These environments can be very positive assets to help in our *avodas Hashem*, and they are important. But the primary focus of our *avodah* is in our own hearts: to feel, and to recognize, the presence of Hashem, and to

4 And although sukkah only requires two walls plus another handsbreadth, when it comes to the enclosure of one's home, it should be as the sukkah of Mashiach, which protects from downpours, etc. (See: *Sukkah* 2b; *Yeshayahu* 4:6; *Sukkah* 6b; *Ibra Dedasha*, *Yerach Ha'eisanim* p. 183.)

draw closer to Him. Then we will be fortified to defend ourselves against the onslaught of persuasions that are bound to attack, as soon as we

leave the cocoon of that uplifted environment, or in times of acute temptation.

The Time and Place for ‘Sukkah Decorations’

We have mentioned a teaching from the Tchebiner Rav, who commented about an individual who once did something terrible in a moment of rage. It is for this, the Tchebiner Rav said, that we daven, *ויציל נפשותינו מן השעות הרעות* – may [Hashem] save our lives from the ‘bad times.’ What are the bad times? This person was really above doing such a disgraceful act. Generally, he was in control of himself; he would never do such a thing. But sometimes a person is in an emotional state and he has a weak moment, a ‘bad time,’ and then he is liable to do things which he would never do in a normal state of mind. So we daven, “save us from the bad times,” save us from the times of anger, or other negative emotions

or desires. When a person fortifies inside himself, when his home has boundaries and the fire of *kedushah* burns within him, then those boundaries will extend further out, saving him even where he cannot erect those boundaries.

My brother, *Hagaon* R. Yitzchok Dovid *shlita*, cites⁵ the opinion of the *Pnei Yehoshua*⁶ regarding the following ruling of the Gemara. The Gemara states that the sukkah’s decorations are *muktzeh*, being dedicated for the mitzvah for the duration of Sukkos (נוי סוכה מוקצה ואסור); *the Pnei Yehoshua* holds that this applies only to decorations that are added to the sukkah after it has become a valid sukkah (with kosher walls and *sechach*).⁷ Decorations which were in place before the sukkah was

5 In the Torah journal *Simchas Torah*, p. 729.

6 *Sukkah* 10a.

7 His proof is from the fact that the *baraisa* which is the source of this halachah specifically says, “If he properly covered the sukkah with *sechach* (סיכך כהלכתה), and then he decorated it ... one cannot use ... until after the last day of Sukkos.” (The *Netziv* in *Ha’mek She’alah* (*Parshas Shelach*, *She’ilta* 126) gives a similar ruling based on this reading, that if someone makes a sukkah in his home, the home decorations (and the walls) are not dedicated to the sukkah.)

made valid are not off-limits during Sukkos.⁸

This opinion of the *Pnei Yehoshua* is not accepted as halachah (and the *Pnei Yehoshua* himself was not convinced of his own position). However, the inherent lesson is certainly true. There are those who assume excessive *chumros* (stringencies) before their core building is erect. Before there are walls and *sechach*, they are busy with decorations. But such decorations are worthless, and false.

The *Mashgiach*, Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt"l*, once noticed a *yungerman* who began refraining from relying upon the eruv (in a city where our Kehillah generally relied upon it). Reb Gad'l knew that this was above his reach. He spoke to the *yungerman*, and said, "Sometimes a person will stumble and succumb to a serious sin, and he knows it, and his *neshamah* knows it, and he feels that he must rectify it. But it's hard for him to cure himself; it's difficult to make the needed improvements. So he offers Hashem a 'present'; he assumes a *chumrah* or a *hiddur*. But that's not what Hashem really wants of him..."

I don't want to belittle any inspiration which a person may feel. In times like these, any holy inspiration should be cherished. But we need to know that this is how the earlier Chassidim were. They were very critical in their *yiras Shamayim*. They constantly analyzed their deeds, even their holy inspirations, to see where they were rooted. We can learn this from the *Pnei Yehoshua*. Don't hang decorations before the walls and *sechach* are in place. Only after the sukkah is properly built can decorations attain the *kedushah* of the sukkah and to be vested with Hashem's name, like the sukkah. As the *Chovos Halevavos*⁹ puts it, ואין תוספת מתקבלת עד שתיפרע החובה – extra additions are not welcome until the debt has been paid off. The primary focus must be to 'pay the principal,' our essential obligations to Hashem, and to overcome temptations. Each individual knows in his heart where he needs improvement. The focus should not be on the shiny decorations, which are seen by others. The private challenges, which remain between the person and Hashem, the struggles that nobody sees — that is what Hashem wants us to work

8 See *Simchas Torah* ad loc, where my brother cited an opposite proof from the words of a *piyut*.

9 *Sha'ar Yichud Hamaaseh* chap. 5

on. Only once we work on our inside 'home' is there room for extras and shiny decorations.

May Hashem help us to perform the mitzvah of sukkah properly,

and to build our own personal *sukkot*, strong and steady. May He illuminate our paths, so we may merit to know what our responsibilities are on this world.

שב"ק ויו"ט א' דסוכות תשפ"א

Making a Brachah on a Horse in place of an Esrog

The holy R. Mordechai of Neshchiz was very poor. All year he would save penny after penny, to be able to afford a beautiful *esrog* for Sukkot. One year he saw a poor wagon driver whose horse had died; this was the man's only source of income, and he lacked the means to purchase a new horse. The Rebbe took all of the money for which he had scraped and sacrificed over the course of the entire year, and handed it to the wagon driver, to buy a new horse. He remarked, "While everyone else says a *brachah* on an *esrog*, Mordche will say a *brachah* on a horse."

Every utterance of a *tzaddik* is worthy of examination, as we can learn from everything a *tzaddik* says or does. Why did R. Mordechai say he would say a *brachah* on a horse — why not on the mitzvah of *tzedakah*?

The secret lies in a cryptic Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (96a) which describes Hashem's response to Yirmiyahu, who asked why the wicked, such as Nevuchadnetzar, prosper. Hashem told Yirmiyahu: "If the reward which I gave to Nevuchadnetzar, who ran

Many perform mitzvos with their own benefit in mind. It's either for the good feeling, or for the reward in the World to Come. They want a nice slice of *Livyasan*

to honor me (as the Gemara immediately describes), astounds you, how much

more so will you be shocked at the reward which I will grant Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, who ran before me as horses do.”

Of all possible descriptions which might describe the *avodas Hashem* of the *Avos*, is a horse really the most suitable analogy?

I heard from my father, the Pnei Menachem *zt”l*, that his father, the Imrei Emes *zy”a*, had a cherished and valuable pair of tefillin, written by the holy R. Moshe of Pshevorsk *zy”a*. He planned on giving it to his youngest son (my father) on the occasion of his bar mitzvah. Some time before my father’s bar mitzvah, a poor man approached my grandfather for money. The Imrei Emes gave the man the holy pair of tefillin. After all, the Rambam¹⁰ exhorts us to tie down our *yetzer hara*, and be generous and expansive; to bring a *korban* from the choicest of animals, and indeed to use the choicest option for any other mitzvah, as the pasuk¹¹ says: 'כל חלב לה', the best of everything is rightly for Hashem.

Many perform mitzvos with their own benefit in mind. It’s either for the good feeling, or for the reward

in the World to Come. They want a nice slice of *Livyasan*.¹² With such a philosophy, of course it is better to keep the special tefillin for one’s son, so that they may be a force of *kedushah* and *deveikus* which will influence him and his descendants for generations. Certainly this takes precedence over helping out a needy pauper. That is the philosophy of those who think about themselves when performing a mitzvah.

However, someone who performs mitzvos to carry out the will of Hashem, who contemplates at every minute what Hashem wants of him *at this moment*, makes no such calculations. If he is presented with the opportunity to help a Yid, and the best possible way to perform this mitzvah is with the tefillin of R. Moshe of Pshevorsk, then that is what he does. Of course there may be a valid way to explain why it is indeed better to save it for his son, to give him the merit to don these holy tefillin and to have that tremendous influence of *kedushah* elevate him. But we do not raise our children for our own nachas and pleasure; we are *mechanech* our children for Hashem. And therefore, the only

10 end of *Hilchos Issurei Mizbeach*

11 *Vayikra* 3:16

12 It’s worth noting that for those who seek pleasure and gastronomic experiences in this world, their concept of eternal reward, as well, is limited to a big slice of *Livyasan*.

question in our minds should be: what does Hashem want of me *now*. (Even if it seems that there will be a price to pay in the future, it is not so. Hashem says "No one loses by listening to Me."¹³)

This is the analogy to a horse, who has no self interest in the running; he runs only for his rider. This was the lofty level of the *Avos*, who ran before Hashem as horses, without any personal interest. Only the honor of Hashem was a consideration. And that is why they are the *merkavah* of the holy *Shechinah*. This is the secret of the pithy remark of Rav Mordechai of Neshchiz. Hashem afforded him the opportunity to give money to a poor wagon driver who needed a new horse. He did so without thinking about what he would want, and this is the meaning of making a *brachah* on a horse.

We have no concept of the sublime level of the mitzvah of *esrog*

of the holy Rebbe of Neshchiz, but we can learn the correct approach to mitzvos from this story. It certainly is above our level. If only we would carry out all the mitzvos with the motive of getting reward in the World to Come; it would be an accomplishment. But we should be aware of the ideal in *kiyum hamitzvos*.

May Hashem help us reach out and touch the ways of our fathers, as the pasuk says, למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו – the word יצוה is related to the word בצוותא,¹⁴ to be in contact. May we merit to reach out and connect with the ways of the *Avos*, to carry out Hashem's will with integrity and a dedicated heart, and may we be blessed with goodness and abundance in every way.

שב"ק ויד"ט א' דסוכות תשפ"א

Utilizing the Mitzvah of Sukkah to Attain True Yishuv Da'as

The purpose of the mitzvah of Sukkah is specified in the Torah: למען ידעו דורותיכם

generations will know. The holy *sefarim* write that the mitzvah of Sukkah has the power to impart to

¹³ *Devarim Rabbah* 4:5

¹⁴ *Berachos* 6b

one who performs it the elevated attribute called 'da'as'.¹⁵ We would think that a person could develop *da'as* much more productively in a comfortable home. Why would we go to the discomfort of a temporary dwelling and thereby gain more *da'as*?¹⁶

To answer, I'd like to preface with a story that the holy R. Aharon of Belz *zy" a* shared with the Boyaner Rebbe *zy" a*. During the period when the Belzer Rav was escaping the clutches of the Nazis, he traveled in a car with his small retinue; they were dressed as Hungarian military officers. Throughout that time, they merited to see open miracles. They witnessed how חונה מלאך ה' סביב ליראיו ויחלצם, an angel of Hashem accompanied them, hiding them from the Nazis. At one point the Belzer Rav asked them to stop the car, as he wished to get out for a bit. Those who were traveling with him tried to talk the

Rebbe out of it, claiming that it was far too dangerous to do so at that time, but all to no avail. When they stopped, the men observed the Rebbe carefully to see what it was that he needed to attend to at the risk of his life. All they saw was the Rebbe sitting on a stone for about ten minutes. Then he returned to the car, and they continued on their way. For many years the mystery remained, as the Rebbe did not disclose what he was doing or why it was so vital for that moment.

Years later the Belzer Rebbe told the Boyaner Rebbe what had happened. During the journey, the Rebbe thought to himself, what can the *yetzer hara* possibly seek to benefit from this whole daring escape? He decided that the *yetzer hara's* scheme for this maneuver was to take away the Rebbe's *yishuv hada'as*, equanimity. The Rebbe decided then and there that he must recalibrate, and so, he stopped

15 Loosely translated as 'experiential knowledge'. It is interesting that on Yom Kippur the amount of food that is considered by the Torah to be a violation of Yom Kippur, is not a *kezayis*, an olive size, which is generally the halachic quantity for eating, but rather the size of a large date (*Yoma* 73b). The reason for this distinction is that one does not violate Yom Kippur by merely eating but by revival of the mind, called יתובי דעתא (*Yoma* 79a). We see that the Torah intended to subdue the aspect of *da'as* which is provided by way of nourishment. (See *Bava Basra* 12b, "before one eats and drinks he has two hearts, but after he eats and drinks he has only one heart.") On Sukkos, on the contrary, the goal is *da'as*, and to that end we must eat in the sukkah on the first night, to nourish the spiritual *da'as*.

16 The Rambam expresses a similar idea when explaining the reason for Shemini Atzeres. He writes in *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:43, "Our departure from Sukkos to a secondary festival - Shemini Atzeres - is for the purpose of completing this rejoicing in ways that we cannot celebrate in Sukkahs, only in spacious houses and buildings."

the car and sat for ten minutes refreshing his *yishuv hada'as*.

Before I continue, I must confess that I am fearful to dissect the actions of an angel of a man, the likes of the holy Belzer Rav *zy"u*, who was an inscrutable wonder and whose deeds were beyond our comprehension. We have no conception of what he called *yishuv hada'as* or lack of *yishuv hada'as*. However, from the very fact that he himself shared this story and explained his actions, we are given permission to examine and learn from it, on its surface. What does this story teach people like us, to improve our service of Hashem?

Why did the Rav need to leave the car to recoup his *yishuv hada'as*? Was he unable to compose himself inside the car? On the contrary, it would seem that the car is more protected, more secure, and more conducive to presence of mind.

Perhaps, although he was cognizant of the hand of Hashem directing them, still there was a strategy, a plan which conceivably could result in their successful escape. It is not for me to suggest *ch"v*, that the holy Belzer Rav had even a fleeting moment when he was not totally attached to Hashem, as it is well known that he was in a

constant state of *d'veikus*, clinging to Hashem. But for people like us, we can understand that, perhaps, to recalibrate his *yishuv hada'as*, he needed to leave the car, to leave behind the man-made plans and maneuvers, to remember that above all the calculations of man is the *Eibershter* Himself. If I have erred in this assessment, and have thereby maligned the honor of the tzaddik, may Hashem in His goodness

Even when we daven and learn as we should, and keep all of the mitzvos, and resist the aveiros, we still tend to get lost in the daily grind of life.

forgive my mistake.

What we can learn from this story is that even when we daven and learn as we should, and keep all of the mitzvos, and resist the *aveiros*, we still tend to get lost in the daily grind of life. We are surrounded by all things mundane and physical, and we need to step out for a minute

and recognize that above everything is the *Eibershter*.

This is our meaning when we daven, הושע נא נפש מבהלה, 'Save, please, the soul from anxiety.' Aside for the simple meaning of saving us from all the stresses that can overwhelm us, it has a deeper meaning as well. We ask Hashem that our mitzvos be performed

with complete serenity, without the effects of our physical life creeping in. On Sukkos we leave our physical surroundings and go to the צילא דמהימנותא, the shade of *emunah*, in order to gain that *yishuv hada'as* that comes with the realization that above everything is Hashem – למען דעת כל עמי הארץ כי ה' הוא האלקים אין עוד.

ליל שחהמ"ס תשע"ד

Joyous Abode

In Parshas Re'ei, the Torah describes each Yom Tov and its celebration in the Beis Hamikdash, in similar but not identical terms. Pesach: וּזְבַחַת פֶּסַח לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ צֹאן וּבָקָר, – *You shall slaughter the Korban Pesach to Hashem, your G-d, from the flock, and [also offer] cattle, in the place where Hashem will choose to rest His Name* (Devarim 16:2). Shavuos: וּשְׂמַחַת לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ וּגו' בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְשַׂכֵּן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם – *You shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d ... in the place that Hashem, your G-d, will choose to rest His Name* (16:11). Sukkos: שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תַּחֲגִיל ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה'

to Hashem, your G-d, in the place that Hashem will choose (16:15). The *mefarshim*¹⁷ point out that for Sukkos only, *in the place that Hashem will choose* is not followed by *to rest His Name*.

The Gemara (Sukkah 9a) states that just as Hashem's Name is upon a *korban chagigah*, so it is upon a sukkah. Wherever a Yid builds a sukkah, the *Shechinah* rests upon it.

Perhaps this is why the pasuk varies its expression. On Sukkos, we are to "celebrate to Hashem in the place that Hashem will choose." This is not limited to the Beis Hamikdash – the *place that Hashem will choose to rest His Name* – but

17 See *Ta'amei Mesores V'Hamikra* of R. Yehudah HaChassid; *Sodei Chumash V'Hashe'ar*, by a disciple of R. Yehudah HaChassid; *Meshech Chochmah*

includes every Yid's sukkah, where Hashem rests His *Shechinah*.

The Sfas Emes¹⁸ applies to Sukkos the pasuk (Tehillim 122:1), שְׂמַחְתִּי בְּאֲמָרִים לִי בֵּית ה' גִּלְגֵּי – *I rejoiced when they said to me, "Let us go to the House of Hashem."* A sukkah, too, is a house of Hashem, a spark of the Beis Hamikdash upon which the *Shechinah* rests. Dovid Hamelech rejoiced at going to Hashem's House; and as well, Sukkos, when we enter our *Beis Hashem*, is *Zman Simchaseinu*, our time of joy.

The Sfas Emes quotes the pasuk as שְׂמַחְתִּי בְּאֲמָרִים כֹּי בֵּית ה' גִּלְגֵּי, omitting the word לִי. Perhaps this suggests that while Dovid Hamelech could truly say he was filled with joy at the prospect of going to the *Beis Hashem*, at the closeness with Hashem he could attain there – we may be very far from this. Instead of joy over the *Beis Hashem* that will welcome us this Yom Tov, our excitement might be at the thought of good food and good times. The Sfas Emes leaves out לִי; Dovid Hamelech said it about himself, but we must contemplate whether it applies to us.

The truth is, though, that the joy of the *Beis Hashem* of Sukkos applies to every Yid, to varying degrees.

Sukkos comes several days after Yom Kippur. *Sefarim* connect the extraordinary *simchah* of Sukkos to the atonement of Yom Kippur.¹⁹ As Rashi says, "One whose sin was atoned is happy."²⁰ As Chassidim put it: "After tidying up, you feel good"²¹

Since every Yid, no matter his standing, attains some measure of atonement on Yom Kippur, every Yid has a connection to the spiritual joy of Sukkos. Every Jewish *neshamah*, freshly cleansed, feels the presence of the *Shechinah* in the *Beis Hashem* of the sukkah.

There is another lesson in the distinct language of the pasuk of Sukkos, בְּמִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה',

Chazal say that because Yamim Tovim are times of joy, special care is needed to avoid improper conduct.²² In fact, *beis din* is required to establish guards to ensure this.²³ This is pertinent especially to Sukkos, with the massive celebrations of *Simchas Beis HaSho'eivah* in the Beis Hamikdash.

18 Sukkos 5660

19 See *Sfas Emes*, 5638 s.v. *Zman*

20 *Menachos* 20a s.v. *Aderaba*

21 In Yiddish: אד מ'רױמיט אויף, איז מען אויפגערוימט.

22 See *Kiddushin* 81a with Rashi s.v. *Sakva*

23 *Tur*, O.C. 529

The Gemara (Sukkah 51b) states that each Sukkos, a balcony was erected in the Beis Hamikdash for women, so that no mingling would occur at the *Simchas Beis HaSho'eivah*.

Laxity in areas of *kedushah* cause the *Shechinah* to remove itself from Klal Yisrael, *chas v'shalom*. As the pasuk says (Devarim 23:15), וְלֹא יִרְאֶה בָּךְ, וְעֵרוֹת דָּבַר וְשָׁב מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ – *so that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you*. The *Navi* rebukes Klal Yisrael for their conduct within the Beis Hamikdash: הַמְעֵרַת פְּרָצִים הִיָּה הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עָלָיו בְּעֵינֵיכֶם – *Has this House, upon which My Name is proclaimed, become a cave of criminals in your eyes?* (Yirmiyahu 7:11)

The Torah leaves out the words וְלֹא יִרְאֶה בָּךְ in regard to Sukkos, to drive home this point. It cannot be taken for granted that Hashem will *rest His Name* in the Beis Hamikdash at times of great joy, such as Sukkos. It is up to us to ensure that our conduct remains worthy of it.

There is an important message in this for us. Each Yid's heart is an abode for the *Shechinah*.²⁴ It is the task of every Jew to keep his heart a place where Hashem's Presence can rest. The same truth applies to the sukkah: every Yid must ensure that his sukkah remains a place fit for the *Shechinah*. Then, we can truly exult in the joy of *Zman Simchaseinu*.

(בנאות דשא – חג הסוכות תשפ"ד)

Booted

Tzaddikim said that sukkah is the only mitzvah a person enters into with his whole body.²⁵ It has been pointed out that the mitzvah of *re'iyah*, presenting oneself in the Beis Hamikdash on Yom Tov, seemingly also has this attribute;

one enters the Beis Hamikdash with one's entire body. The answer we have been taught is that one may not enter the Beis Hamikdash wearing shoes,²⁶ but one may enter his sukkah even with his *shtivel*, his boots.

24 See *Chareidim*, מל"ח, chap. 7: "משכן בתוך לבי, Within my heart I will build a sanctuary for His glory."

25 See *Ramasayim Tzofim*, entry 77, הר"ר בונם זי"א, *Sifsei Tzaddik*, 1 and 13, citing the Chiddushei HaRim

26 See Brachos 54a

The pasuk states (Yirmiyahu 2:25), מְנַעֵי רַגְלֶךָ מִיַּחֲדָּוּת – *Withhold your foot from barefootedness*, and the Gemara explains (Yoma 77a), *Withhold yourself from sin so that your foot does not come barefoot*. Similarly, the Arizal taught that shoes, which separate one from the earth, are necessary to avert sin. They represent the lowliness of humanity.

When a person enters the holy space of the Har HaBayis, he must shed his *gashmiyus* so that he no longer needs the spiritual protection of shoes. The uniqueness of sukkah is that one may enter as is, without stepping out of his mundaneness. He may ‘wear his boots.’

~

Chazal²⁷ reveal a reason for the mitzvah of *nisuch hamayim* (pouring water on the *Mizbe’ach*) on Sukkos. At the time of Creation, when the lower waters were separated from the upper waters, the lower waters cried out to Hashem, “We want to be close to the King!” Because of this, they were promised that salt (which is extracted from water) would be offered together with all *korbanos*, and that

water would be poured as *nisuch hamayim* each year on Sukkos.

Why is salt used in the *avodah* all year long, while actual water is used only once a year? Salt is a refined derivative of water, purified and crystallized. It even has the ability to refine other things.²⁸ Water, on the

One can attain exalted madreigos by the kedushah of the sukkah and the Shechinah that rests upon it. To do so, however, one must free himself from triviality and lowliness. Then, the Name of Hashem will rest upon his sukkah.

other hand, is unrefined. It induces physicality and passion.²⁹ For this reason, some *tzaddikim* refrained from drinking plain water.³⁰

27 See *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 5, 19b and *Tikkun* 40, 80a; Rashi and Rabbeinu Bechaye, *Vayikra* 2:13

28 See *Brachos* 5a; *Zohar hakadosh*, vol. 1, 241b

29 See *Sha’arei Kedushah*, vol. 1 *sha’ar* 2; *Ramasayim Tzofim*, entry 64, הר"ר בונם זי"א,

30 Paradoxically, water also brings purity. This is a discussion for itself.

Salt is offered with *korbanos* all year round because throughout the year, our *avodah* must be refined and purified. The *kedushah* of Sukkos, however, is so revealed that every Yid can tap into it even without prior refinement. Thus, water is used for the *avodah* of Sukkos on its own.³¹

~

R. Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin taught that the placement of every statement of Gemara has deep significance. In Maseches Sukkah (25b), we are taught that העוסק במצוה כסוּר מן המצוה, *One engaged in one mitzvah is exempt from another mitzvah*. What does this have to do with sukkah?

According to some Rishonim,³² the exemption of *oseik b'mitzvah* applies even where one could perform both mitzvos simultaneously. The Chiddushei HaRim explains³³ that a Yid must put his entire life energy into the performance of each mitzvah, and so two cannot be properly fulfilled at the same time. The Chiddushei HaRim adds that because one's whole life force must be injected into

each mitzvah, naturally one could not remain alive afterwards. He survives only because the mitzvah infuses fresh life into him.

The mitzvah of sukkah is special because one enters into it entirely, with his whole body, even with his boots. This is the connection between sukkah and *oseik b'mitzvah*, which teaches that a mitzvah must be performed with one's entire being.

~

We have seen that one may enter a sukkah even while 'wearing his boots.' My father taught³⁴ that although boots may enter, they must be first cleansed of mud. After all, the halachah is that repulsive utensils may not be brought into the sukkah;³⁵ some even maintain that they invalidate the sukkah.³⁶ While we are permitted to enter the sukkah without first shedding our physicality, unlike with the Beis Hamikdash; still, we must cleanse ourselves of spiritual filth before entering.

This distinction is clear if we study the calendar placement of

31 See *Sfas Emes*, 5651 s.v. ט"ח

32 Rabbeinu Tam, Ran, and others.

33 See *Sifsei Tzaddik*, *Shemini* 13

34 See *Otzar Derashos Pnei Menachem*, vol. 1 p. 231

35 *O.C.* 639:1

36 See *Sha'ar Hatziyon* *ibid*, 13

Sukkos. Sukkos follows Yom Kippur, when we were purified of our *aveiros*. But as soon as Yom Kippur ended, we were no longer detached from *gashmiyus*. In Hashem's kindness, He allows us to enter the sukkah even in this manner. But we still must prepare ourselves by rinsing the mud off our boots.³⁷

~

חג הסוכות שבעת ימים לה' – *The Festival of Sukkos, a seven-day period for Hashem* (Vayikra 23:34). The Gemara (Sukkah 9a, Beitzah 30b) derives from here that just as a *korban chagigah* ("חגי is imbued with the Name of Hashem, as the pasuk says לה' – so too is a sukkah ("הסוכות").

The Gemara (Sukkah 8b) states, as well, that various types of huts designated for mundane use³⁸ are nonetheless kosher for the mitzvah of sukkah. The Rashba writes³⁹ that although one may fulfill his obligation with such a sukkah, the *kedushah* of sukkah and the Name of Hashem do not rest upon it.

There is a lesson in this for us. One can attain exalted *madreigos* by the *kedushah* of the sukkah and the *Shechinah* that rests upon it. To do so, however, one must free himself from triviality and lowliness. Then, the Name of Hashem will rest upon his sukkah.

(בנאות דשא – חג הסוכות ושמחה)

(תורה תשפ"ב ותשפ"ג)

Sukkos Selection

The Gemara (Sukkah 37b) asks why the *brachah* recited is על נטילת לולב; why ignore the other three species? The Gemara answers that since the lulav is the tallest of the *minim*, the *brachah* mentions it specifically.

We do find that Hashem takes pride in tall humans;⁴⁰ however, in

other contexts, it seems the opposite is true. For example, Hashem chose Har Sinai to rest his *Shechinah* because it is a low mountain. The mitzvah of lulav, too, induces a form of *hashra'as haShechinah*, as we say in the *l'shem yichud*, "ולידע, – איך שמך נקרא עלי

37 See *Pnei Menachem*, Ha'azinu p. 226

38 סוכת גב"ר – סוכת גוים, נשים, בהמה, כותים.

39 Beitzah, *ibid*

40 See Bechoros 45b; see also *Otzar Derashos U'Ma'amarim*, Tu B'Shevat

Your Name is called upon me.” If so, shouldn’t the *brachah* be made on the lowest of the species?

The Gemara (Sukkah 45b) states: כל המצוות כולן אין אדם יוצא בהן אלא דרך גדילתן – *Every single mitzvah – a person can fulfill it only in the direction it grew.* Rashi explains that this refers to erecting the *kerashim* of the *Mishkan*, and to taking the

A mitzvah must be done with a desire to distance oneself from the ground, to be lifted up and connect with Hashem

lulav, *hadass*, and *aravah*, facing upwards.

Why does the Gemara underscore “כל המצוות כולן – *every single mitzvah*”? This is especially difficult since Rashi applies this rule to only a handful of mitzvos.

The answer is that, indeed, *every single mitzvah* must be performed facing upwards, like a growing plant, standing tall and reaching higher. A mitzvah must be done

with a desire to distance oneself from the ground, to be lifted up and connect with Hashem.

Only a *domem*, an inanimate creation, a stone or a mountain, is valued for its lowness. A living entity, even a plant, is valued more when it stands tall, reaching up in yearning toward the heavens. This is not improper *ga'avah*, but rather *standing proud in the ways of Hashem* (Divrei Hayamim II 17:6).

This is why we recite the *brachah* on the lulav: as the tallest of the *minim*, it best represents our pining to climb upwards, close to Hashem.

The Gemara (Sukkah 38a) says that our fulfillment of the mitzvah of lulav is an arrow in the eyes of the *satan*. By pointing and shaking the lulav in every direction, we are arousing and expressing our longing for Hashem – in every place and in every circumstance. When we are up or even when we are down – regardless, we feel connected and desire the closeness of Hashem. This is truly an arrow in the *satan*'s eyes.

*

The Gemara (Sukkah 51b) relates: It happened once that Rabban Gamliel, R. Yehudah, R. Elazar ben

Azaryah and R. Akiva were traveling by ship (on Sukkos), and only Rabban Gamliel possessed a lulav, which he purchased for one thousand *zuz*. The Gemara asks: Why is it necessary to tell that it was bought for one thousand *zuz*? The Gemara answers: To show how precious mitzvos were to the *Chachamim*.

The Sfas Emes points out that one is obligated to spend at least one-tenth of his assets for a positive mitzvah.⁴¹ Rabban Gamliel was a wealthy person, so certainly, one thousand *zuz* was not more than a tenth of his capital. How, then, does this demonstrate that mitzvos were particularly dear to him?

The Sfas Emes answers that the lulav Rabban Gamliel purchased did not have such a high market value, but he nonetheless paid one thousand *zuz* for it, just as some *tzaddikim* would pay for a mitzvah item whatever price was asked. This showed how precious the mitzvah was to him.

This conduct of *tzaddikim* is related about the Arizal,⁴² who would pay for articles of mitzvos whatever the vendor asked and wouldn't negotiate the price. At

times, he placed his moneybag before the seller and instructed him to take however much he wanted.

This is difficult to understand. If an item can be bought for less money, what is the use of paying more?

We may suggest as follows. The purpose of our physical possessions in this world is so we may use them in preparation for *Olam Haba*. We are meant to elevate our worldly assets into spiritual wealth. Rabban Gamliel and other *tzaddikim* would spend extra money on mitzvos so that more of their money would become uplifted by being used for a mitzvah. This demonstrates, indeed, how dear mitzvos were to them.

The Acharonim⁴³ consider, in a scenario where one willingly pays for an item more than its value: is the surplus amount part of the actual payment, or is it simply a gift? The question has practical relevance where a buyer effects a *kinyan* on an item before paying; is he now obligated in the full amount, or only in the item's value?

If we assume that the extra amount is considered a gift, how did

41 See *Magen Avraham*, 656:7 citing R. Yerucham; see also *Beur Halachah*, *ibid*

42 See *Kaf Hachaim*, 454:40

43 As cited in *Yalkut Shiurim (Hayashan)*, Kiddushin 18:6 s.v. *V'achar kach*

Rabban Gamliel's expenditure show his affection for mitzvos? After all, he paid for the lulav only its actual value; the rest was only a present.

This position of the Acharonim – that the surplus payment is a gift – applies only where the price paid is completely beyond the market value of the item. In a case where the price is within the range of market value, but it could have been negotiated lower, all would agree that the full amount paid is considered payment for the purchase. Perhaps this latter scenario was the case with the purchase of Rabban Gamliel's lulav; one thousand *zuz* wasn't entirely above its range of value. Thus, the amount he paid was all payment for the purchase, and indeed demonstrated his great regard for mitzvos.

Additionally, since (presumably) the vendor set the price at one thousand *zuz*, it was considered the price of the sale, although Rabban Gamliel could have lowered it by negotiation.

*

The Gemara (Sukkah 51b) relates that at the *Simchas Beis HaSho'eivah*, the *kohanim* would say, "אבותינו שהיו, במקום הזה, אחוריהם אל ההיכל ופניהם

קדמה ומשתחויים קדמה לשמש, ואנו ה- עינינו – *Our ancestors who were in this place (during the first Beis Hamikdash) – their backs faced the Heichal while they faced east and bowed to the sun. But we – our eyes are toward Hashem.*"

What was the purpose of mentioning the misdeeds of their forebears? The Imrei Emes says that when one does *teshuvah* out of love, even the sins of one's ancestors transform into merits. In their state of *ahavas Hashem*, the *kohanim* confessed the sins of their ancestors so that they, too, would become *zechuyos*.

Just as the *teshuvah me'ahavah* of a descendant can transform the misdeeds of an ancestor, it would seem that the reverse is true, too, and a grandfather's *teshuvah* can transform the sins of his grandson. But the Gemara (Sanhedrin 104a) says otherwise: *ברא מזכי אבא, אבא לא מזכי ברא* – *A son can bring merit to his father; a father cannot bring merit to his son.*

However, the Rashba⁴⁴ writes that this Gemara is talking about the spiritual, upper worlds — where the *neshamah* of a deceased father can be elevated by his son, and not the other way around. This is because

44 *She'elos U'Teshuvos*, vol. 5 no. 49

a son's spiritual achievements are credited to his father. In this physical world, however, a son is considered a part of his father — and so he can benefit from his father's merits in this world.

If so, while we inhabit this world, we can evoke our ancestors'

teshuvah me'ahavah as we cry out for help navigating the spiritual pitfalls of this world — and in doing so, our own sins will be transformed into *zechuyos*.

(בנאות דשא – חג הסוכות
ושמחת תורה תשפ"ב ותשפ"ג)

Moving Out

לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דִרְתֵיכֶם כִּי בְּסֻכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

So that your generations will know that I caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell in sukkos when I took them from the land of Egypt. (Vayikra 23:43)

The *Tur* famously asks:⁴⁵ Since the Torah provides the reason for the mitzvah of *sukkah* as remembering the *sukkos* in which we dwelled following *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the *yom tov* of *Sukkos* should take place during Nissan, the season of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. Why is it in Tishrei?

The *kadmonim*⁴⁶ offer the following explanation, based on a Midrash.⁴⁷ The month of Tishrei begins with the *yemei hadin*, when all people are judged and sentenced.

The Torah then provides the *yom tov* of *Sukkos*, so that those who were given a sentence of *galus* can fulfill it by moving out to the *sukkah*. We mention this idea in the *yehi ratzon* recited upon entering the *sukkah*: בזכות צאתנו מהבית חוצה, יחשב לי כאילו הרחקתי נודד – *In the merit of leaving our houses for the outdoors, please consider it as if I wandered far away.*

This is difficult to understand. How can the small inconvenience of sitting in a *sukkah* right outside one's home for a week be counted as a long and arduous exile experience? Furthermore, if we do consider moving out to the *sukkah* as a difficult experience of *galus*, then one would be exempt from the mitzvah, since מצטער פטור מן הסוכה

45 O.C. 625

46 See *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, 5625, citing *Elyah Rabbah*

47 *Peskita D'Rav Kahana*, 2

(one who is uncomfortable is exempt from *sukkah*).⁴⁸

The Midrash⁴⁹ relates that Hashem displayed for Avraham Avinu both *Gehinnom* and *galus*, and instructed him to choose a path for his descendants (since a person must be spiritually cleansed to enter *Gan Eden*). The Midrash continues that one opinion maintains that Avraham chose *galus*, and another holds that he chose *Gehinnom*, but Hashem overrode him and chose *galus*.

The *mefarshim* explain that the purpose of *galus* is not only to serve as punishment in place of *Gehinnom*; it also serves to keep Yidden on the proper *madreigah*. When a Yid stumbles and descends to a lower place than he should be in, his *galus* experiences will purify him and lead him back to where he should be.

In what way does *galus* cleanse a person? The Gemara (*Pesachim* 49b) relates that the ten *shevatim* of *Malchus Yisrael* lived an over-indulgent lifestyle. The Maharsha writes that this is why they were exiled before the rest of Klal Yisrael. It was a perfectly matched correction, *middah k'neged middah*:

since they lived lavishly, they were made to go into *galus*, which deprives a person of the pleasures he seeks. Clearly, *galus* purifies a person by removing his access to pleasures and enjoyments.

The Gemara (*Sukkah* 2a) describes the purpose of the mitzvah of *sukkah*: “Leave your permanent home and live in a temporary dwelling.” *Sefarim hakedoshim* explain that this is meant to be taken as a message for our lives: *Realize that Olam Hazeh is only a temporary dwelling, an antechamber before Olam Haba!*⁵⁰ Since entering the *sukkah* represents viewing our life as the temporal existence that it is, one can achieve thorough it the purpose of *galus*: living with a mentality of *אֲנִי בְּאֶרֶץ זָרָה – I am a sojourner in the world* (*Tehillim* 119:19).

It is true that one week in the *sukkah* cannot take the place of full-fledged exile; but if a person leaves his house and enters the *sukkah* with a desire to change his lifestyle, to minimize his worldly pleasures and focus on what is truly important, then he has embarked on a journey that has the benefits of *galus*. Although he has only taken

48 See *Pri Tzaddik*, *Sukkos* 18

49 *Bereishis Rabbah* 44:21

50 See *Akeidas Yitzchak*, 67; *Shach al haTorah*, *Vayikra* 23:42; *Ya'aros Devash*, vol. 1 no. 6; *Dera-shos Chasam Sofer*, p. 54 column 2 s.v. *V'Yaakov*. See also *Sfas Emes*, *Vayishlach* 5654.

a few steps from his house to his *sukkah*, he is worthy of the words of the *yehi ratzon*: *In the merit of leaving our houses for the outdoors, please consider it as if I wandered far away.* Just as one can transfer ownership of an item into his domain by simply moving it,⁵¹ a Yid who simply enters the *sukkah* with the proper mindset has transitioned himself from the domain of *gashmiyus* to that of *ruchniyus*. It is “as if he wandered far away.”

Let us take another approach to understanding the *yehi ratzon*. We are beseeching Hashem that although until now we have been too deeply entrenched in *Olam Hazeh*, יחשב לי כאילו הרחקתי נדוד – please allow the mitzvah of *sukkah* to help us climb out of that lifestyle, as if we went into *galus* and *wandered far away*. In this way we will be elevated above our previous, self-indulgent way of life.

The Sfas Emes writes⁵² that during Sukkos, the *sukkah* should be seen as more permanent than any permanent abode in the world. If one views the *sukkah* in this way, he can break free from his attachment to *Olam Hazeh* and enter the *sukkah* as one truly going into *galus*.

The Gemara (Sukkah 3a) states that one must enter the *sukkah* to the extent that “his head, most of his body, and his table are inside the *sukkah*.” One cannot sit in the *sukkah* and eat from a table inside the house, because if he does so he might be drawn after the table into the house. When we sit in the *sukkah*, it must be with our “head, most of our body, and our table” –

The purpose of
arba'ah minim,
is to remind us
to direct our joy
toward Hashem

our *neshamah*, our heart, and our resources, in order that we don't find ourselves “drawn after the table into the house,” losing the *madreigah* we achieved of “Leave your permanent home and live in a temporary dwelling.”

The Gemara (Sukkah 28b) derives from the pasuk (Vayikra 23:42) כָּל הָאֶזְרָח – *every native in*

51 See Bava Basra 75b

52 5653 s.v. Issa b'Gemara

Yisrael shall dwell in sukkos, that even a *ger* is included in the mitzvah of *sukkah*. The *Rishonim*⁵³ wonder about this: a *ger* is included in every mitzvah like a born Jew; why might we think he should be exempted from *sukkah*?

We may suggest that since *geirim* do not inherit a share of the Eretz Yisrael, they do not find themselves so deeply entrenched in the mundanity of this world. Also, they chose of their own volition to forgo much of *Olam Haze'h* and become a

Jew. Perhaps they would not need the mitzvah of *sukkah* to shape their mentality and remind them to “leave their permanent home and live in a temporary dwelling.” The pasuk therefore teaches that every person, no matter his background, will eventually begin to feel comfortable and will face *nisyonos* in life; everybody needs to be reminded that this world is only a transient entranceway to *Olam Haba*.

(בנאות דשא – חג הסוכות ושמחת תורה תשפ"ג)

Heavy Lifting

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרֵי עֵץ הָדָר,
כַּפַּת תְּמָרִים וְגו'

You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms... (Vayikra 23:40)

The *berachah* we make upon taking a *lulav* and *esrog* is על נטילת – on taking a *lulav*. The *Levush*⁵⁴ wonders why we don't say על לקיחת – on taking, in accordance with the pasuk's actual phrasing, וּלְקַחְתֶּם. The *Levush* answers that לקיחה connotes, in addition to taking, purchasing. If

the *berachah* would be על לקיחת לולב, one might think that it is enough to simply gain ownership of a *lulav*, without actually holding it. The *Chachamim* therefore instituted the *berachah* as על נטילת לולב, which denotes taking it in one's hand, as the pasuk says (Yeshayah 63:9), וַיִּנְטְלֵם – *He lifted them and carried them*.

This question of the *Levush* is already discussed by the Rashba.⁵⁵ The Rashba dismisses it by saying that what matters is the concept,

53 *Tosafos* and others

54 651:7

55 *She'elos U'Teshuvos*, vol. 1, 157

not the wording. He points out that if we really need to stay true to the pasuk's phrasing, the *berachah* should be על נטילת כפות תמרים, since that is the way the pasuk describes a *lulav*. Clearly, it is not the phraseology that matters, but the idea.

We might add that since the *berachos* were composed by the *Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah*, they phrased them according to the Rabbinic language of their era. As such, they used לולב instead of כפות תמרים, and נטילת instead of לקיחת.

Although the Rashba dismisses the question, the *Levush* does deem it worthy of discussion. We may thus pick up the discussion and apply it to our *avodah*.

The *Chinuch*⁵⁶ writes that the *arba'ah minim* naturally arouse feelings of *simchah* within a person. One might think, then, that fulfilling the mitzvah properly is easy: just pick up the *lulav* and *esrog* and enjoy the happiness they inspire. After all, everyone likes good feelings. But that is simplistic and wrong. The mitzvah of *arba'ah minim* is much deeper than that.

This is what the *Chachamim* were alluding to with the phrasing of the *berachah*. It is clear from *pesukim*⁵⁷ that an expression of נטילה implies lifting a heavy load, more so than an expression of לקיחה. The message: the mitzvah of *arba'ah minim* is not lightweight. It is not easy to reach its depths and fulfill it in a profound manner; it takes hard work.

What is this deep level that we aspire to when fulfilling the mitzvah of *arba'ah minim*?

The *Kuzari* writes⁵⁸ that we can achieve closeness to Hashem through the joy of Shabbos and *yom tov* just as much as through the humbling feelings we experience on a fast day. He continues, "If your joy in mitzvos reaches a level of singing and dancing, this too will be *avodas Hashem*, and through this too you will become attached to G-dliness." However, it is not so simple. When fasting, the body is weakened, and the person is easily humbled before Hashem. But in rejoicing, the body wants to take part, too. It is thus much harder to utilize joy as a vehicle for closeness to Hashem than to utilize bodily affliction.⁵⁹

56 324

57 See Shmuel II 24:12; Mishlei 27:3; Eichah 3:28

58 2:50

59 See *Tanya, Igeres HaTeshuvah*, end of chap. 2; *Likutei Torah, derushim* for Yom Kippur s.v. *v'shev shabbason*, no. 5

Even on *yamim tovim*, when there is a mitzvah of *simchah*, it takes hard work to ensure that our joy does not become just another physical pleasure. In the *Kuzari's* words: "Just as prayer needs thought and concentration, so does joy in mitzvos and matters of G-dliness require thought and concentration. This is necessary so that one is joyous in the mitzvah itself, out of love for the One Who commanded it, recognizing how much good He granted him..."

The Torah wants us to experience the intense spiritual joy that follows the purity we attain

through Yom Kippur. The *Chinuch* explains⁶⁰ that this is the reason for the mitzvah of *arba'ah minim*: "Since happiness strongly attracts the physical element and leads one to momentarily forget his *yiras Shamayim*, Hashem commanded us to hold in our hands items that remind us that the joy in our hearts is only for His Name and His glory."

The purpose of *arba'ah minim*, then, is to remind us to direct our joy toward Hashem. This is no simple thing. This requires a נטילה, a very strong manner of taking.

(בנאות דשא – יו"ט סוכות תשפ"א)

רגל בפני עצמו – A Foot All Its Own

The Gemara (Shabbos 31a) relates that a non-Jew once approached Hillel and asked to be converted on one condition: that Hillel teach him the entire Torah while the non-Jew stood on one foot. Hillel was *megayer* him, and said: "What you dislike, don't do to your friend. This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and learn."

The Ruzhiner Rebbe explained what "one foot" alludes to: Shemini

Atzeres, which is called a רגל בפני עצמו (a *yom tov* all its own),⁶¹ which can be translated as "a foot all its own." On the "one foot" of Shemini Atzeres it is possible to relate to the entire Torah, since on that day we complete the Torah. The message through which to tap into the entirety of Torah on Shemini Atzeres is, "What you dislike do not do to your friend." Rashi explains which friend Hillel referred to: Hashem, about Whom

60 Ibid

61 Sukkah 48a

it is written (Mishlei 27:10), **לֹרְעָה וְרֵעֵךְ אֶל תַּעֲזֹב** – *Do not forsake your Friend and the Friend of your father.* Hillel was teaching the *ger*, “Do not transgress Hashem’s words, just as you would not like your friend to transgress your words.”

How can one achieve this level of loyalty to Hashem? By following the Torah’s directive (Vayikra 19:18), **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ** – *you shall love your friend as yourself.* By loving our Friend, Hashem, as ourselves, we can keep ourselves motivated to keep His entire Torah.

Shemini Atzeres, specifically, is a time for a Yid to inspire himself and actualize *ahavas Hashem*. Shemini Atzeres is when Hashem draws the Jewish nation near to spend time alone with Him. It is also the *ushpizin* of Shlomo Hamelech, about whom the pasuk states (Shmuel II 12:24-25), **וְהָיָה אֹהֲבוֹ וְגוֹ' וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ** **וְהָיָה אֹהֲבוֹ וְגוֹ' וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ** – *Hashem loved him... he called him Yedidyah because of Hashem*; Rashi explains: “Because of Hashem – Who loved him.”

On the **רגל בפני עצמו** of Shemini Atzeres one can study “the entire Torah on one foot,” by truly internalizing and feeling a love for Hashem, and committing to keep all of His Torah.

We must know, however, that the level of love that Hashem, our Friend, has for us, is dependent on our level of love for Him. As the pasuk says (Mishlei 27:19), **כַּמַּיִם לְאָדָם לֹאדָם כִּן לֵב הָאָדָם לְאָדָם** – *As water reflects a face back to a face, so one’s heart is reflected back to him by another.* We find that this concept applies to our relationship with Hashem, as well. The pasuk says (Devarim 33:21), **לְבַיְתָּאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכֵן לְבֶטֶח עָלָיו, חֹפֵף עָלָיו כָּל הַיּוֹם** **וְגִבִּין כְּתֹפְיוֹ שָׁכֵן** – *Of Binyamin he said: May Hashem’s beloved dwell securely by Him; He hovers over him all day long, and rests between his shoulders.* Hashem “rests between Binyamin’s shoulders,” meaning that the *Aron Kodesh*, containing the Torah, rests in Binyamin’s portion of Eretz Yisrael. Since Binyamin serves as host to the Torah, he was inspired to attach himself to the Torah and draw close to Hashem. Because Binyamin aroused in his heart *ahavas Hashem*, Hashem, in turn, refers to him as **וְיָדִיד** – *Hashem’s beloved.*

This is an additional reason Shemini Atzeres is called a **רגל בפני עצמו**. The words **רגל בפני עצמו** can be read as “for each individual person.” In other words, to the degree that a person deepens his attachment to the Torah and thus strengthens

his *ahavas Hashem*, his Friend, Hashem, will likewise express His love back for him. Then he will have spanned the entirety of Torah on one foot, on this day of רגל בפני עצמו.

It is important to know that there is a prerequisite to attaining *ahavas Hashem*: deeply contemplating and realizing that the only true love is love of Hashem, His Torah and His mitzvos. Any other *ahavah* a person may feel is only a perversion of the deep *ahavah* his *neshamah* has for Hashem. In the darkness of this world, the *neshamah's* love for Hashem can become hidden, and can manifest in various and often unsuitable ways.

On special days like *yamim tovim* – and particularly Shemini Atzeres, the רגל בפני עצמו – a person must look himself in the mirror and ask, “Do I feel love for Hashem?” *Ahavas Hashem* lies in the heart of every Yid; our job is only to uncover it and awaken it within ourselves, until we truly feel that we love the Ribbono Shel Olam. Once a person's heart is aflame with *ahavas Hashem*, that *ahavah* will stamp out any *ahavah* that does not relate to Hashem. In this way one can return to Hashem

with *teshuvah me'ahavah* and live the life of a truly *ehrliche Yid*.

Commenting on the pasuk (Tehillim 19:8) תּוֹרַת ה' תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נַפְשׁ – *The Torah of Hashem is perfect, restoring the soul*, the Sfas Emes writes⁶² that every *Yiddishe neshamah* has an extraordinary draw toward its Creator, as it yearns to attach itself to the Source of life. (We may conceptualize this as a magnetic pull, although it is many times stronger than that.) But there are multiple things that stand in the *neshamah's* way: the darkness of this world, the separation caused by sin, and a person's physical inclinations, which layer over the *neshamah's* innermost desire. So how can a person uncover his *neshamah's* deepest longing? When one delves into Torah – which is called חמדה גנוזה, a *hidden treasure*⁶³ – he merits מְשִׁיבַת נַפְשׁ, as the deepest and most hidden desires of his *nefesh* are restored to him. He then experiences a deep yearning to draw close and attach himself to Hashem and His Torah and mitzvos.

(בבואת דשא – חג הסוכות ושמחת תורה תשפ"ג)

62 Ad loc., from Terumah 5662 and Naso 5654

63 Shabbos 88b

Living Lives Infused with the Spirit of the Torah

Each Shabbos we ask Hashem to give “זרעא די לא יפסוק ודי לא יבטול” - Children who will not cease, nor break, from the words of the Torah.” It seems strange that we daven in this order, for presumably, one who does not cease from learning the Torah will certainly not break from learning the Torah.

In the realm of *pshat* perhaps we can answer that one can learn without a pause, and yet be in violation of *bittul Torah*. This is famously expressed as an explanation to a difficult Gemara. The Gemara states in Megillah (3a) “מבטלין תלמוד תורה למקרא מגילה” - we break the study of Torah for the sake of reading the Megillah.” The simple question is, what break of the study of Torah is implicit in the reading of the Megillah? On the contrary, the reading of the Megillah is also Torah study! The popular answer is that although the reading of the Megillah comprises Torah study, the quality of that study is poor, as one just listens to the words, and cannot stop to delve into the content. Therefore, we ask that our children not stop learning, and

their learning should not lack in its quantity either.

From a perspective focused on the elevation of the spirit, we can explain based on the explanation of the Sfas Emes to the words of the Mishnah (Avos 2:2) “וכל תורה שאין עמה”

We have to follow the Torah in everything we do to the point where every one of our daily activities becomes an outgrowth of our Torah learning

Torah - מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון - Torah study which is not accompanied by labor will end up ceasing and causing sin.” On their face, these words are very troubling. True, it’s very well to blend your Torah study with work, as the first part of the Mishnah tells us “יפה תלמוד תורה עם” “דרך ארץ”, but from there to ‘causing

sin', is quite a leap! (As we know, there always were individuals who did not engage in work at all, and devoted themselves wholly to Torah study. In fact, the Sfias Emes himself was hardly involved in anything outside of the realm of the spiritual.)

The Sfias Emes explained, that "תורה שאין עמה מלאכה means Torah which one does not incorporate into his daily life. One is required to sanctify the mundane by infusing it with the Torah which he learns. There is a well-known story told about a waggoner who was hired by a merchant to transport goods to the *yerid* (market bazaar). The merchant warned the waggoner to be on time to the fair, and stipulated that if he was late, he would receive no payment for the job. Sure enough, the merchandise arrived late to the *yerid* causing the merchant a large loss. The merchant, understandably, refused to pay the waggoner for the transport, and the matter was taken to the *beis din* for adjudication. The ruling was in favor of the merchant, and the waggoner was indignant. "Who says?" he demanded of the *dayanim*. "The Torah," came the reply. "Aha!" said the *baal agolah*, "when was the Torah given? In the summer! When the roads are dry and clear! So how can you use the

Torah as proof against me, who got stuck in the mud and storms of winter?!"

Are we not somewhat guilty of the same foolishness? We received the Torah on Shavuot, and finish it every *Simchas Torah*, and we dance and rejoice with it. However, we sometime get the mistaken notion that the Torah is for learning, and keeping the mitzvos, but it has nothing to do with our daily chores and responsibilities. 'What does the Torah have to do with my day-to-day actions and interactions?' Therefore, the Mishnah tells us that any Torah which doesn't inform my regular mundane actions, "סופה" "בטלה" the *סוף* of the Torah, will be interrupted. The *סוף* of the Torah is a reference to the mundane world, as our world is the last iteration in a line of transformations of the "light" which Hashem emitted to create the world. The further away from the Source, the coarser the "light" becomes, until our world, where it actually becomes physical. If the Torah does not inform our physical actions, then they are disconnected from the source, his "knowledge is greater than his deeds"⁶⁴ and therefore, will cause sin.

This is the meaning behind our *tefillah*: די לא יבטול מפתגמי אורייתא, that our daily actions not be divorced of the Torah, thereby dimming its light, cutting it off from its Source. Rather we have to follow the Torah in everything

we do to the point where every one of our daily activities becomes an outgrowth of our Torah learning. Our every action, including the most mundane, must be infused with the spirit of the Torah.

סעודה שלישית ש"ק שמי"ע ושמה"ת תשכ"א

Kabbalas HaTorah and Simchas Torah

My great uncle, Rav Yehoshua of Viershuv *zt"l* was famously an extreme ascetic, who was not familiar with even the streets near his home. When he travelled to Eretz Yisroel, a non-Jewish border official inspected his passport, and asked him for his date of birth, he answered that he was born on *Hoshana Rabbah*. Obviously, this was not helpful to the official, but this was the only significance which he attached to the day.

We also go through life's vicissitudes, and we need a passport, to pass through the various challenges which further us from Hashem. We need to enter '*Eretz Yisroel*' – in it's purest state, an '*Eretz Yisroel*' which one who lives there is considered as if "י 17"

אלוה – he has a God."⁶⁵ The 'birthday' of our *Kehillah* is *Shemini Atzeres*, not simply as a date, but with all the internal powers of the day of *Shemini Atzeres*. Everyone has a bit of a 'non-Jewish officer' in his heart, who needs to be surmounted, and to this 'gentile' we must say "*Shemini Atzeres*". This is the 'passport' which we can use to pass through this world unmolested.

The Sfas Emes (Sukkos 5643) quotes the Chidushei HaRim, who explains the two berachos which we recite upon the reading of the Torah, that they are symmetrical to those berachos which are recited before and after food. We make a berachah before eating food, to thank Hashem for the actual food, which Hashem has provided us, and after eating we

65 (Kesubos 110b)

make another berachah (or, berachos) to thank for the nourishment which the food was able to provide, by being absorbed by the body. The same is with the Torah. We make a berachah before reading the Torah, on the Torah with which Hashem provided us, אשר בחר בנו וכו' ונתן לנו את תורתו, – Who has chosen us etc. and given us His Torah.” And after the reasing of the Torah we acknowledge that the Torah is absorbed into our very beings, and provides us with life and sustenance, וחיי עולם נטע בתוכינו – eternal life He has implanted within us.”

The Sfas Emes then adds, that perhaps these two expressions are manifested by the two holidays which celebrate the Torah. On Shavuot we celebrate the receipt of the Torah, that the Torah was provided to us. *Simchas Torah* is when we celebrate the effect which the Torah has had on us, as we finish the Torah, and recognize how it has sustained us, and illuminated within each one of us. On *Shemini Atzeres* the Torah is '*lachem*', it has made its imprint on you.

The berachah, and the rejoicing of *Simchas Torah* is that we have not only learned the Torah, but also that we have learned from the Torah – how to live. By learning the

Torah, and even more so by what we have learned from the Torah, we can pass through the challenges of live unaffected. We have mentioned numerous times, on the words of תאיר ארץ מכבודך, illuminate the world with your honor” from יד נפש. A person walks in the street and is faced with tests. A person goes through life, and experiences hardships. Whatever the situation is, a person has the opportunity to be *mekadesh Shem Shamayim* by overcoming, and persevering. If we only would remember how much *nachas ruach* Hashem has from us when we exhibit moral strength, we would be *mekadesh Shem Shamayim*. For every 'sight' from which we avert our gaze, for every 'word' which we ignore, for every exertion in the toil of Torah, from the 'earthiness' shines the honor of Hashem. By converting the ארץ into an opportunity of *kiddush* Hashem, תאיר ארץ, how, by using it to honor Hashem, by exhibiting strength against it.

This is the purpose and the path of our *kehillah*, to learn, and to employ whatever we learn in a practical level, לשהבין ולהשכיל, לשמוע. Our 'passport', our strategy for enduring this world, is to uphold and perform whatever we learn, and

to keep this energy throughout the entire year.

May Hashem help that whatever we learn and hear should enter the hearts of the audience, we

should continue the paths of our predecessors, in the proper Yiddishe fashion, and merit a good year, in the spiritual and material realms.

הקפות שניות תשפ"א

The Never-ending Pursuit of the Truths of the Torah

Mishlei (3:14) refers to the Torah as סחורה, "כי טוב סחורה מכל סחורה – its merchandise is better than any other merchandise." Why is the Torah called 'merchandise'? What kind of business is performed with the Torah? Perhaps, סחורה should not be rendered 'merchandise', but rather 'surrounding'.⁶⁶ [Which is why a merchant is called a סוחר, as he goes around from city to city in a perpetual circle (see Shorashim of Radak, סחר).]

In the Yehi Ratzon prayer recommended by the Chid"א for the third *hakafah*, which corresponds to Yaakov, the following supplication is included: "Let us merit to toil in Your Torah, which is *Toras Emes*, and let our sole purpose be the quest for *emes*, and grant us that we gain

knowledge of the truth of the laws of the Torah etc." Of course, all we want is to reach the truth, but that is easier said than done. Who can truthfully say that they have arrived at the inner truth of the Torah? But we do revolve around the truth of the Torah, in our quest for the truth. And the 'revolving' around the truth is better than any other 'revolving' – כי טוב סחורה מכל סחורה. And it is certainly better than chasing after the Yetzer Hara, about whom we are warned "סחור סחור לכרמא לא" תקרב, surrounding the vineyard do not approach." This is why we revolve around the bimah, because revolving around the Torah's truth, even if we never reach it, is better than any other pursuit.

66 See: Rashi (Bereishis 42:34), and Targum (Bereishis 23:17).

There is No 'End' to the Torah

"Before all Yisrael" are the last words of the Torah. Rashi quotes *Chazal*, that this refers to the inspiration which Moshe Rabbeinu had to shatter the *luchos*. This is strange, because there is an axiom⁶⁷ that we try to end on a positive note. One may deflect this issue, by claiming that it is not explicit, but only hidden in a veiled reference. But still, why finish with this? It could have been inserted at the beginning of the posuk. The end of the Torah is the takeaway of the entire Torah, why is this the message? True, the sin of the *eigel* remains for generations, as the pasuk states: "וביום פקדי ופקדתי" – On the day of consideration, I will consider [the sin of the *eigel* as well]"⁶⁸, still, this is not a pressing reason to end the Torah with it!

One possibility is that the shattering of the *luchos* was indeed a positive development, because if not for that, the entire nation would have been wiped out. As *Chazal* tell us that were the *luchos* given to the Yidden, they would have been considered as violating their 'marriage'.⁶⁹

Another possible approach is that in truth there is no ending to the Torah. When there is a break, we make sure to end on a positive note, but all the way in the 'end', when someone might fall into the illusion that there is an end, we make sure that it is not positive, that way everyone knows that there is no 'end' here, we start again immediately from Bereishis, because there is no culmination of the Torah.

To further our *Avodas Hashem*, we can offer yet another approach. This pasuk teaches us the idea which is expressed in the pasuk in Tehillim (50:16) "ולרשע אמר אלקים מה" – To the wicked one, Hashem says, 'why do you tell my laws?'" Those who learn without implementing the Torah practically, there is no value to their learning. Moshe Rabbeinu shattered the *luchos* because the Jewish People did not keep the Torah. This is the fitting close of the Torah, because, as the Ramban puts this concept, in his famous epistle to his son: "when you are about to interrupt your learning from a *sefer*, examine what you have learned, to see if

67 See Berachos 31a.

68 (Shemos 32:34)

69 Shemos Rabbah (43:1).

there is anything in it which you can adopt.” A person needs to constantly examine what the Torah can teach him, to better his ways. Specifically at the end of the Torah, the Torah hints to the shattering of the *luchos*, that we should know that learning without self-improvement is worthless. “Anyone who says ‘I only

need the Torah’, doesn’t even have the Torah.”⁷⁰ But we learn the Torah, and rejoice in it, with a commitment to practice whatever is written in it, and to cling to it. This way, all the Torah we learn is of supreme value.

שמחת תורה – הקפות שניות
 תשע"ז תשע"ח תשע"ט

Confiscated Kapoteh

In Parshas V’Zos HaBrachah, which we read on Simchas Torah, it says: *שִׂמַח זְבוּלוֹן בְּצִיָּאתָהּ וַיִּשְׂכַּר בְּאַהֲלָיָהּ* – *Rejoice, Zevulun, in your excursions, and Yissachar in your tents* (Devarim 33:18). Zevulun is blessed to rejoice as he journeys for his livelihood, and Yissachar as he studies Torah.

What need is there to bless Zevulun with happiness as he pursues his riches? And why are Yissachar and Zevulun linked together in this *brachah*?

The Baal HaTurim notes that the word *בְּאַהֲלָיָהּ* appears in one other place: *וְאֵל תִּשְׁכֹּן בְּאַהֲלָיָהּ עוֹלָה* – *and let not crime dwell in your tent* (Iyov 11:14). The Gemara (Kesubos 19a) applies this pasuk to keeping possession of a paid loan document

(which might be used to re-collect a paid debt) or a loan document whose loan did not occur yet (which might be used to collect a non-existent debt). In our

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pasuk, the word *בְּאַהֲלָיָהּ* is connected to Yissachar. Wouldn’t the Baal

70 (Yevamos 109b)

HaTurim's connection be more applicable to Zevulun, who is out in the business world and faces the temptation to cheat in commerce?

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 7a, as explained by Rashi) states that a person whose cloak⁷¹ was confiscated by *beis din* (to repay a debt) should go on singing to himself, since he was served a true judgment and was saved from the sin of theft. The Gemara notes that this concept appears in the Torah, where Yisro details his plan for a judicial system to Moshe. Yisro concludes, וְגַם כָּל הָעָם הַזֶּה עַל מִקְמוֹ יָבֹא בְּשָׁלוֹם – *and this entire people, as well, will arrive at its place in peace* (Shemos 18:23). Both the vindicated and the defeated parties will be at peace, since they will recognize that the judgement was good and right.

שְׂמַח זְבוּלוֹן בְּצִיּוּרָהּ is a call to Zevulun to remain joyous even when judged and found liable by יִשָּׁשכָר בְּאֹהֶלֶיךָ, *Yissachar who sits in the tent of Torah law*. Facing Yissachar, Zevulun is cautioned, אַל תִּשְׁכַּח בְּאֹהֶלֶיךָ עוֹלָה – *make sure to exercise honesty in your business dealings*.

The lesson to be learned from here is that the Torah's purpose in this world is not to sit on a bookshelf,

nor to dance with on Simchas Torah. Even learning Torah does not fully satisfy its purpose. The Torah is here to be listened to and obeyed. Otherwise, the *malachim* were right when they argued that the Torah should be kept in *Shamayim*.

When the Gemara states that a guilty party should remain joyous, it doesn't only mean one who has been found guilty in a court of law.

When a person learns Torah properly, the Torah makes him aware of his shortcomings so that he can stop blaming others for his problems. He must listen as the Torah guides him, and allow his actions to be judged objectively. He must hear as the Torah 'confiscates his cloak': *Remove that honorable garment of yours; inspect your deeds and make sure you deserve that prestige*.

The pasuk says (Bamidbar 14:6), וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון וְכָלֵב בֶּן יִפְנֵה, מִן הַתְּרִימִים אֶת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון וְכָלֵב בֶּן יִפְנֵה, קָרְעוּ בְּגָדֵיהֶם – *Yehoshua bin Nun and Kalev ben Yefuneh, of the spies of the land, tore their garments*. We already know that Yehoshua and Kalev were among the spies; why should the Torah repeat it?

The Kotzker answered: The other ten spies, former leaders of

71 See Maharsha.

Klal Yisrael, went about decked in *shtreimlech* and resplendent white kaftans. Yehoshua and Kalev approached these *spies of the land* and *tore the spies' garments*, demanding: *What business do you have with such noble apparel?*⁷²

This is the question that every person who learns Torah must ask himself: *What business do I have with the cloak of a talmid chacham, when inside I am so lacking?*

When the Torah 'removes one's cloak,' it's a time to sing for joy – to *arrive at his destination in peace*, and determine what his *avodah* is now. This, as well, is the connection between Yissachar and אַל תִּשְׁכַּח בְּאֵימֶת עוֹלָה – through learning Torah, Yissachar will recognize his weaknesses and work to rectify them, all while maintaining his joy.

What is *simchah*? R. Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin teaches⁷³ that the deepest essence of any concept can be learned from where the Torah mentions it first. One would think that *simchah*, happiness, would

be mentioned first in a context of *kedushah*; perhaps *Mattan Torah* or something similar. In fact, it is first mentioned in connection with Lavan HaArami: וְלֹא הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי, וְאִשְׁלַחְךָ וְגַבְשֻׁרִים – *You did not tell me (you were leaving); I would have sent you off with gladness and with songs!*

How can the essence of *simchah* be associated with Lavan?

The answer is that true *simchah* is leaving the house of Lavan, making a break from wickedness. As Rashi says,⁷⁴ “One whose sin is atoned is happy.”

When the three *regalim* are mapped to the three Avos, Sukkos corresponds to Yaakov.⁷⁵ Yaakov Avinu, having escaped Lavan's evil atmosphere, epitomized true *simchah*. This is why Sukkos is *Zman Simchaseinu*, our Time of Joy. After the atonement of Yom Kippur, having abandoned our former misdeeds, we can experience true joy.

(שמיני עצרת ושמיחת תורה תשכ"ג)

– נעילת החג, מאמר א)

72 *Emes V'Emunah* (Yerushalayim 5732) pp. 76, 128.

73 *Yisrael Kedoshim* 7.

74 *Menachos* 20a s.v. *Aderaba*.

75 *Tur*, O.C. 417.

Rays of Truth

During a period when the Avnei Nezer was unwell, his doctors ordered him to avoid in-depth learning which would strain his mind. Instead, he learned the *sefer Bechinos Olam*,⁷⁶ a poetic work deprecating the vanity of this world.

His father-in-law, the Kotzker Rebbe, remarked, "Although this *sefer* teaches the worthlessness of *Olam Hazei*, and the mind can understand and internalize that – still, what can be done, since the body still demands its dues? The only way to purify the flesh is by laboring through a *blatt* Gemara with *Tosafos* thoroughly. With that, even the physical body will understand."⁷⁷

The Sfas Emes⁷⁸ comments on the words of *birchos haTorah*, ונתן לנו – *and He gave us a Torah of truth*. Is there another Torah, one of falsehood? And if it means to emphasize a true Torah as opposed to a counterfeit one, the term תורה אמיתית would seem more fitting.

The Sfas Emes explains that תורת אמת does mean a Torah of truth: it is a Torah that instills in us the way of truth, so that we may seek it out and attain it. Although this world is an *alma d'shikra*, a world of falsehood, still its existence depends on the truth that is the core of all Creation. In this false world, the inner vitality of *emes* is hidden. By learning Torah, a Yid can shine its light upon the darkness of this world and uncover the truth, enabling him to draw closer to Hashem.⁷⁹ The seal of Hashem is Truth; the closer one comes to truth, the closer he comes to Hashem. Through laborious Torah study, the *lev ha'even*, a person's heart of stone, is removed from him,⁸⁰ so that he may serve Hashem ever better.

The *brachah* continues: וחיי עולם – *and He planted within us eternal life*. The Mishnah⁸¹ teaches, כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא – *All of Yisrael has a portion in the World to Come*. It would seem more natural to say יהיה להם חלק, *they will have*

76 By R. Yedayah HaPenini ben R. Avraham HaBardashi.

77 *Eretz Tzvi*, Bechukosai; *She'elos U'Teshuvos Eretz Tzvi*, 11 in note beginning ועי' רמב"ם; *Shem M'Shmuel*, Emor p. 300 column 1.

78 5640 s.v. *B'nusach*; 5648 s.v. *B'nusach*; Shavuot 5632.

79 *Sfas Emes*, Bo 5664.

80 *Sfas Emes*, Vayeitzei 5662.

81 Sanhedrin 10:1.

a portion. *אם יש להם* implies that they have a portion already, now.

This shows – says the Sfas Emes⁸² – that indeed, even while inhabiting this world, every Yid has a piece of *Olam Haba*. What is *Olam Haba* about, after all? It is about closeness and *deveikus* with Hashem, with the Truth that is Hashem's seal. In the next world, one can attain this on a complete level, without any separation at all between him and Hashem. But one can attain a measure of this even while still in *Olam Hazeih*, by learning Torah – the *chayei olam*,⁸³ the eternal life that Hashem planted within us. The Torah is our *chayei olam*, and it is *Toras emes*, a Torah of truth, since by it a Yid can peel away at the *sheker* of this world, reveal the inner truth, and discover the purpose for his existence. To reach these levels, though, one must labor in Torah learning with the intention of attaining these truths.

The Gemara (Pesachim 109a) states: *אין שמחה אלא בברש*, *there is no gladness but with meat*. The reference is to the meat of *korbanos* at the time of the Beis Hamikdash, which was given in part to Hashem

and in part to the owner to eat. Nowadays, joy of a mitzvah (such as on Yom Tov) is defined as drinking a measure of wine. But just as part of a *korban* was given to Hashem, what part can we give, today, to Hashem?

R. Yitzchak of Neshchiz says that even today, what we can give Hashem is meat – our own. When a Yid transcends his flesh, rises above his bodily instincts – that is the greatest *simchah* one can give to Hashem.⁸⁴

The Sfas Emes⁸⁵ points out that the Torah introduces Shemini Atzeres as *וַעֲצַרְתָּ תְהִיָּה לְכֶם* – literally, *it shall be a restriction for you* (Bamidbar 29:35). Shemini Atzeres reminds us that one must restrict himself to only his basic physical needs. Even meeting the necessities (“for you”) must be for the purpose of serving Hashem.

Chazal refer to Shavuot, when we received the Torah, as Atzeres. The day when we complete the Torah is called Shemini Atzeres. Only through the Torah is it possible to practice *atzeres*, to keep one's *ta'avos* and desires in check.

בנאות דשא – חג הסוכות ושמחת
תורה תשפ"ב ותשפ"ג

82 5660 s.v. *B'yom*; Acharei Mos 5657.

83 Shabbos 10a.

84 See *Baal Shem Tov al haTorah*, Bereishis; *Mekor Mayim Chaim*, 75.

85 5632 s.v. *U'beGemara*; *Likutim*, Sukkos s.v. *V'Yom Tov*.

Battling Bittul

To the questioner who requests anonymity,

My father related that after his grandfather, R. Yaakov Meir Biderman, was married, he refrained from participating in the *melaveh malkeh* for the *Gerreryungeleit*, since he was an extraordinary *masmid*, as well as a quiet and reticent person. When the Sfas Emes became aware of this, he instructed him to attend. At the next *melaveh malkah*, R. Yaakov Meir participated with a full heart, from the beginning of the event to its end. Afterwards, the Sfas Emes called him over and said that it would suffice to make a short appearance. Indeed, thereafter he would come for a few minutes and then leave.

Every person and each circumstance is different. We cannot compare ourselves to the great *madreigos* of R. Yaakov Meir, nor can we compare our social obligations to the exalted *seudos* of the *bonei heichala* of the Sfas Emes. Nonetheless, the lesson is that one can attend to events of *yiras Shamayim* while still maintaining strong *hasmadah* in learning.

For example, if on two consecutive Shabbosos one has

simchos to attend, it might attract attention if he shows up late to both in order to keep his *sedarim*. Instead, he can be on time to one and late to the other. Perhaps he can show better attendance on winter Shabbosos than during the summer, since the days are shorter in the winter. These are just ideas; each person must use his judgment and figure out what works best in his circumstances.

The main point to keep in mind is that *talmud Torah* is the most vital mitzvah. Especially since this generation is characterized by time wasting (*batahah*), it's important to strengthen oneself in learning and not be overly concerned for possible collateral affects.

It is told that R. Chaim Brisker would purposely send his son, R. Yitzchak Zev, on various missions while R. Yitzchak Zev was learning, to train him to think in learning while tending to obligations. Obviously, this is not for people like us, but still, it's a good idea to occasionally accustom one's mind to maintain thought amid distraction. Personally, when I know I will be attending a lengthy event, I prepare topics to think about in advance.

It must be noted that *hasmadah* is a difficult trait to attain, and when one must be *mevatel* here and there, it can add up and negatively impact one's hard-acquired diligence.

The bottom line is that one's learning must always carry the most weight, but one should attempt to minimize standing out among others.

As far as teaching Torah, most *yungeleit* who begin teaching Torah do so out of financial considerations or out of a need to share and impact other people. If these reasons do not apply to you, then you should use this time to focus on your own learning; later, you will fulfill the mitzvah of teaching Torah in its essential form, with your own children. Or, if somebody

approaches you to learn with them, you can do so then. From your letter, it seems that you feel satisfied with your present learning, and that you have some opportunities to teach Torah, as well.

You write that you feel you aren't properly utilizing your time. Try to access this sentiment whenever you experience times of weakness, of *bittul*. See it then as a matter of shame for yourself, so that you can strengthen yourself and return to your learning.

Your friend who wishes you *hatzlachah* in Torah and *yiras Shamayim*,

Shaul

(בנאות דשא – חג הסוכות ושמחת

תורה תשפ"ב ותשפ"ג)

Return Again

We are introduced to the concept of *teshuvah* immediately at the start of the Torah, with the story of Kayin and Hevel. By human nature, people are inclined to sin,⁸⁶ and so *teshuvah* is necessary for the continuation of the world. Therefore, its place is right at the beginning of the Torah.

R. Tzadok HaKohen teaches that the innermost meaning of any concept can be learned from the first place it is mentioned in the Torah. Let us see what we can glean about *teshuvah* from examining this *parshah*.

86 See *Derashos Chasam Sofer*, vol. 2 p. 353; in new edition, vol. 1 p. 107.

*Sefer HaIkarim*⁸⁷ explains Kayin's pronouncement after he killed Hevel, *גָּדוֹל עוֹנֵי הַנֶּשֶׁא* – *Is my sin too great to bear?* (Bereishis 4:13) Kayin was saying that if indeed his crime could not be forgiven, that would indicate, *chas v'shalom*, a limitation in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the *Kol Yachol*, and in the nature of the world He created.

Based on a statement of Chazal, we may see where Kayin went wrong. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 101b) says that Kayin's statement was an *alilah*, a wrongful accusation.⁸⁸ Indeed, Kayin's sin would not be simply overlooked, and yet he did have a path forward. He could earn his continued existence by means of *teshuvah*, by repenting for his misdeed. If he did *teshuvah*, his *aveirah* would be wiped clean, as if it had never been.

On a deeper level, not only does a person have the option to merit renewed existence by doing *teshuvah*, but he is surviving even until then because Hashem awaits his *teshuvah*. The *sefarim hakedoshim* say that Hashem is never informed of a person's *aveirah*, as the pasuk says (Tehillim

5:5), *לֹא יִגְרָה רָע* – *no evil sojourns with You*.⁸⁹ Instead, He is told of the new possibility of *teshuvah* created as a result of the sin. Now, the sinner is expected to take advantage of it and do *teshuvah*.

After Kayin killed his brother, Hashem told him, *הֲלוֹא אָם תִּיטִיב שְׂאֵת*, *וְאָם לֹא תִיטִיב לִפְתּוֹחַ חַטָּאת רִבְךָ* – *Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven, but if you do not improve yourself, sin rests at the door* (4:7).

The Gemara (Yoma 52b) says that the word *שְׂאֵת* can be read two ways, either connected to the pasuk's beginning – *אָם תִּיטִיב שְׂאֵת*, *if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven*; or to the pasuk's end – *שְׂאֵת וְאָם לֹא תִיטִיב*, *but if you do not improve yourself, you will bear [your sin]*.

The *mefarshim* point out an obvious difficulty. If we connect *שְׂאֵת* to the end of the pasuk, the pasuk's beginning seems to become a meaningless fragment. *אָם תִּיטִיב*, *if you improve yourself* – then what?

כִּי עוֹנֵי אֶדְאָג מִחַטָּאתַי – *When I admit my iniquity, I worry because of my sin* (Tehillim 38:19). This pasuk demonstrates that even after doing *teshuvah*, one must always worry that his *teshuvah* was not sufficient.

87 Section 4 chapter 21.

88 See, however, Rashi's interpretation.

89 See Chagigah 12b.

One must continue to do *teshuvah* again and again.⁹⁰

We may now understand the Gemara. Certainly, in the simple reading of the pasuk, it is to be read *שָׂאת וְאָם תִּיטִיב שָׂאת* – *if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven*. However, *שָׂאת* can be attached to the latter part of the pasuk, as well, by which it teaches an important lesson: *אָם תִּיטִיב* – *Even after you*

improve yourself with teshuvah, you must remain aware that *שָׂאת וְאָם תִּיטִיב* – *if you do not continue to improve yourself with teshuvah, you will bear your sin*.

We must repair our mistakes with *teshuvah*, and we must also remember that the work is never over.

(בנאות דשא – בראשית תשפ"ב)

The Power of Individuality

וַיִּכְלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם

Then the heaven and the earth were completed, and all their array.
(Bereishis 2:1)

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 11a, Chullin 60a) expounds based on this pasuk: “All matter of Creation was created in its full posture, with its consent, and in its form, as the pasuk says, *וַיִּכְלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם*; do not read it “*but rather צבאם* – their form.””

*Toldos Yaakov Yosef*⁹¹ quotes the Baal Shem Tov who cited a question of the Rambam:⁹² If each thing was only created with its consent, why didn't the earth insist on being

created as the heavens, which are so much more connected to Hashem?

We may note that according to Rashi's reading of the Gemara in Rosh Hashanah, the question seems to be a non-starter. Rashi comments: “With its consent – Hashem asked them if they want to be created, and they said yes. In its form – In each one's flavor and each one's mold.” It seems clear from Rashi that the creations were not asked *how* they wanted to be created, but *if* they wanted to be created. If they would choose to be created, they would be formed as Hashem saw fit. The heavens would be the

90 See *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, 1:16-20.

91 *Ben Poras Yosef* to our parshah; *Tzafnas Pa'ane'ach*, Yisro; *Kesones Pasim*, Kedoshim

92 The Baal Shem Tov gave the source as a *teshuvah* of the Rambam. It is no longer extant.

heavens and the earth would be the earth. However, in Chullin, Rashi explains “In its form” as “In the form that they chose.” Accordingly, perhaps the creations could, in fact, choose their form. However, this Rashi may simply mean that, for example, the earth could have chosen to be square instead of round – not that it could have chosen to be a different creation. Clearly, the Rambam understood the Gemara as meaning that each creation could choose which creation it would be.⁹³

The Rambam answers his question: the earth did not possess the understanding to fathom the purity and *kedushah* of the *Shamayim*, so it consented to be created as the earth. *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* questions this: The purpose of seeking the consent of every creation was so that it could not complain later why it wasn’t created as something else. But if each creation did not know better than to consent to its form, it could still harbor a complaint when it would later learn what it could have been. If so, what was achieved by this?

When I was in *cheder*, my *rabbeim* would relate a saying of the Rebbe R. Bunim: “If, before Creation, I would have been asked if I wanted to trade places with Avraham Avinu, I would have declined. Either way, there would be only one Avraham Avinu and one Bunim of Peshischa, so what would Hashem have gained by switching us around?”⁹⁴ What did R. Bunim mean? The Mishnah says (*Avos* 4:3), אין לך אדם שאין לו שעה, ואין לך דבר שאין לו מקום – *Every person has his hour, and each thing has its place*. In order that this world see an expression of every *bechinah* (spiritual nuance), each person needs to be created in his unique mold. There can be no two Avraham Avinus and no two R. Bunims. In the same way, there is a need for the heavens and a need for the earth. Each one serves its unique purpose, giving Hashem *nachas ruach* in its particular fashion.

What unique purpose does the earth serve? The Midrash⁹⁵ states that the earth is called ארץ because it wanted (רצתה) to fulfill Hashem’s will. The Sfas Emes explains⁹⁶ that

93 The Rambam could have asked this question on many aspects of Creation; for example, why didn’t mankind choose to be *malachim*? It seems that he focused the question on the first matters of Creation, i.e., heaven and earth.

94 See *Ramasayim Tzofim*, מערכת הר"ר בונים ז"ע, no. 17; *Shem MiShmuel*, Korach p. 287; *Zechusa D’Avraham*, Vayeshev; *Siach Sarfei Kodesh*, vol. 3 no. 214 (in the new version, Vayishlach)

95 Bereishis Rabbah 5:8

96 5635 s.v. *B’Midrash*

although the *Shamayim* is superior to the earth in its perfection, the earth is greater in one aspect: *ratzon*, desire. Elsewhere,⁹⁷ the Sfas Emes adds that this is the reason there is *ta'avah*, desire, in our world. The power of *ratzon* is the essence of our purpose on this world: desiring closeness to Hashem. The satisfaction we as earth-bound creations can bring Hashem with our longing for Him cannot be matched by the *malachim* in *Shamayim* with their *avodah*. After all, that is the purpose of Creation: that Hashem be given a place to reside in the lower worlds, through our *avodas Hashem* carried out with longing.

This, then, is why the earth did not prefer to be created as the heavens. It understood that it must

serve its own important *avodah* – exercising *ratzon*, desire, to serve Hashem. It is specifically *because* our world is so far removed from *ruchniyus*, so physical and earthly, that its feelings of longing for Hashem are so precious to Him.

We must all take this lesson to heart. When people suffer hardship, whether in *ruchniyus* or *gashmiyus*, they often think, *If only my life circumstances were different, like so-and-so! Then everything would be just fine.* This is the *yetzer hara* talking! We must repeat to ourselves what Chazal said: אין לך אדם שאין לו שעה, ואין לך דבר שאין לו מקום. Every person must serve Hashem in the manner specific to his place and his time, unique to his individual situation.

(בראשית תשפ"ג – ס"ג מאמר א)

Dated Date Palms

The Gemara⁹⁸ relates a fascinating story, which allows us a glimpse into Adam HaRishon's activities at the dawn of Creation. R. Shimi bar Ashi once set out on a journey, and R. Kahana accompanied him from Pum

Nahara until Bei Tzinisa of Bavel. Bei Tzinisa was home to many date palms. When they reached there, R. Kahana asked R. Shimi if it was true that the local palm trees dated back to the time of Adam HaRishon. R. Shimi remarked that this question

⁹⁷ *Likutim, hashmatos* to our *parshah*

⁹⁸ Berachos 31a, Sotah 46b

reminded him of an explanation he'd heard attributed to R. Yosi ben R. Chanina, on the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 2:6) בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא עָבַר בָּהּ אִישׁ וְלֹא יָשַׁב אָדָם – *in a land through which no man passed and where no person settled.* R. Yosi asked: If no man ever passed through that land, surely no person settled there, so what is the meaning of וְלֹא יָשַׁב אָדָם שָׁם? R. Yosi answered, אֶרֶץ שֶׁגִּזְרָה עָלֶיהָ אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן לִישׁוּב – *Any land which Adam HaRishon decreed would be settled; any land he did not decree, was not settled.* וְלֹא יָשַׁב אָדָם שָׁם means that Adam HaRishon did not decree settlement on that land, and as a result it is “a land through which no man passed.” Rav Shimi concluded that this phenomenon was applicable to Bei Tzinisa in a different sense: Adam HaRishon decreed that its only settlement would be date palms. This is why these trees are said to date back to Adam HaRishon.

The Gemara's wording seems unusual. The term אֶרֶץ גִּזְרָה means “a desolate land.”⁹⁹ If so, it seems odd to refer to a land destined for settlement as “אֶרֶץ שֶׁגִּזְרָה עָלֶיהָ אָדָם, הָרִאשׁוֹן לִישׁוּב.”

The pasuk says (2:7) וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים – *And Hashem G-d formed the man of dust from the ground.* Rashi cites Chazal saying that Hashem collected dust from all ends of the earth and formed Adam out of it, so that wherever he would die, the earth would accept him in burial. Clearly, besides containing the *neshamos* of all future humanity, Adam's creation encompassed the world itself. Because of this, when Adam sinned with the *etz hada'as*, the entirety of Creation was negatively impacted. Since that time, every person is tasked with doing his part to restore the damage wrought by Adam's sin. As each generation – and each individual – would withstand its *nisyonos*, the *chet* would be repaired to a degree.

This is what the Gemara means by אֶרֶץ שֶׁגִּזְרָה עָלֶיהָ אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן לִישׁוּב and אֶרֶץ שֶׁלֹּא גִזְרָה עָלֶיהָ אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן. All people would face tests as a result of Adam HaRishon. Some people's tests would be in the form of an אֶרֶץ גִּזְרָה, a desolate land that is “not decreed to be settled,” i.e., they would face harsh difficulties, both in *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*; while some people would find their lot in “a land decreed to be settled,” i.e., a life of wealth, where they would need to

99 See *mefarshim* to Vayikra 16:22

exercise caution not to drown in the luxuries of this world. Whichever form of *nisayon* a person faces, he as a person, and the world as a whole, must do their best to repair the *chet* of Adam HaRishon.

The same lifetime might include periods of “settlement” and periods of “desolation.” When a person feels difficulty in *avodas Hashem*, when he doesn’t taste its sweetness, he must hold strong and not succumb to his negative feelings. He must realize that this is the context for the *avodah* that Hashem wants from him at this time. And when one feels good about his *avodas Hashem*, enjoying its *geshmak*, he must be cautious that it does not lead to haughtiness.

We must internalize that our stay in this world is only a means of entry into *Olam Haba*; we must follow the script that Hashem prepared for us, fulfilling His will in whatever situation we find ourselves. This is why R. Shimi’s message was relayed while traveling: it teaches that the lesson of serving Hashem whether in “settlement” or “desolation” is our life’s journey, through which we can repair the damage of Adam HaRishon’s sin.

One might wonder how exactly to restore the damage of Adam’s *chet*. Perhaps we should learn *mishnayos* which begin with the letters of Adam’s name? Such questions are simply a distraction from one’s *avodah*. Each person must fix himself; he must repair his own *chet* of the *eitz hada’as*. Every person needs to focus on his own *aveiros*, elevating and refining himself further and further.

Many people want to know what they should be *mekabel* upon themselves. The answer is simple: Don’t look for new things. Just fulfill your obligations – fully. Whichever mitzvos apply to you presently, perform them to the utmost. Every person knows where his struggles lie, where he needs to battle his *yetzer hara*. That is where he should focus.

One may ask *how* to do his *avodah*; *how* to vanquish his *yetzer hara*. But *what* he should be doing? That is not a question.

(בנאות דשא – בראשית תשפ"ג)

Following Orders

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶל הַנָּחָשׁ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת
אָרוּר אַתָּה

And Hashem G-d said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, accursed are you." (Bereishis 3:14)

Rashicomments, citing Chazal,¹⁰⁰ that this shows that we do not seek merit for one who seduces others to sin. After all, the *nachash* could have been defended based on the principle of "דברי הרב ודברי התלמיד, דברי מי ודברי מי, שומעין, A command of the *rebbe* and a command of a student – which does one obey?" The *nachash* could have argued that it was not responsible for Adam HaRishon eating from the *etz hada'as* because Adam should have followed Hashem's command not to eat, disregarding the advice of the *nachash*.

What is the rationale behind the concept of דברי הרב ודברי התלמיד, דברי מי ודברי מי שומעין? The *Sma*¹⁰¹ explains that a *meshale'ach* (one who appoints a *shaliach*) can claim he did not expect the *shaliach* to follow his directive over the command of Hashem. This explanation is given by the *Rishonim*¹⁰²

as well. The understanding seems to be that since the *meshale'ach* did not expect the *shelichus* to be fulfilled, his *minui shelichus* (appointing of a *shaliach*) was deficient.

This is hard to accept. Why would we assume that the *meshale'ach* was not serious about appointing the *shaliach*? This is especially difficult since the principle of *divrei harav* applies even where the *shaliach* was paid to carry out the *shelichus*.¹⁰³ In this case, the *meshale'ach* certainly intended for the *shelichus* to be fulfilled.¹⁰⁴ So why would the *minui shelichus* be incomplete?

One might suggest that as long as the *meshale'ach* is unsure whether the *shelichus* will be fulfilled, the appointment is lacking. But this cannot be true, either. Suppose one appoints a *shaliach* for a mission in a dangerous area. It is obviously doubtful whether it will be carried out. Nonetheless, if the *shaliach* does fulfill the *shelichus*, it certainly takes effect. Clearly, doubtfulness about the future fulfillment of a

100 Sanhedrin 29a

101 182:2

102 *Tosefos HaRosh*, Kiddushin 42b s.v. *Hani*; *Tosefos Shantz* cited in *Shittah Mekubetzes*, *ibid* s.v. *Heicha*

103 See *Pnei Yehoshua* *ibid*; *Sha'arei Mishpat* 182:3

104 See *Tosafos*, Bava Kamma 56a s.v. *Ela*

shelichus does not affect the validity of its *minui shelichus*.

Furthermore, it is a matter of debate whether a *shaliach* even needs to be formally appointed, or it is enough for the *shaliach* to know that the *meshale'ach* wants his service (*gilui da'as*).¹⁰⁵ According to the second approach, the idea of *divrei harav* could not be attributed to a deficiency in the *minui shelichus*.

I believe the *Sma* means to explain differently. It is not that the *meshale'ach* does not expect the *shelichus* to be fulfilled, but rather that in regard to attributing the actions of the *shaliach* to the *meshale'ach*, the *shaliach* is seen as acting of his own accord, since the directive opposed Hashem's command.

Let us prove this approach further. The Gemara (Kiddushin ibid) cites a *Beraisa* that if one appoints a *shaliach* to purchase something with money of *hekdesch*, and the *shaliach* does so, the *meshale'ach* has transgressed the prohibition of *me'ilah*. The Gemara challenges this: Why doesn't the principle of אין שליח לדבר עבירה (one cannot become a *shaliach* to transgress a sin) apply, so that

the *shaliach* is the one transgressing *me'ilah*?

*Tosafos*¹⁰⁶ points out that the Gemara must be discussing a case where it was unknown that the money belonged to *hekdesch*, because one does not transgress *me'ilah* when acting knowingly. But if so, the principle of *divrei harav* (which is the basis for אין שליח לדבר עבירה) could not apply. If the *shaliach* did not know that Hashem commanded him not to use this money, he could not be expected to reject the *shelichus*. So how can the Gemara's question be understood? *Tosafos* answers that the Gemara invokes אין שליח לדבר עבירה for a case where after being appointed, the *shaliach* found out that the money belonged to *hekdesch*, and nonetheless used it. In such a case, he should have followed Hashem's command and not spent the money.

If *divrei harav* is a claim that the *meshale'ach* did not expect the *shaliach* to carry out his directive, as one might understand the *Sma*'s explanation, then *Tosafos'* answer cannot be understood. Since when he appointed the *shaliach*, the *meshale'ach* was unaware that the money belonged to *hekdesch*, it could

¹⁰⁵ See *Shulchan Aruch*, E.H. 35:4; *Machaneh Efraim*, *Zechiyah U'Matanah* 6

¹⁰⁶ S.v. *Amai*

not be said that he did not expect the *shelichus* to be fulfilled. Even if the *shaliach* later discovered that it belonged to *hekdesh*, that cannot change the original mindset of the *meshale'ach*. The *Sma's* explanation must be reconciled with *Tosafos'* answer, because *Tosefos Shantz*¹⁰⁷ writes both of these explanations.

Clearly, the *Sma* means that, as above, because the *shelichus*

conflicts with Hashem's command, the act of the *shaliach* cannot be attributed to the *meshale'ach*. This holds true even where the *shaliach* realizes after his appointment that Hashem forbids following the directive of the *meshale'ach*. Here, too, the *shaliach's* act cannot be seen as belonging to the *meshale'ach*.

(בנאות דשא – בראשית תשפ"ג)

Divrei Hisorerus on the Situation in Eretz Yisrael

It was not easy to feel *simchas yom tov* as the Torah requires this Simchas Torah. It brings to mind a story with Rav Yitzchak Hutner. During Sukkos of 5703, Rav Hutner, living in America, received the bitter news coming out of Europe. At the same time, a gentile neighbor decided to have some fun and set Rav Hutner's *sukkah* on fire. Utterly broken, Rav Hutner sat down and burst into tears. Just then, a *chassidishe Yid* passed by. Taking in the situation, he addressed Rav Hutner. "Rav Yitzchak," he said, "you must understand that when the Ribbono Shel Olam commanded the

mitzvah of *v'samachta b'chagecha*, He intended it, as well, for Rav Yitzchak Hutner on Sukkos of 5703."

Rav Hutner was grateful his entire life for these words. The right words at the right time make their mark better than the most powerful *derashah*. It is this same lesson that we must keep in mind now.

We must internalize that Hashem is our merciful Father and He acts only for our good. We don't know His *cheshbonos*, but if He commanded us to be joyous, we must try to place ourselves in a happy state of mind.

107 Ibid

All Yidden must join in with our brethren who are *batzarah u'vashivyah*, in suffering and captivity. We must join them in feeling, in heartfelt pain. When the Jews of Beitar were undergoing suffering at the hands of the Romans, other Jews felt secure that it was not they who were suffering. This caused a *kitrug* against them. We must not feel this way.

Each person has to judge for himself in what area he falls short and rectify his ways. It is impossible to know Hashem's ways, but it seems that in a general sense, there has been a lacking in *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. We have become reliant on *basar v'dam*, on the power of man. It has now become clear that אַם ה' לֹא – *if Hashem*

will not guard the city, in vain is the watchman vigilant (Tehillim 127:1). Sometimes one forgets who it is that is guarding him from the dog. It is then that the dog bites, *chas v'shalom*. We must remember and internalize that Hashem alone is our protector and guardian.

Another important point is attentiveness to *kedushah*. The Torah warns that when there is a breach in *kedushah*, וְשָׁב מֵאַחֲרַיָּהּ – *Hashem will turn away from you* (Devarim 23:15). It is not easy, but the more we improve in *kedushah*, the more the *Shechinah* will be among Klal Yisrael and protect us.

Let us strengthen ourselves in Torah and *tefillah* and acting as Yidden should act, and may Hashem bring us *besoros tovus*.

Stardom

Our parshah describes the creation of the luminaries (Bereishis 1:16), וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹקִים אֶת שְׁנֵי הַמָּאֲרוֹת הַגְּדֹלִים, וגו' וְאֵת הַמָּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשָׁלֹת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים – *And G-d made the two great luminaries.... and the lesser luminary to dominate the night; and the stars.* Rashi writes, citing a Midrash,¹⁰⁸

that because Hashem minimized the moon, He appeased it by placing under it an army of many stars. As we shall see, the stars He created are not only great in number, but great in significance as well.

The pasuk in Tehillim (147:4) states, מוֹנֵה מִסְפֵּר לְכוֹכָבִים לְכֹלָם

108 Bereishis Rabbah 6:4

שמות יקרא – *He counts the number of the stars, to all of them He assigns names.* The Sfas Emes¹⁰⁹ wonders why Hashem knowing the number of the stars is considered noteworthy. Shouldn't the pasuk instead celebrate that Hashem is the Creator of the stars?¹¹⁰ The Sfas Emes explains that the stars cannot be counted because they simply have no number. When Hashem challenged Avraham to count the stars,¹¹¹ it was not because they are too numerous for a human being to put a number on — in fact, no number can possibly be placed on them.¹¹² When Hashem counts the stars, He creates a number where no number exists, *yesh me'ayin*. This is the greatness that the pasuk relates.

However, this is difficult to understand. Firstly, nothing can be infinite except Hashem, so how can the stars be uncountable? Furthermore, the very notion seems impossible. Of course, it's true Hashem can fashion something from nothing; the Creation itself was *yesh me'ayin*, from nothing. However, if the stars have no

number, how could a number possibly be placed on them? What happens to the stars that are outside of that number? And if they can all fit into a number, obviously they never were beyond count.

It seems the Sfas Emes meant that just as there is a spiritual concept called 'למעלה מן הזמן' – 'above time,' the stars are spiritually 'למעלה מן המספר' – 'above counting.' They are not physically numerous beyond numbers, but rather they are elevated above the boundaries of our world. It was only after the moon was minimized, bringing spiritual darkness upon the world, that Hashem gave the stars a 'number,' allowing them to give light to our lowly, nightly world.¹¹³

Although this concept remains beyond our comprehension, it carries an important lesson for all of us. Chazal¹¹⁴ compare Yidden to stars. Each star seems minuscule, but it is in fact bigger than our entire world.¹¹⁵ The Gemara says as well (Pesachim 94a) that the world's entire settlement rests under a single star. What does this mean? Each Yid is

109 Shemos 5638

110 See Maharal *Chiddushei Aggados*, Sanhedrin 39a

111 Bereishis 15:5

112 See *Bamidbar Rabbah* 1:14

113 See *Sfas Emes*, Shemos 5646 'ד"ה במד'

114 Megillah 16a, *Shemos Rabbah* 3:3

115 See *Sfas Emes*, Lech Lecha 5646 'ד"ה במדרש שמעי'

'above counting,' like a star – above nature and of greater significance than the whole world. And just as Hashem 'assigns names' to each star, assigning it a unique mission, so does He designate for each individual Yid a specific mission in life, as well as a distinct way of connecting to Him.¹¹⁶ A person may feel that he is just an insignificant speck of dust within the vastness of Creation, with little spiritual standing. He must know that this is not the case; each Yid is like a star in his own right, vastly important in the upper worlds, and shining with a unique light.

The Berdichever¹¹⁷ comments on the pasuk (Bamidbar 24:17) כֹּכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב – *a star has issued from Yaakov*, that כֹּכַב – *star* is comprised of the letters כ"ו and כ"ב which are 26 and 22. 26 represents the ineffable Name of Hashem, beyond any possible comprehension and connection for any part of Creation. Yet through the 22 letters of the *Alef Beis* with which Yidden praise Hashem and learn His Torah, they can achieve a relationship with Him. This is what it means that Yidden are praised as כֹּכַב.

As we have explained, a Yid is 'above counting,' like a star – above the realm of limited possibility. By applying himself to the 22 letters of the Torah, by occupying himself with Torah learning, davening, mitzvos and *chessed*, a Yid can achieve the absolute impossibility of connecting with Hashem.

We must internalize that although we are lowly creatures rooted firmly on earth, our potential for greatness is boundless. We are

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uniquely capable of bonding with our Creator. When one Yid has heartfelt feelings of *teshuvah*, of striving for closeness to Hashem amid the darkness of this world –

116 See *Sfas Emes*, Shemos 5637 and 5657

117 *Kedushas Levi*, Balak

the entire world 'rests under his star,' because this is the only matter of consequence in the entire world. When a Yid illuminates his star, he is truly above counting.

We go about our days doing mitzvos, learning Torah, davening, making *brachos*; we must learn to appreciate the value of these actions. We are each a star with a special connection to Hashem Himself! When we make a *brachah*, we must take care to say it slowly and deliberately, as the Gemara (Brachos 47a) instructs,¹¹⁸ rather than speeding through it. A *brachah* is

not a passcode one must utter to be allowed to eat. Each *brachah* is a chance to bless the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. Each *tefillah* is an opportunity to praise Him and ask of Him whatever we need. Every time a person learns Torah it must be with a deep understanding that Hashem is sitting and learning opposite him.¹¹⁹

May Hashem grant us the privilege of reaching the levels required of us, following in the proper path, and illuminating as stars.

(בראשית תשפ"ב – מאמר ב)

Flying High

Rashi in our parshah (2:19) cites a discussion of the Gemara (Chullin 27b). A pasuk (1:20) states, וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, יִשְׂרָצוּ הַמַּיִם שְׂרָץ נֶכֶס חַיָּה וְעוֹף יְעוֹפֵף – *G-d said, "Let the waters teem with teeming living creatures, and fowl that fly about,"* while another (2:19) states: וַיִּצְרָה' אֱלֹקִים מִן הָאֲדָמָה כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ – *Hashem-G-d had formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the sky*. Were birds created from

water or from earth? The Gemara answers that they were formed from mire, a mix of earth and water.

Specifically, birds, which were created with wings, were fashioned from mud. What lesson can we learn from this? If we wish to extract ourselves from the mire of this world, we must give ourselves wings. In this way we can soar above, engaging in higher pursuits. In fact,

118 As explained by the *Rishonim*; see Rosh (7:17). See also *Mishnah Berurah*, siman 5 no. 1.

119 The Yerushalmi (Shabbos 1:2) states that when one learns words of Torah, he should envision the originator of the Torah thought standing opposite him. The Baal Shem Tov explained that this refers to Hashem Himself, the true Originator of all of Torah, Who attends to every Yid who learns His Torah. (See *Pnei Menachem*, Vayigash p. 360 and 377, and elsewhere.)

the Gemara (Sanhedrin 92b) teaches that after the time of Mashiach, Hashem will outfit *tzaddikim* with wings like eagles. The *Halachos Ketanos*¹²⁰ wonders, if the proper form of man includes a set of wings, why wasn't he created with them to start with? He provides two answers. Firstly, man was created in his present form to enable him to earn reward by walking to do mitzvos. Secondly, a winged person would have more access to sin, if with a flap of his wings he could travel to any destination. This is why man was created with the heaviness that walking entails.

It is told that a young boy was seen staring at Rav Yisrael, the Ruzhiner Rebbe. When questioned, the boy explained that he was taught in *cheder* that an angel has six wings. He was looking for the

Rebbe's six wings (because everybody knows the Rebbe is an angel!). The Ruzhiner said to show the boy his six holy sons: they were his wings.

What did he mean?

Everyone wants to have righteous children. But often a father reasons that as long as he encourages his sons to learn Torah and answer *Yehei Shmei Rabba* properly, they will turn out right. This is a mistake. Our children's *chinuch* depends on our own *chinuch*. If one raises holy children, it is because he has elevated himself to holiness. This was the Ruzhiner's intention. One's children are his wings, for if he has soared above this world's mud, he will see his children follow.

(בראשית תשפ"א - שלום זכר)

Healed of the Curse

Part of the snake's curse for his role in the sin of the *eitz hada'as* was (Bereishis 3:14) וְעָכָר תֹּאכַל כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ - *and dust you shall eat all the days of your life*. Rabbeinu Bachya notes the similar language in the mitzvah of remembering *Yetzias*

Mitzrayim (Devarim 16:3) לְמַעַן תִּזְכָּר אֶת יוֹם צְאוֹתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ - *so that you will remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt all the days of your life*. The Gemara (Brachos 12b), explaining this pasuk, extrapolates from the

120 Vol. 1 *siman* 223

word כל – all [the days of your life] that the mitzvah of recalling *Yetzias Mitzrayim* will be obligatory even during the Messianic age. Thus, Rabbeinu Bachya draws a similar conclusion regarding the snake's punishment, כל ימי חייך means the snake's curse will continue even during the messianic age. Indeed, the Midrash¹²¹ teaches that all creatures are destined to be healed besides the snake.

However, this seems problematic. The pasuk (3:16) states regarding Adam's punishment, אַרְוָה הָאָדָמָה בְּעֵבוּרָהּ בְּעֶצְבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה כל ימי חייך – *accursed is the ground because of you; through suffering shall you eat of it* all the days of your life. Yet, mankind is destined to be healed of this curse. The Gemara in Shabbos 30b states that in the future, the ground of Eretz Yisrael will produce ready-made pastries, making it unnecessary to work the land. The pasuk (Yeshaya 61:5) states, וְעָמְדוּ זָרִים וְרָעוּ צֹאנֵכֶם וּבְנֵי נֹכַר אֶפְרִיכֶם וְכַרְמֵיכֶם – *Foreigners will stand and tend your flocks and the sons of the stranger will be your plowmen and your vineyard workers*. Clearly, we will no longer need to suffer in pursuit of sustenance. But don't the words 'כל ימי חייך' indicate that the

curse continues into the Messianic age, just as they do regarding the snake's curse?

The concept that the words 'כל ימי חייך' regarding *Yetzias Mitzrayim* alludes to the Messianic age is subject to a dispute among Tannaim. Another opinion maintains that these words indicate that this mitzvah is obligatory at night, in addition to the day. This opinion is in fact accepted as the *halachah*. So why does כל ימי חייך indicate the snake's curse in the messianic age, rather than during the nighttime? Apparently, it is because the snake sleeps at night, so the curse of its eating habits does not apply then; consequently, כל ימי חייך must imply its application to the Messianic age. Man, however, is preoccupied with his livelihood day and night; by day he toils to make a living, and by night he tosses and turns, worrying about making ends meet. This can explain why for Adam's punishment, כל ימי חייך includes the nighttime – as with the mitzvah of remembering *Yetzias Mitzrayim* – and not the messianic age, when we will be healed of this curse.

We all understand that nighttime anxiety about one's livelihood is not productive. The

121 Bereishis Rabbah 20:5

only effective formula for earning a living is *tefillah*. As Rashi in our parshah (2:5) relates, the first rain did not fall until Adam davened for it. In *birchas hachodesh* we pray not merely for *parnassah* but for חיים של – פרנסה – a life of livelihood. Besides for livelihood, we want to *live*. Indeed, the Gemara (Taanis 8b) states

that during a time of both famine and plague, one need merely pray for the famine to end – “because Hashem grants sustenance to those living.”

May Hashem grant us plentiful *parnassah* together with good health and all blessings.

(בראשית תשפ"א – קידושא רבא)

Above and Beyond

Question: The pasuk (Bereishis 1:7) states, וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מַתַּחַת וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מַעַל לָרָקִיעַ – and He created a separation between the waters below the firmament and the waters above the firmament. *Yashreish Yaakov* is quoted¹²² as explaining why this pasuk mentions the lower waters before the upper waters, based on the following statement of *Tikkunei Zohar*: when the lower waters were separated and placed below, they cried out and attempted to raise themselves, saying that they wanted to be close to their King. Since Hashem holds dear those who are subdued and broken-hearted, He placed them first in the pasuk.

In *Kulmus HaChassidus*, Rabbeinu Shlita noted that there are two other instances in which earthly water is given prominence. The first is at *nisuch hamayim* (the water libations performed on Sukkos) where water is poured not into the same hole in the *mizbe'ach* as the wine of *nisuch hayayin* (the regular wine libations), but into the *mizbe'ach's* western hole – which is closer to the Divine Presence of the Holy of Holies.¹²³ The second relates to the salt supplemented to *korbanos*. Salt is taken from the depths of the earth and is considered to be a derivative of the lower waters. When salt is added to *korbanos*, the *korbanos* are not dipped into it, but rather it is

122 *M'Pi Sefarim V'Sofrim*, Bereishis, *Peninei HaChassidus* no. 19

123 See *Sukkah* 48b

given the distinction of being placed on top of them.¹²⁴

Yet Rabbeinu's grandfather, Rav Yaakov Meir Biderman, in his notes appended to *Piskei Teshuvah*,¹²⁵ questions the idea that something placed higher than another is considered more prominent. Commenting on *Piskei Teshuvah's* assertion, based on a statement of *Terumas HaDeshen*, that an item mandated to be higher is holier than the item that is lower, Rav Biderman points to two sources which seem to contradict this. First, why doesn't the Mishnah in *Zevachim* (89a) state that a *chatas* is brought before an *olah* and an *asham* because its blood is sprayed higher than theirs? Second, why does a bird *chatas* precede a bird *olah*; a bird *olah's* blood is expressed on the upper part of the *mizbe'ach* and a bird *chatas's* on its lower part.

Clearly, Rav Biderman's position is that placing one item higher than another does not indicate heightened holiness. And so, why would the placement of salt atop the limbs of a *korban* indicate prominence of the salt over the *korban*?

Response: I do not recall this statement of my grandfather, but I am amazed that he would have maintained this position. To start with, in two discussions of the Gemara in *Zevachim* (10a¹²⁶ and 10b), when attempting to learn *halachos* from one type of *korban* to another, the Gemara attributes superiority to one over the other because its blood is sprayed higher than the other. Clearly, one item's height in contrast to another's is indication of its prominence.

Furthermore, the question why the Mishnah doesn't attribute superiority to the *chatas* because its blood is sprayed higher than that of an the *asham* is a very problematic question. The Mishnah in fact states that a *chatas* precedes an *asham* because its blood is sprayed on the *karnos hamizbe'ach*. Blood sprayed on the *kranos* is (by definition) sprayed on the top of the *mizbe'ach*; it is obviously inclusive of the *chatas's* blood being sprayed high. As to why the Mishnah doesn't mention the *chatas's* blood sprayed higher than that of the *olah*, see *Tosafos* in *Zevachim* 89b¹²⁷ who resolves this problem.

124 See *Chasdei Dovid*, Menachos 6:2; Yerushalmi Nedarim 6:3

125 Vol. 1, to *siman* 101, in footnote

126 See *Chok Nossan* and other commentaries

127 *S.v. Dam Chatas*

The question why a bird *chatas* precedes a bird *olah*, whose blood is excised higher, is quite problematic. The Gemara in Zevachim 90a learns explicitly from a pasuk that a bird *chatas* precedes even an animal *olah* – and certainly a bird *olah*. The reason for this is given on 7b; the appeasement of a “protection” sacrifice precedes that of a “gift” sacrifice.¹²⁸

I wonder whether the quoted statement was in fact my grandfather's. He was a tremendous *talmid chacham*, and a very knowledgeable individual.¹²⁹ In any case, whoever it was that made this statement didn't actually intend to question the superiority of a *mitzvah* performed higher than another. It is stated explicitly by *Terumas HaDeshen*, as quoted by *Piskei Teshuvah*. He simply meant to raise several questions on *Terumas HaDeshen's* position.

All the above has no bearing on my statement regarding the

prominence of salt over a *korban*. Rav Biderman's statement was regarding the placement of one *mitzvah* in a higher place than another; I was discussing placing one *atop* another. The superiority of a *mitzvah* placed on top of another is recognized in *halachah*; one may not place *sefarim* atop a *Sefer Torah*,¹³⁰ nor *tefillin shel yad* atop *tefillin shel rosh*.¹³¹ To be clear, salt is certainly not more important than a *korban* itself;¹³² my intention was that its placement above the limbs of the *korban* signifies its inherent significance.

One might raise a question from a statement of the Gemara in Yoma (26a), that the fats (פֶּדֶי) of a *korban* are placed atop its head, covering its upturned incision of *shechitah*. The head of a *korban* is certainly more important; shouldn't the fats be placed below it, covering its incision from below? It would seem, then, that regarding components of an animal being burned together

128 In fact, this is implicit in the Mishnah's (89b) teaching that a *chatas* precedes an *olah* “because it appeases.”

129 Someone once mentioned to my grandfather, the Imrei Emes, the name of a certain well-known Torah giant in Poland, calling him a “*gaon*.” The Imrei Emes responded, “*Gaon*?! He knows how to learn. Our Rav Yaakov Meir (Biderman) also knows how to learn.” Indeed, the *gadol* in question was very well-respected; the *Imrei Emes* simply wasn't one for exaggerated titles.

130 Megillah 27a

131 *Magen Avraham, siman 28*

132 Even if we say that it is considered a part of the *korban*, and not merely a preparation for it (as maintained by *Tziyunim LaTorah, klal 40*), nevertheless, it is taken because of the *korban*, and not vice versa.

as a *korban*, the position of one vis-à-vis another does not signify importance.¹³³ If so, the same should hold true regarding a *korban's* limbs and its accompanying salt. In truth, however, the phenomenon of the *korban's* head being upturned, and the fat being placed atop it, is explained by the Radvaz¹³⁴ as a means of protecting the Kohen's

clothing from becoming soiled by blood dripping from the head's incision. Accordingly, our position remains that a component of a *korban* placed atop another – and salt placed atop limbs of a *korban* – holds greater significance.

With Torah blessings,

Shaul Alter

(בנאות דשא – בראשית תשפ"ב)

133 One may question this argument based on a discussion in the *Acharonim* whether the fats are burned with the head, or merely brought with it up the ramp of the *mizbe'ach*. In the latter case, this cannot be proof to the significance of relative positions when a *korban's* components are burned together.

134 *Ma'aseh HaKorbanos* 6:11