

Kohelet Perek 10: Solving the Complexities of Life #11

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbitzin Tziporah Heller

The sages tell us that there are three forces that take a person out of reality: jealousy, desire, and honor.

Jealousy is the illusion that if someone else has more, than I have correspondingly less. In spirituality there are no limitations. We are given exactly what we need to achieve in life. We can be our absolute maximum self regardless of what anyone else has. Lack of control is the voice of desire. Rav Dessler teaches that unlike jealousy, desire can't be eliminated because it has a physical and emotional base. Imagery can help. At the moment when desires arises within you, try to imagine how you would appear out of control or, conversely, attempt to picture yourself in control and feel good about it.

Honor is connected to the body. Needing

appreciation and validation on the deepest level, means not trusting who you are without external acknowledgement. If you need people's validation then you are a prisoner to other people on the basis of what they tell you. Honor takes a person out of intellectual reality, desire lifts him out of physical reality, and jealousy forces him out of emotional reality. The evil inclination then goes right into that empty space and does his work. The heart of a wise person leads him to the good path, the right side, which is stronger, while the desire of the fool takes him to the left side, the road less defined.

Right is chesed (kindness) and left is gevurah (justice). Chesed is the most predominant of the spiritual attributes and gevurah is the most corruptible. A person's heart can steer him towards exploring things and feelings with the

intent of wanting to bring goodness into the world. It can also lead him in the direction of defensiveness and restraint and not wanting to give anything at all. It's better to trust the side of you that wants to give and make things good, than to trust the part of you that demands justice, because the desire for justice is easily corruptible.

The Baal Hatanya teaches that the heart has two ventricles. While the right side is empty, the left side is full of blood. The right side is the good side of the person, the part that gives itself over to Hashem. The left side is the animal side, the part that's driven to pursue its goals. The fool doesn't know the difference between right and left. He will do whatever he wants to do without thinking. His heart and emotions influence his actions.

Exalted Entourage: Sukkot

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

There is a well-known custom of inviting one of the ushpizin (seven shepherds of our nation) into our sukkah, on each night of the holiday of Sukkot Otzar Hatorah. What is this custom based on? The Torah commands, "You shall dwell in booths for a seven day period; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths." The explains the seeming redundancy with the idea that first the great tzadikim are commanded to sit in the sukkot, and then they are to be joined by all of Israel. The Zohar adds a different, somewhat cryptic, interpretation. The subject of the first "sit" is seven days - the seven days shall sit and then be joined by all of Bnei Yisroel. Each day of the holiday is dedicated to one of the shepherds and all of Israel then joins them.

The Chida suggests that one light an extra candle, or perhaps seven candles, in honor of the special guest of each night. Rabbi Yaakov Hillel quoting the Chida suggests preparing a special chair for the ushpizin, similar to the chair designated for Eliyahu Hanavi at a brit. In fact, notes Nitei Gavriel, there is an allusion to Eliyahu Hanavi in the verse, Basukkot teshvu shivat yamim, whose initials are an

acronym for Tishbi. Some have a custom to decorate the chair while others put sifrei kodesh on it.

Naturally, with such exalted guests, writes the Otzrot Hatorah citing the Shlah Hakodosh, we must behave accordingly in the sukkah, and speak only about Torah ideas so our guests feel comfortable. The Belzer Rebbe adds that the great wives of these leaders accompany them as well. The Netivot Shalom writes that they come from Gan Eden, a place of total spirituality, which is why they can only come to a temporary abode like the sukkah. While the walls of our permanent homes may absorb all the improper speech and untoward behavior of the entire year, writes the Minchat Michoel, the s'chach of the sukkah is the shade of the protection of Hashem and the walls are inherently holy.

Rabbi Leff reminds us that the sukkah represent the clouds of glory that surrounded us at Sinai and then descended on the Mishkan. As such, they signify the bond between the physical and the spiritual. The clouds, like the sukkah, are a temporary manifestation of God's presence. The ultimate

bond, however, is achieved in the World to Come from where our guests have come to visit us. When we sit in the sukkah, we are basking in the joy of being in God's presence.

The Netivot Shalom notes that while the covenant between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael was originally forged at Sinai and the Clouds of Glory surrounded us at that time, that covenant is renewed every year when the world is recreated on Rosh Hashanah. Then we can again draw His presence down to us as we try to repair the world anew. Each of these leaders renewed something in the world. Avraham brought back monotheism and Yitzchak purified the world. Each year on Sukkot, after the world is recreated, we draw upon these characteristics to help us repair the world, and we ask that these seven come down and impart their energies to us so that we can accomplish our mission.

Rabbi Gamliel in Tiv Hamoadim points out that the word nisayon can mean a test, a banner of victory, or flight. These ancient leaders of our nation point the way to the proper response to the challenges we face in our lives, and we

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can draw on their strength. As Rabbi Pincus says, the ushpizin help us jump start into the new realm of the year.

On Sukkot, we invite our seven spiritual ancestors to join us in our joy. But these guests don't eat. How can we then acknowledge their presence? By inviting the poor to our sukkah or giving them financial, spiritual, or emotional support we are taking what we

would otherwise offer these guests and giving it to others. If you keep your celebration focused only on yourself, the ushpizin want no part of it and leave. Your spiritual high must be grounded in reality and must include those less fortunate. It is, after all, Chag Ha'asif, the holiday of gathering the wheat, but the gathering should not be limited to produce, but should include gathering people together in joy.

So let us make our special guests feel welcome. Make each one the center of the conversation of the night dedicated to him, suggests Halekach Vehalebuv. The point of Sukkot is to give hope to people, for just as the Clouds of Glory, surrounded us in the desert, so does Hashem's presence surround us throughout our lives.

Love Beyond Reason #4

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The Shem MiShmuel asks, why on Hoshana Rabba do the *aravot* (willow leaves) play the central role?

The Midrash explains that each of the species represent a different type of Jew. The *etrog* (citron fruit), which has a good flavor and scent, represents the *tzaddik* who has both Torah wisdom and good deeds. The *lulav* (palm branch), which has a good flavor, but no scent, signifies a person with wisdom but no good deeds. The *hadassim* (myrtle branches), which have a good fragrance but no flavor, symbolize a person with good deeds but no wisdom. The *aravot* (willow branches), have neither flavor nor fragrance, which signifies a person who lacks both good deeds and Torah wisdom.

We find a similar idea hidden in the *ketoret* (incense offering). There were eleven spices, one of which was the *chelbana*, which exuded an unpleasant odor. However, when combined with the other ten spices it added a tasteful pungency to the mixture. On Sukkot, we take the four species and symbolically proclaim that every Jew, no matter what level he's at, has something to contribute to *klal Yisrael*.

On Hashana Rabbah, only the *aravot* are

taken. This teaches us the absolute love Hashem has for every Jew, even the most wicked. Hashem chose us, exercising a choice unbound by logic, and he will never abandon us. Our relationship is otherworldly, something that cannot be contained in words. And just as Hashem remains loyal to us, we must love every Jew regardless of his level.

While Yom Kippur is an island of sanctity, isolated from the rest of the year, Hoshana Rabbah contains elements of the weekday. A lot of the influence of Yom Kippur has worn off by the time we get to the end of Sukkot. On Hashana Rabbah, we tell Hashem, "We want to be good, but the complexities of life make it difficult. Give us a free gift and forgive our sins."

During the times of the *beit hamikdash*, the Jews would circle the altar with the *aravot*. This signifies that even if we fall to the lowest depths like the *aravot*, Hashem will lift us to the level of the altar. Large *aravot* were placed on the altar. The *aravot* were offered as a sacrifice, just as we offer our own human weaknesses to Hashem. In a sense Hoshana Rabbah goes beyond Yom Kippur. On this day it is as if Hashem tells us, "My children, you are not lost, despite your failings."

Our sages teach us that Shemini Atzeret, the eighth day of Sukkot, is a holiday of its own. Seven signifies the cycle of nature, while eight represents something supernatural. It's wrong for a person to think, "This is the way I am. I cannot improve." On the contrary, we can transform ourselves because there is something extraordinary beyond nature inside each of us. Torah study, prayer, and kind deeds empower us to repent. While angels remain stagnant, people have the ability to reach unimaginable heights.

When the *beit hamikdash* stood, the Jews would form a human wall and encircle the altar with the four species. A wall is like an environment. There are terrible environments that must be shattered and good environments that must be built. Walking around with the *lulav* and *etrog* is akin to destroying negative barriers. Encircling the altar with the Torah is like erecting a wall of sanctity. The Zohar writes that the female side of the satan is called *yilila*. This also means wailing because sadness is fundamental to evil. The opposite is also true. Therefore, the last day of the holiday is Simchat Torah. Torah signifies *simcha* (happiness). We rejoice with Hashem's love and with the privilege to build a wall of holiness and sanctity to last us through the coming year.