

Sukkot in Our Times

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Summary by Devora Kaye

In this class we will discuss the *Shla Hako-desh's* discourse on *Sukkot*. The four days between *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkos* are days of mercy, a continuation of *Yom Kippur*. It says in the *Navi* that although *Yovel* was sounded for the slaves on the 10th of the month which is *Yom Kippur*, for the slaves it was considered like a new year, a *Rosh Hashana*, because they were beginning a new life. We learn from this, that sometimes *Yom Kippur* could be like *Rosh Hashana*, a new beginning. And if so, ten days from there takes us to *Hoshana Rabbah*. Hashem gives us till then to repent and to transform judgement to mercy.

The Days of Awe are called that way because you can't easily change things afterwards. Where Hashem is taking you is where you signed on you wanted to go. With this in mind, let's explore the backdrop of *Sukkot*. The holiday is seven days. The *Shla* divides it in two unique segments, six and one. Six relate to the six extremities on a cube, top, bottom, and four sides. And then there's the inside. The six aspects of being that we call surface are the six days of *Sukkot*. The inside, the seventh, is the last day. On *Sukkot* we celebrate the feeling of closeness and being enveloped in Hashem's embrace which we can only sense if we went through the Days of Awe in the right way. The *Gra* writes that the clouds of glory in the desert departed after the sin of the golden calf. After Moshe prayed it came back. On *Sukkot* we celebrate being enveloped by Hashem. Picture a brilliant, dazzling light that you can't possibly look at. The one who created this light wanted to be known so He placed a screen with perfora-

tions. There are different ways in which Hashem lets himself be known and we will discuss seven of them. No matter where you are, whether you have an actual *sukka* or not, the holiness of the days of *Sukkot* is there. Seven spiritual guests who saw through the perforations and whose experiences could give us a sense of seeing not only the shield and the difficulties, but the light that radiates through, visit us in our *sukka*.

There's a prayer in *selichot*, *Mi she'ana*- The One who answered. We pray, "The one who answered Avraham on the temple mount, He'll answer us." You could only answer if there's a question. What was Avraham asking at the *akeida*? Who will worship on this mountain if Yitzchak will be gone? You promised my descendant would be so numerous like the stars in heaven and the dust of the earth. How will this happen? The answer is it will happen far more than we can fathom. Hashem's chesed is greater than imaginable.

The second night symbolizes Yitzchak. On the altar, Yitzchak prayed that he be worthy of his act of *mesirat nefesh*. His *middah* is *gevura*, being strong in the sense that Hashem is strong, holding back and giving us what we need when and how we need it. Yitzchak asked, how do I know I'm worthy? Hashem answered, you will be the one who carries on the heritage. Every one of us is capable of *mesirat nefesh*.

Yaakov's *midda* was *tiferet*. Truth is anything permanent and inclusive. Every Jew has the *Torah* as their legacy and is obligated to know

it, to see truth and not be deceived by life's challenges.

Yosef's question in prison was- How can I be the person you want me to be in this dungeon? By being a person who's human and developed enough to be sensitive to a stranger's pain, when he himself had every reason to be embittered, he answered his question. His ultimate freedom wasn't accomplished through maneuvering but by becoming the person Hashem wanted him to be in the circumstances He placed him.

Aharon stood between the living and the dead trying to stop the plague and Hashem answered him. We see ourselves as separate just as branches of a tree but in truth we all come from a single root which is Hashem. Being a man of peace means viewing people as stemming from one root and relating to their inner divine spark.

The seventh day is hinted at in the name *sukka* which comes from the word *sach* -to pour forth. Hashem pours forth something of himself into every person mixing all of these different *middot* to express *rachamim* or in Kabbalistic terms *binah* -truly understanding the person. Hashem gives us exactly what we need and can digest. The recipient is *malchut*, letting Hashem rule and trusting in His rule. *David Hamelech* epitomized this. David and Shlomo asked Hashem, will you answer our prayers when we are confused, when we don't know what will be. And Hashem said yes. May we merit the *simcha* of *Sukkot* and the joy of being enveloped in Hashem's embrace.

The Second Pillar- Avodah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

Chazal tell us that the world stands on three things, *Torah*, *avoda*, and *gemilat chasadim*. Avos D'rav Nosson explains that when we did the *avodah* (service) in the *Beit Hamikdash*, the land was blessed. But if we didn't do His will, there was no *bracha*. The Midrash tells us that this *avodah* refers to the morning and evening *korbon tamid*. The morning *tamid* atoned for any sins committed at night. The evening *tamid* atoned for sins by day. The *menachot* brought blessing to the wheat, the *omer* to the earth, the *bikurim* to the fruit, and the *shtei halechem* to the world. We see that the *avodah* in the *Beit Hamikdash* brought

bracha and when it was destroyed, the situation changed. The Gemara in *Brachot* tells us that the world is sustained by the kindness of Hashem but the *barei lev* receive blessing from Hashem because He's indebted to them. The *avodah* in the *Beit Hamikdash* made Hashem obligated to send blessing and rain in its time. Now that the *Beit Hamikdash* is destroyed we have to come on to the mercy of Hashem to receive what we need.

Avodah can also mean *avodah shebalev*, work of the heart. The Gemara in *Megilah* says that the *Beit Hamikdash* of today is the *beit*

haknesset (synagogue) and prayer is instead of *korbonot*. It's not just reciting the words. One's mind and heart must concentrate on what one says. This *avodah* requires a *makom kavuah*, a designated place where one always prays which helps for concentration and shows *anivut* (modesty). The Gemara in *Megila* cites an opinion that one is allowed to sell a *Beit Midrash*, a place of Torah learning, to a *Beit Knesset*. *Torah* doesn't require a *makom*. Wherever a Jew finds himself, he is obligated to learn. However, prayer requires a designated place and is an important cornerstone upon which the world rests.

Yaakov's Yerusha: Sukkos

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

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Our Sages suggest two rationales for the observance of *Sukkot*. First, these temporary shelters are to remind us of the actual temporary shelters we resided in during our forty years in the desert. Second, it is meant to remind us of the clouds of Glory with which Hashem protected us in the desert. Additionally, the Tur notes that *Sukkot* is associated with Yaakov who "journeyed to *Sukkot* and built himself a house, and for his livestock he made shelters/*sukkot*; he therefore called the name of the place *Sukkot*." Throughout history, Esau is associated with the Satan, always trying to lead us to sin to our destruction, a goal he was not able to achieve with his brother Yaakov. The Shvilei Pinchas notes that when we dwell in the *sukkah*, it protects us from the Satan whom we have just defeated on *Yom Kippur*, just as Yaakov defeated Esau and his guardian angel. Hashem wants to rejoice with us, Yaakov's descendants, as He rejoiced with Yaakov in his home. But our past victory through the teshuvah process does not guarantee that the Satan will not return. Hence, we are grateful for Hashem's protection.

Adam was not only created on *Rosh Hashanah* but sinned by eating the forbidden fruit on that very day. With that he brought death into the world. Every death since then, is one for which Adam is held accountable, albeit it was similar to an "accidental killing." Adam was exiled from Eden, just as later the inadvertent killer would be forced into exile into a city of refuge. The Zohar implies that Yaakov was a reincarnation of Adam, and therefore was forced into exile in Choron to continue the atonement for Adam. Similarly, each of us carries within us some responsibility for Adam's sin, as Adam's soul contained within it every soul. Each of us has that same battle, whether to follow Hashem's command unquestioningly or substitute our own judgment for His. When we enter our *sukkot*, we are symbolically going into exile, as did Adam, and receiving Hashem's protection.

The Gemara suggests that the materials for the schach be the leftovers from the vines or from the wheat, for our Sages have identified the forbidden fruit as either grapes or wheat. When we use these for a *mitzvah*, we are rectifying the sin of Adam. Similarly, *Kiddush* over wine and *Hamotzi* over wheat bread on *Shabbat* also serve as our continued atonement for Adam's sin.

When *Bnei Yisroel* stood at Har Sinai and proclaimed, "We will do and we will listen," accepting the *Torah* without question, they returned to the pure state of Adam before the sin. When they sinned with the golden calf, they hoped that having a physical representation of God would enhance their ability to worship Him. Their reasoning was flawed, as was Adam's, for Hashem had not commanded this. It was then that Hashem removed the Clouds of Glory that had protected them. But when *Bnei Yisroel* sought atonement and Hashem commanded them to build the Tabernacle, they accepted these commands joyously. Then Hashem responded by returning the Clouds of Glory to surround *Bnei Yisroel*. Our observance of *Sukkot* celebrates the return of this protection, notes the Gra, not the initial protection of when we first left Egypt. Similarly, when we followed Hashem into the desert, completely dependent and faithful to Him, it was further proof of our unquestioning loyalty, continues the Chazon Lamoed, and is also an atonement for Adam's sin and cause for celebrating. We followed Hashem with the same temimut and purity that our Patriarch Yaakov, the *ish tam*, is known for.

An important part of the Yom Kippur service during the time of the Temple was the ritual of the two goats. One would be sacrificed to Hashem on the altar while the other was sent with a designated priest into the desert where it would be thrown off a cliff to the jagged stones below. The goat in Hebrew is a *sa'ir*, another name for Esau. The *Matnas Chaim*

notes that just as Esau represents the materialism of this world and the negation of the world to come, so does this goat represent that philosophy. We distance ourselves from this by throwing it away from us into the abyss. We pray for the connection to Hashem, a connection Esau tries to sever through his continued influence over our materialistic human desire. Our leaving our homes to dwell in the *sukkah* reminds us of the impermanence of this world and its comforts, writes Rabbi Kanatopsky z"l. True joy lies in our relationship with Hashem rather than in more possessions.

Rabbi Heiman cites the Baal Haturim who notes that the spelling of *Sukkot*, missing a "vov," appears only in two instances in the Torah. Here with Yaakov arriving at *Sukkot* and building *sukkot*, and when *Bnei Yisroel* left Egypt and traveled from Ramses to *Sukkot*. When Yaakov was approaching Esau, he was experiencing his *Rosh Hashana* moment, would he live or would he die. Upon surviving this ordeal, with Esau expressing love for him and then leaving him, Yaakov wants to express his gratitude to Hashem. He calls the place *Sukkot* in gratitude and full faith that he can now sit without fear. This is the same faith that *Bnei Yisroel* exhibited when they arrived at *Sukkot*. They were able to sojourn there without the fear that the Egyptians would immediately pursue them. The Clouds of Glory were Hashem's response to *Bnei Yisroel*'s faith in blindly following Him and implicitly following Him into the desert. Our *sukkot* on *Sukkot* are a reflection of Yaakov's faith and of the faith of *Bnei Yisroel*, and a testament that we recognize that this world is but temporary, a portal to the Eternal World.

May we merit to feel Hashem's protection and embrace, and to build our bayit and our *sukkot* as places where Hashem can reside with us in joy.