

O H R N E T

SPECIAL SUKKOT EDITION · PARSHIOT BEREISHET - NOACH · TISHREI 5773 · OCT. 2012 · VOL. 20 NO. 2

SIMCHAT TORAH

The Culmination of the Days of Awe

BY RABBI YITZCHOK BREITOWITZ

On Shemini Atzeret, we put aside all the symbols of Succot that have been so prominent up until now. We don't take the lulav and etrog. Unlike other holidays, there are no special rituals on Shemini Atzeret. It is the time when we simply come close to celebrate on one final day with G-d. In the famous parable, it is as if the king invited all the nations of the world to celebrate. For seven days, amid much pomp and circumstance, the king and his guests partook of the formal celebration. On the last day, however, after all the guests have gone home, the king invites his family for an informal celebration in the kitchen. It's a time of closeness and intimacy with G-d. This is Shemini Atzeret.

In Israel, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah occur on the same day. It's a roller coaster of emotions, combining the somber *yizkor* (memorial prayers for the departed) with the unrestrained joy of the *hakafot*. In *chutz la'aretz*, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are celebrated on two different days. (Technically, however, Simchat Torah is the second day of Shemini Atzeret that must be observed in the Diaspora just as all Festivals in the Diaspora have two days). It must be noted that the Torah nowhere indicates that we are to finish the Torah in an annual cycle and it certainly does not specify that the completion date should be Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah. Linking the completion of the Torah to the festive holiday was a practice that was instituted many centuries after Sinai as a way of enhancing and increasing our joy. This, however, raises a number of questions.

First, why do we celebrate the Torah now, rather than on Shavuot, the anniversary of our receiving it? Second, why should we even be *allowed* to celebrate our love for the

Torah on Shemini Atzeret? Chazal generally prohibit celebrating two joyous occasions on the same day. Thus we're not allowed to have weddings on Chol HaMo'ed, so that one rejoicing doesn't take away from the other. Why then should we celebrate the completion of the Torah on a day when we already are commanded to rejoice?

Starting with the second question, one might suggest that there is no problem of mixing joys on this day, because what we celebrate on Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah is our closeness to G-d, and the uniqueness of our relationship. The means by which we achieve that closeness is the Torah. The Torah is also the expression of G-d's love for us. Torah is both the reason for that closeness and the expression of it. There is no contradiction, then, in celebrating Shemini Atzeret by celebrating the Torah because ultimately the joy of relationship and the joy of Torah are one.

As for the first question, on Shavuot we did indeed receive the Torah. But the nation that received it was one that had reached, at least for that moment, the forty-ninth level of purity. We had recreated the state of Adam and Eve before the sin. At that moment death was banished from the world. We received the Torah on Shavuot in a state of purity, sanctity and righteousness. But we couldn't maintain that state. Before Moshe even came down from Sinai we had fallen to the depths with the sin of the Golden Calf. Moshe came down and broke the Tablets, and had to return again to plead for us; G-d wanted to destroy us and begin anew with Moshe.

G-d forgave us on Yom Kippur, and we received a new set of Tablets. This second receipt of the Torah was different from the first. This was the Torah of the *ba'al teshuva*, the

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BEREISHET

In the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava — the Human pair — are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing “sin,” Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain bearing and raising children. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock, and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain, until the birth of Noach. After the death of Sheith, Mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out Man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noach, finds favor with G-d.

NOACH

It is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam's descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth's inhabitants

except for the righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the earth. G-d instructs Noach to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days Noach sends the dove once more; the dove does not return. G-d tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. Hashem commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world's climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Ham, one of Noach's sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach's three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

SUCCOT

Succot is a very unique holiday with a special significance for Jews in Israel today. The original *succot* were the clouds of glory that protected our ancestors from the harsh climate in the wilderness. It is impossible for us to duplicate such a Heavenly shield, so the Torah commands us to build *succot* from earthly material in order to recall that miracle.

As Israel faces the threat of a nuclear Iran and incessant ter-

rorist activity, living and eating in our *succot* reminds us that we were once privileged to enjoy the protection of those Heavenly *succot*. When a Jew enters his man-made succah he must feel as though he is entering the best shelter available. By fulfilling this mitzvah and putting our faith in G-d we can hope that we will be worthy of the Heavenly protection which will shelter Israel forever.

BEREISHET

DE-CONSTRUCTION

"In the beginning of G-D's creating the heavens and the earth..." (1:1)

You drive up to your dream home. It's been two years in the planning, and three to build it. You usher your guests up to the top of the west wing and proudly fling open the doors to the guest suite. The doors bang against their stops. Then a small shudder shakes the house. What sounds like a distant groan starts to get louder and louder until before your eyes the entire west wing parts company with the house and falls away, crashing to the ground like some slow-motion movie. You and your guests are left wide-eyed in horror and disbelief, gazing into fifty feet of nothingness two inches from the ends of your toes.

The Torah is the blueprint of the world. Just as a builder takes great pains to study the blueprint of a house before a single bulldozer raises its claws in earnest; just as he measures and calculates and evaluates, slide-rule and calculator at the ready, so too G-d creates the world from His blueprint — the Torah.

It stands to reason therefore, that a Sefer Torah that lacks even one letter is *pasul* (invalid). For just as one missing line in the plans of a building may lead to the west wing crashing into ruins in front of your eyes, so too one letter missing from a Sefer Torah is as though vast tracts of the universe have been erased.

• Source: Based on the Chafetz Chaim

FIRST AND LAST

"In the beginning..." (1:1)

Beginnings. And endings. The beginning has a quality that the end does not possess, and the end has that which the beginning lacks.

Beginning has its strength in quality, but it is weak in quantity. The beginning of something is its source, its root, its central point. It is the powerhouse of its strength, the well-spring of its life-force.

On the other hand, ending is strong in quantity, in size, in extent, but it is weak in quality. The end of something represents its maximum span, its fullest extrusion into the physical world — its greatest presence, its most developed incarnation.

However its greatest extent is also the weakest expression of its essence. The leaves of a tree may define its ultimate span, but they are also the weakest point of its life-force. The roots, on the other hand, may be hidden, but they contain its very essence.

The greatness of an empire is evaluated by its furthest outpost, but it is also there that it is at its weakest, with its lines of communication at full stretch.

This is all true in the physical world. But on the spiritual plane, quality and quantity are identical at the beginning as they are at the end.

This is the hallmark of Shabbat. Shabbat is the end of Creation, but it is also its first purpose and goal. "Last in action; in thought, first."

Shabbat has to come after the six working days. And even if you get lost in the desert and forget which day of the week it is you still count six days and only then keep a day of Shabbat. Not the reverse.

But Shabbat is not just the end. Every Shabbat throughout the generations is still called "*Shabbat Bereishet*" — the first Shabbat — because every Shabbat contains the primal power of the first, of the root. It contains the source of blessing and the root of holiness.

• Source: Adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in *L'Torah U'I'Moadim*

NOACH

WHAT'S IN A WORD

"Then G-d said to Noah, 'Come into the ark, you and all your household'..." (7:1).

The word in Hebrew for ark is "*Teiva*", which also means "*word*". Throughout the history of the Jewish People, both in times of oppression and assimilation, our only refuge has been to "*Come into the Teiva*"; to come into the "*word*".

That word is the word of prayer uttered from a contrite heart; that word is the word of the Torah, which has proved itself to be a "Noah's ark" for our entire household throughout all of history.

• Source: *Ba'al Shem Tov*

PROGENY OF LOVE

"These are the offspring of Noah – Noah was a righteous man" (6:9).

The essential offspring of a person are his righteous acts. Just as a person nurtures and cares for his offspring, sparing no love or effort to perfect them, likewise one should behave toward one's good deeds. One should lavish love to perfect even the least promising of them, as one would do with one's children, for no one considers even the least of one's children insignificant.

• Source: *Rabbi Moshe Feinstein*

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JEWISH ECOLOGY

“And G-d saw the earth and behold it was corrupted, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.” (6:12)

The Rosh Yeshiva’s wife had to make a decision. Her dining room suite was on its last legs. An investigation was made. It would cost almost exactly the same amount of money to repair the old suite as it would to replace it with an identical new one. Obviously she would want to have a new suite, rather than an old one that had been patched up, however good the repair.

Obviously. However, without a moment’s hesitation she decided to have the old suite repaired. One of the yeshiva students asked her why she didn’t prefer to have a new suite.

“It’s not for sentimental reasons.” she replied. “Around this table sat all the great Torah sages of Europe at one time

or another. When they came to Baltimore, they would always stay with us. It was at this table that Reb Chaim Ozer learned Torah, that Reb Boruch Ber ate gefilte fish on Shabbat. It was on this chair that the Chafetz Chaim sat.”

When we think of ecology, we tend to think of our physical impact on Nature. However our spirituality and our morality also impact the ecosphere.

Two identical tables come off the factory assembly line. One table finds its way to a bar. One to a yeshiva. The table in the bar is *not the same table* as the one in the yeshiva. The table in the yeshiva, supporting holy books and thoughts is a different table. Not metaphorically — but in reality. Its very essence is altered and uplifted.

Such is the power given over to man. We can alter the very eco-structure of the world.

We can destroy the world by polluting it with sin. Or through the *mitzvot* of the Torah we can raise ourselves and the world with us to the Heavens.

SIMCHAT TORAH The Culmination of the Days of Awe - continued from page one

Torah not of perfection, but of a flawed people who had yet been forgiven. And this – and Moshe’s dropping of the first Tablets – is what we celebrate on Simchat Torah. We celebrate it with such passion because, while none of us could achieve the perfection the nation achieved on Shavuot, all of us are guaranteed the Torah of the *ba’al teshuva*. This is a Torah we cannot lose, no matter what we do, no matter how far we stray. This is the Torah as our birthright.

This understanding lies deep within each Jew, and it is the reason Simchat Torah strikes a chord with so many. In Soviet Russia in the eighties, at a time when Jews feared to practice their religion, there was one day in which they took to the streets as Jews without fear of the consequences. This was Simchat Torah. These were people who observed and knew almost no *mitzvot*, and yet they danced. This is the power of Simchat Torah.

Our dancing on Simchat Torah is more than dancing. It is a way of breaking barriers between us and G-d. This is the meaning of *hakafot*. According to Kabbalistic teaching, we circle seven times because this is a way of breaking barriers and destroying walls. Thus, the walls of Jericho fell after being encircled for seven days. This is one of the reasons a bride circles her groom seven times – to break the barriers that people inevitably have between them. On Simchat Torah we are using the Torah to break barriers between us and the Shechina. The Vilna Gaon used to say that the

Shechina itself rests on the *bimah* on Simchat Torah. Simchat Torah is an echo of that future time when the righteous will circle the Shechina, pointing, “this is the One we hoped for.” For this reason the Vilna Gaon would not allow anyone on the *bimah* during Simchat Torah. It is the place of the Shechina.

Finally, when we do the *hakafot* we are making a type of vow to G-d. Someone once complained to a Rabbi that he had not been honored with the privilege of holding a Torah during the dancing. The Rabbi told him that when one holds the Torah on Simchat Torah in a *hakafah*, he is making the strongest vow a person can make, a vow on a Torah Scroll. The vow is that he will live his life according to the principles of the Torah. But a person is a living Torah Scroll, and so we should think the same way about carrying our children in a *hakafah*. We are pledging to raise them according to the principles of the Torah.

This is the power of the *hakafot*, and the power of Simchat Torah. The great *meshgiach* of Mir, Reb Yeruchem Leibovitz, *zatzal*, once said that he didn’t know which was more powerful spiritually – the praying on Yom Kippur or the dancing on Simchat Torah. Both have the power to break barriers between us and G-d. Through love, joy and unity we can redeem ourselves and the world.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Israel Forever, Love of the Land, Talmud Tips, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair • General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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SHABBAT 2 - 22

“Do we tell someone to sin in order to save another from sin?”

This rhetorical question is raised in regard to a situation in which a Jew, unaware that it was Shabbat, put dough into a baking oven. Another Jew comes along and realizes that if the dough is left there to bake the fellow who placed it in the oven will be guilty of violating the Shabbat. A suggestion is made by the *gemara* that, although it is forbidden by rabbinic law to remove bread from an operating oven on Shabbat, he may remove the dough in order to save the Jew who placed it there.

This suggestion is rejected because we cannot ask one to commit even a minor sin in order to save another from committing a graver one.

• *Shabbat 4a*

“After you measure a kur (very large amount) of salt I will answer your question.”

This was how Rabbi Nachman responded to a question posed by his disciple, the Sage Rava, which he thought was not a problem deserving of much consideration.

Rashi explains that this was said in a joking manner before providing an answer to the question. Why does Rashi thus assume rather than explain that as his teacher of Torah Rabbi Nachman had the right to actually demand of his disciple that he perform this salt measuring service before answering him?

Rashash explains that we are not informed of Rava's actually doing anything before receiving the answer. We must therefore assume that Rabbi Nachman said it only in jest.

• *Shabbat 4a*

“One who gives another a gift should inform him that he is doing so.”

The purpose of this advice given by the Sage Rav, explains Rashi, is twofold. By letting the recipient know

that it is a gift, you avoid the danger of his being embarrassed to accept a handout. Even in a situation where the gift was not given directly but sent to the recipient's home, it is important to inform him that you are the giver so that you will thus gain his affection.

• *Shabbat 10b*

“One should never show favoritism to one son over the others.”

The biblical basis for this warning of the Sage Rav is the story of Yosef and his brothers. As a result of the special garment which Yaakov gave to Yosef alone, the brothers became jealous of him and this set off a chain of events which ultimately led to our ancestors going down to Egypt.

• *Shabbat 10b*

“One who gives a garment to a laundry to wash should measure it before he gives it and after receiving it.”

This advice of the Sage Abaye was intended to help avoid suffering the damage of the garment being stretched or shrunk.

Although this would seem to be limited to problems with the laundry, it has much broader significance. Too many disputes arise between owners and service people because there was no definitive knowledge of the condition of the item submitted for repair.

• *Shabbat 19a*

“One should be careful to avoid showing disrespect for a mitzvah.”

Rabbi Yosef offers two applications of this advice.

When one slaughters a fowl or beast he has a mitzvah to cover the blood. The material he uses to cover it should be placed by hand and not by kicking it because that would show disrespect for the mitzvah.

On Chanukah one should not examine money by the light of the Chanukah lamps because such action constitutes disrespect for the mitzvah.

• *Shabbat 22a*

Bereishet

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How was the wood of the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. G-d blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so for the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article "the"?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from G-d?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked?"
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

Answers to Bereishet's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that G-d, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - G-d saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. G-d created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god. The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. G-d commanded not to eat from the tree, but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced; therefore G-d took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

Noach

1. Parshat Noach begins by describing Noach as “perfectly righteous.” Yet later in the parsha, G-d says to Noach “For I have seen that you are righteous” but not “perfectly” righteous. Why not?
2. What sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
3. Why did G-d tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
4. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
5. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
6. Why did G-d postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
7. The flood began “in the second month.” What is the second month?
8. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
9. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did G-d do to protect him?
10. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
11. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
12. What did the olive branch symbolize?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to “be fruitful and multiply” directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

Answers to Noach’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 7:1 - Because one should not tell the entire praise of a person in his presence.
2. 6:13 - Robbery.
3. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, “G-d is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
4. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
5. 7:2 - G-d told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
6. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
7. 7:11 - Rabbi Eliezar says Marcheshvan; Rabbi Yehuda says Iyar.
8. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
9. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we’ll smash it!” G-d surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
10. 7:22 - The fish.
11. 8:4 - Eleven *amot*.
12. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it’s better to eat food “bitter like an olive” but which comes directly from G-d, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach’s disgrace to Ham. And because Ham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Ham’s fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against Hashem.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yiscah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called Yiscah because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

Why Isn't This Night Different From All Other Nights?

BY RABBI RICHARD JACOBS

Did you ever play “Find the Differences” as a child? You know, the one where you have two almost identical pictures side by side and you have to highlight where the pictures aren't identical. Imagine the following two puzzles:

PUZZLE 1

Picture 1

A family sits at the Shabbat table in the dining room, illuminated by the Shabbat candles, laid with fine crockery. Two challahs lie covered by a white cloth; a bottle of wine

stands on the table beside the kiddush cup. The family make kiddush and eat a sumptuous meal while speaking divrei Torah and singing zemirot.

Picture 2

A family sits at the Yom Tov table in the dining room, illuminated by the Yom Tov candles, laid with the finest crockery. Three matzot lie covered by a white cloth; a bottle of wine stands on the table beside the kiddush cup and the table centerpiece is the seder plate. The family make kiddush, speak divrei Torah and eat a sumptuous meal while speaking divrei Torah and singing zemirot.

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RICH SUCCAH, POOR SUCCAH

From: Steven

Dear Rabbi,

If the succah is about rejoicing before G-d with the bounty of one's harvest, what message does it have for the poor, or for those with little harvest?

Dear Steven,

This is a very interesting question! But certainly the Torah has a message for all. Let's see in more detail what the fundamental message of the succah is, and perhaps we'll see how it applies to both the rich and the poor.

We dwell in the succah seven days. For seven days we leave our permanent homes for temporary ones, in fulfillment of G-d's command in the Torah. In doing so we recall the Succot in which our forefathers dwelt in the wilderness, and the G-d given clouds of glory that shielded them there.

Reflecting on the nature and meaning of the succah enhances our insight into the meaning of trust in G-d, and the extent of Divine Providence in our lives.

We go out into the succah during the “Festival of the Ingathering” upon having harvested the fruit of our labor. If a person has received divine blessing and all his needs have

been fulfilled, the Torah bids him to leave his bounty-filled house, his source of blessing and security to sojourn in the frail, meager and exposed succah. This is to teach him that the wealth and possessions that were given to him are from the Almighty alone, and conversely, G-d sustains even those who live in lowly abodes with little material wealth. Let him reflect that wealth is fleeting and only important if used to serve the One who bestowed it.

On the other hand, one who is poor or who has been given only very little bounty might be concerned how he'll possibly manage the coming winter. Lest he feel forlorn and fearful, the Torah bids him to reside in the succah to remind him that G-d also had our ancestors dwell in such modest abodes in the wilderness, yet He sustained them there miraculously for decades in a way which they knew no want. All of their needs were miraculously cared for – water, food, clothing, protection from the elements and from all worldly harm. The succah thus teaches him that Divine Providence is better than all worldly possessions, and one who fully trusts in G-d will not be forsaken.

In this way, the succah is relevant for both wealthy and poor, and has a message that is pertinent to all generations – from the generation who wandered the wilderness of old to our generation wandering the spiritual wilderness of the modern world.

Why Isn't This Night Different From All Other Nights?

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PUZZLE 2

Picture 1

Exactly as above in puzzle 1, picture 1. Please re-read.

Picture 2

A family sits at the Yom Tov table, outdoors, in a temporary dwelling, a succah, sheltered from the elements under a flimsy roof made of leafy branches. The Yom Tov candles flicker in the breeze and the tableware blows around the table. Two challahs lie covered by a white cloth; a bottle of wine stands on the table beside the kiddush cup. Behind the table are beds for sleeping in later that night. The family make kiddush and eat a sumptuous meal while speaking divrei Torah and singing zemirot.

In which of the two puzzles do the pictures seem more similar and which more different? The first - contrasting Shabbat and Pesach - where the primary differences are in the foods and manner of eating, or the second - contrasting Shabbat and Succot - when on Succot the entire family and household belongings are uprooted and relocated outside to a temporary dwelling, exposed to the elements, where the weather is fast becoming non-conducive to outdoor life? To most people the differences in the second puzzle (between Shabbat and Succot) are most pronounced.

So why is it, that on Pesach we ask questions highlighting the difference between this night and the rest of year (eating matzah and not chametz, eating bitter herbs, dipping our food, and reclining) while on Succot where the difference is even more pronounced the distinction isn't highlighted? Why don't our children ask us on Succot, "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

The simple answer is clearly that regarding Pesach there is verse (Exodus 13:8) that obligates us to expound on our slavery in Egypt and about the Exodus, and our Sages instituted that this should be by means of a question and answer format in order to engage the interest of the children. There is no such verse and therefore no such commandment for Succot.

Perhaps, however, we can suggest another idea.

Perhaps Succot really isn't all that *different* from all other nights. Pesach (otherwise known as *zman*

cheiruteinu - the time of our freedom) is a time in sharp contrast to the rest of the year. However, Succot, despite being *zman simchateinu* (the time of joy) and the fact that the two most prominent mitzvot of the festival (the succah and the four species) both symbolize unity (which is the essence of joy) is surrounded by references and allusions to the current state of exile of lacking our homeland in the full manner in which we are meant to live in Eretz Yisrael.

The succah is a temporary dwelling place, and our time on earth is indeed temporary; we are in a state of exile and the succah is a place of no fixed abode.

In fact when our Sages discuss why we observe Succot in the autumn rather than in the spring (when after-all we first lived in a succah), one of the answers given is that Succot falls after Rosh Hashana when G-d sits in judgment on all the world's inhabitants, and after Yom Kippur when G-d seals the judgment, because maybe it was decreed for the Jewish People to go into exile. Therefore we build a succah and go into exile from our homes to the succah.

Further, the laws of the succah hint to our exile: The schach (roofing) of the succah must be plant material, but it is forbidden for it to be still attached to the ground. In the same way in exile, we are detached from our land.

A succah that is ten *tefachim* (approximately 90-100 cm) high is valid, even though it is virtually impossible to raise your head, so too in exile we go with bowed heads.

A succah that is "already made" (e.g. the schach was there before the walls) and not "made" (with placing of the schach now to complete a kosher succah) is not valid, symbolizing that in exile we constantly need to start afresh because that which we have already built is taken from us.

When we leave our homes and move into these temporary dwellings, we don't notice the difference because on a metaphysical level there isn't one.

The festival of Succot is one the happiest times of the year, yet this joy is currently tempered. May it be G-d's will that these reminders help us to strive for the ultimate redemption and that our *zman simchateinu* should soon be complete and perfect.

• Source: Based on Torah L'Da'at, chelek gimme!

SUCCOT Q&A ?

1. According to the Torah, what three basic requirements define a material as valid for use as a succah roof?
2. If the succah causes discomfort (e.g., it's too cold) to the extent that under similar conditions you would leave your very own house, you are exempt from the mitzvah. Why?
3. What two things are forbidden to do outside of the succah all seven days of the festival?
4. What is the absolute minimum number of meals a person is required to eat in the succah during the seven-day holiday?
5. Besides referring to the tree and its fruit, what does the word "etrog" mean literally?
6. What is the minimum length of a lulav?
7. What is the maximum percentage a person is required to add to the purchase price of his etrog in order to obtain an etrog of greater beauty?
8. On the Shabbat that occurs during Succot, we read the Book of Kohelet, in which King Solomon refers to himself as "Kohelet." Why is King Solomon called Kohelet?
9. What prohibition could a person transgress simply by sitting in the succah on the eighth day of Succot?
10. We hold a tallit over the heads of the people who read the end of the Torah and the beginning of the Torah. Why?

SUCCOT Q&A!

Answers to Succot Questions!

1. It must grow from the ground, no longer be connected to the ground, and not be receptive to tumah (ritual defilement).
2. Because the commandment of living in a succah is to dwell in the succah for seven days the same way you dwell in your house the rest of the year. (*Mishna Berura 640:13*)
3. Eat (an 'established' meal) or sleep. (*Orach Chaim 639:2*)
4. One. Eating a meal in the succah the first night of Succot is a requirement. The rest of the festival, a person can eat 'snacks' which are not required to be eaten in a succah. (Outside Israel, one must eat a meal the second night of Succot as well. However, there is no requirement to live outside Israel!)
(*Orach Chaim 639:3*)
5. Beauty. (*Ramban Vayikra 23:40*)
6. Its spine must be at least 4 *tefachim* (halachic hand-breadths).
7. 33.3% (*Orach Chaim 656:1*)
8. Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on Succot after the Sabbatical year. (*Rashi, Kohelet 1:1*)
9. Bal Tosif - "Do not add to the *mitzvot*." The commandment to live in the succah applies for only seven days. To sit in the succah on the eighth day with intent to fulfill the mitzvah transgresses "bal tosif." (*Orach Chaim 666:1*)
10. It represents the wedding canopy, symbolizing that through the Torah we wed ourselves to G-d.

חג שמחה

ohr.edu wishes all of Israel a Happy Succot

WHAT'S THE TIME?

Question: It often happens that a child who is a complete stranger will meet me on the street and ask me what time it is. I find it difficult to understand how knowing the right time is significant to such a youngster, whose parents have not seen the need to provide him with a wristwatch, and I am tempted to ignore the request. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The child asking you for the time may indeed be in need of knowing the hour because he or she was told to be at home or school at a designated time. The absence of a watch of his own may be attributed either to the economic situation of his parents or to their distrust of his ability to

properly care for such a delicate instrument.

Like many adults in the same situation, you are likely to suspect that the juvenile inquirer is not really interested in the correct time, but is merely seeking an opportunity of engaging an adult stranger in conversation, a pastime which children treasure as a contact with the "big world" outside their home and classroom. You may be correct in making such an assumption, but so what! Isn't it worth a few seconds of your time to do a child a favor? As you provide him with the right time in a patient, friendly tone, try adding a few words of encouragement for him. You would be surprised at how much you can achieve with this.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE IN-HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

Two stories reported in the local and international media reveal the inhuman side of the story with harmless animal life waging unintended battles against humans.

The first concerned a burglar alarm that went off in an Auckland, New Zealand home. When police broke down the securely locked front door, they found no one inside except for the family cat. In the course of exercising its freedom to climb undisturbed over everything in the house while its owners were away, this feline alarmer had inadvertently stepped on the phone buttons, which set off the

alarm.

In Israel it was a rooster that caused the trouble. Residents of a quiet neighborhood in Ramat Gan were kept awake for several nights by a rooster who apparently got its timing mixed up and crowed throughout the night. When the efforts of the city veterinarian to apprehend the offender proved unsuccessful because of the rooster's ability to hide in the bushes, a call went out to get a posse from the Ramat Gan Safari Zoo. Armed with rifles and tranquilizing darts, they arrived at the scene and, after a long battle, managed to restore quiet to Ramat Gan.

LOVE OF THE LAND: THE PEOPLE

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

SING A SONG?

When the exiled Jews finally rested by the rivers of Babylon they hung their lyres on the willows growing there. The psalm (137) in *Tehillim* recounting their dramatic scene goes on to relate that, "There our captors requested words of song from us with our lyres playing joyous music: Sing for us from Zion's song."

"How can we sign the songs of G-d upon the aliens soil?" was the response of the Levites who had taken with them the instruments that they had used for providing musical accompaniment.



Our Sages point out that they did not say, "We shall not sing" but "How can we sing?" To avoid playing sacred music on their lyres for their heathen captors on foreign soil, they had cut off their thumbs in order to make it impossible for them to play those instruments.

These courageous Levites were the ones who eventually accompanied Ezra on the return to Eretz Yisrael despite the difficulties involved while those who had not removed their thumbs remained behind to enjoy the comfort and security of Babylon.

“PEOPLE OF THE BIKE”

A look into the differing nature of Shabbat and the Festivals

BY RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN

There are special days that we celebrate that we call Shabbat and Festivals (*Chagim*). Shabbat is every seventh day and the Festivals are scattered throughout the year. They are all holy days on which certain mundane activities are not allowed. However there is a fundamental and essential difference between Shabbat and the Festivals.

Picture a bicycle wheel. It has a rim and spokes. The rim is connected to the center of the wheel by the spokes. And each point on the rim is connected to the point next to it on the rim – thereby forming the circumference of the wheel.

The Jewish People are like all the points along the rim of the wheel. We are a nation of individuals who have a special relationship to all other members of our nation. We are all equidistant from the center since we are all equal.

However, besides the special relationship to others, we also have a direct “spoke-like” relationship with G-d. Each of us has a direct connection to the Center.

Shabbat is a day of rest, when the emphasis is on each individual having an opportunity to reflect on his or her relationship with G-d and purpose in this world. Each of us is a point on the rim with a spoke that connects us to the Center.

The Festivals — Succot, Passover and Shavuot — highlight a different aspect of our Judaism. They are times for us to unite together and observe these days as one Jewish nation, besides our being unique individuals. In this way,

we are all like the points on the rim that are neighbors and connect to each other. And, of course, the entire rim connects to the Center as well.

We see this in the way we celebrate the Festivals differently than Shabbat. For example:

On the Festivals, unlike Shabbat, we are permitted to cook food, thereby easing and encouraging the hosting of guests to share our meals. We are also permitted to carry objects through public areas outside our homes on the Festivals, enabling us to bring food, games, books, etc. to share with our friends and neighbors. On Succot a person can fulfill the mitzvah of dwelling in the succah without owning a personal succah. Many people eat with their neighbors or with the community in the succah built at the local synagogue. When the Temple stood in Jerusalem all Jews from everywhere came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festivals together.

There is a “duality” in the way we connect to G-d. Via both the Shabbat and the Festivals. Shabbat accents the individual’s relationship to G-d (the spoke), and the Festivals emphasize the national connection to G-d (the rim that binds us all to each other, and the rim itself is bound to the center as well). The word for Festival in Hebrew is “Chag”, which means circle — the “rim” of the wheel. The Jewish People as a nation.

May we all be blessed with a healthy, sweet and successful New Year, and may we always enjoy our special gifts of Shabbat and Festivals, and celebrate them joyfully, both individually and as a nation.