

Special Edition

בס"ד



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מועצת הרבנים דשיקגו

Divrei Torah

Sukkos, Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah 5785



Rav Yona
Reiss



Rabbi A. M.
Abramson



Rabbi Zvi
Engel



Rabbi Ephraim
Friedman



Rabbi Joel
Gutstein



Rabbi Boruch
Hertz



Rabbi Chaim
Pollock



Rabbi Daniel J.
Raccah

2701 W. Howard Street | Chicago, Illinois 60645
773.465.3900 | office@crcweb.org | www.crcweb.org



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The Sukkah: A Spiritual Haven

Rabbi Ephraim Friedman

Rosh Kollel, Ezra Franco Sephardic Kollel, Aventura, FL



Most of us are probably familiar with the explanation of the *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 625) as to why we are commanded to dwell in *sukkos* during the month of *Tishrei* and not *Nissan*, although the reason behind the *mitzva* is to commemorate the "*sukkos*" Hashem Yisborach provided us with in the desert upon leaving Egypt in *Nissan*. He explains that to build an airy hut in which one can sit comfortably in the nice weather which typifies *Nissan* is not unusual, and doesn't display a desire or attempt at fulfilling a *mitzva*. In *Tishrei*, however, when the rainy season begins along with colder temperatures, leaving the comfort of one's home to sleep and eat in a makeshift hut shows exactly that.

The Vilna Gaon, however, in his commentary to *Shir HaShirim* (1:3) offers a different explanation. What were the "*sukkos*" of the desert? According to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer (*Sukkah* 11b) they were the ענני הכבוד (Clouds of Glory) which traveled through the desert with the Jewish people providing comfort and protection from harm of all forms. Although the ענני הכבוד were given to the Jews in *Nissan* soon after their exodus from Egypt, they didn't remain very long, since about three months later, after the חטא העגל (the sin of the Golden Calf), the clouds departed, and were restored only upon the construction of the *Mishkan* which served as an atonement for that sin.

Now, says the Vilna Gaon, when precisely did construction begin on the *Mishkan*? Let's figure it out. Moshe Rabeinu descended from Har Sinai on the tenth of *Tishrei* (Yom Kippur) having achieved Hashem's willingness to forgive His people for their sin. On the eleventh, Moshe informed them of the new commandment to build a *Mishkan*. The next two days (the twelfth and thirteenth) they brought their gold and silver etc. to contribute to the project (as the Torah states in *Shmos* 36:3 "בבוקר בבוקר"). On the fourteenth, those in charge of the construction gathered all the donations and sorted them out. Finally, on the fifteenth of *Tishrei*, construction of the *Mishkan* began, and at that point the ענני הכבוד were restored! For that reason, concludes the Vilna Gaon, the festival of *Sukkos* was very appropriately designed to commence on the fifteenth of *Tishrei*, and not in *Nissan*, to commemorate the return of the ענני הכבוד.

A question, however, still remains. It is true that the original gift of ענני הכבוד was temporary and not long lasting. But the return of the Clouds in *Tishrei* was also not permanent, lasting only until the death of Aharon HaKohen in the desert. Why, then, would the Torah choose to establish the commemorative festival based on their reinstatement and not based on their original appearance?

Rav Shneur Kotler z"l (*Noam Siach*)

Yomim Noraim pg. 342) raises this question and suggests a beautiful answer, based on the words of Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato in *Derech Hashem* (Sect. 4, 4:2). Rav Luzzato there explains that the function of the ענני הכבוד in the desert was not limited to providing Bnei Yisroel physical protection and safety. Rather, they were of tremendous spiritual benefit as well, by secluding the people from the influences of all other nations and elevating them above a mundane material lifestyle, helping them live with a constant, solid connection to Hashem Yisborach and reach the spiritual level He desires.

The spiritual aspect of the ענני הכבוד is something which is not totally lost, although the Clouds themselves are no longer here. In the words of the *Derech Hashem*:

שאמנם אור קדושה נמשך מלפניו יתברך
ומקיף כל צדיק מישראל ומבדילו מכל שאר בני
אדם ומנשאו למעלה מהם וכו'.

That is, a special sacred light emanates

from the Almighty which encompasses every truly pious Jew and elevates him above ordinary people.

ומתחדש דבר זה בישראל בחג הסוכות על ידי
הסוכה.

Dwelling in the sukkah has the power to renew and refresh this powerful Divine light.

We learn from the words of the *Derech Hashem* that the spiritual component of the ענני הכבוד which was restored on the fifteenth of *Tishrei* is still present to an extent in the *sukkah* we build each year. The actual Clouds may be gone, but their power to serve as a spiritual haven and to promote greatness and closeness to G-d was transferred into the *sukkah* which every Jew can construct and use.

The return of the Clouds in *Tishrei* was indeed permanent to an extent. It behooves us to ponder this thought and make full use of the *sukkah* as a location and opportunity to strengthen our connection to our Creator to stay with us throughout the year. ■



Sukkos: A Celebration of Mindfulness

Rabbi Joel Gutstein

Rabbi, Congregation Yehuda Moshe



When I was a young child, I used to watch Gilligan's Island, a sitcom about seven castaways who are constantly trying to escape from being shipwrecked on a desert island. Rather unusual events happened during every episode. Gilligan was the central figure of every show. He was a good-hearted individual, but his head was sometimes in the clouds.

If we sat back and analyzed our families, we would probably find that Gilligan's Island is a microcosm of our lives. We do silly things... strange events happen... and we can just sit back and laugh about them.

Our family is no different. We probably can write the script for the show. One year, two of our children went to buy *lulavim* and *esrogim*. They each purchased their own set of the four species and began driving home. Shortly thereafter, one of them noticed that they had their *lulavim*, *hadassim* and *aravos*, but their *esrogim* were missing. The *esrogim* were not in the car.

Suddenly, one of them remembered that before putting their *lulav* sets in the car, they had placed them on the roof of the car. They had driven away with the *esrogim* on top of the car and not in the car. So, they drove back. One of them found his *esrog* in the box on the street about three blocks from where they bought it. That *esrog* was still in good condition. The other one found his *esrog* about one block from the purchase location. Unfortunately, that *esrog* was no longer acceptable and he had to buy another one.

Regarding the Holiday of *Sukkos*, the Torah teaches us that we must keep our minds and heads clear and use our knowledge to analyze and recognize what we are doing and why we are doing it. The Torah (*Vayikra* 23:43) teaches us that we sit in the *sukkah* "in order that your generation will know that I made the Children of Israel dwell in huts when I took them out from Egypt." Rashi comments that the huts are the Clouds of Glory that surrounded the Jews in the desert.

There is a famous question asked by the *Ba'al Haturim*. Since the *mitzva* of *Sukkah* is a reminder of the clouds that protected the Jewish people upon their exodus from Egypt in *Nissan*, *Sukkos* should be celebrated in the spring (when we celebrate Pesach). It would also make everything easier. You would eat *matza* and *maror* in the *Sukkah*, you would not have to clean the house, and you would take care of two holidays with one celebration! Why not?

In addition, on both holidays there is an obligation to go to the Bais Hamikdash... both last seven days... there is an obligation to eat meat on both holidays... we say *Hallel* on both... both begin on the 15th of the month... they have so much in common, including the reason – the Exodus from Egypt. Why not just put the two together?

There was a football player from the University of Nebraska who was not known for his devotion to his studies. One time he was asked what the "N" represented on his football helmet. He responded, "Knowledge"!

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter – the first Rebbe of the Gerer Chasidim and better known as the *Chidushei Harim* – explains that the Torah teaches us that the *mitzva* of *Sukkah* requires דעת – knowledge. All year long people unfortunately commit sins, even though they are unintentional. The Talmud teaches us that a person does not sin unless a spirit of foolishness enters him.

After Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur we have achieved atonement and have been cleansed of our sins. Therefore, this spirit of foolishness is no longer within us, and we have a clear knowledge of G-dliness and what G-d wants from us. So, at this time

of the year we are mentally and spiritually prepared for the Holiday of *Sukkos*.

Now that *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* have passed, we must maintain the frame of mind on *Kavod Yom Tov* – honoring *Yom Tov*. We must try to maintain the higher mental and spiritual state that we have achieved over the holidays.

And now that the Holiday of *Sukkos* has arrived, we should apply our knowledge to the gifts that G-d has given us – the *mitzvos* of *lulav* and *esrog* and *Sukkah* – rescue ourselves from the desert island of foolishness and continue to build on the spiritual momentum of this holiday season. ■



Celebrating Simchas Torah this Year

Rav Yona Reiss

Av Beth Din



How do we prepare properly to celebrate *Simchas Torah* this year? This is a question that many have asked, still reeling from the devastating tragedy of the massacre in Israel that claimed the lives of over one thousand Jews last *Simchas Torah* in what has been described as the most horrific assault against Jews since the time of the Holocaust.

Of course, there have been celebrations of *Simchas Torah* even in the most difficult of circumstances, such as the *hakafos* observed in the home of Rabbi Menachem Ziemba *Hy"d* in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, when Rabbi Yehuda Leib Orlean, a Torah teacher, found one of the very few surviving children at the time, and scooped him up in dance and song, proclaiming, as both a wish and forecast of a better future, “a young boy dances with the Torah!” More recently, Rabbi Norman Lamm wrote an essay in 1973 during the early days of the Yom Kippur war in which he noted that our expression of celebration during *Simchas Torah* during wartime bespeaks faith and belief in Hashem, and our ability to transcend sadness through our joy of Torah.

The Ponovizher Rav provides us with additional insight in terms of appreciating the meaning of *Simchas Torah* during this time. According to his understanding, it is simply inconceivable for a Jew to live life, even on the battlefield, without having the song of Torah on his lips.

He derives this idea from a *Gemora* at

the beginning of *Megillah* (3a). The *Gemora*, based on verses in *Sefer Yehoshua* (5:13-14), describes how, during the war at Jericho, Yehoshua was approached by a menacing looking figure wielding a sharp sword. After Yehoshua inquired, “Are you with us or with our enemies,” the figure identified himself as an angel of Hashem, saying that he had come to chastise Yehoshua since “yesterday you did not bring the daily afternoon offering, and now you have failed to engage in Torah learning.” Yehoshua inquired, “for which offense have you specifically come?” The angel enigmatically responded *עתה באתי* – meaning that “I have come now,” which the *Gemora* understands as indicating that the actionable offense was the failure to learn Torah. Immediately, Yehoshua jumped into action and engaged in deep Torah learning.

As the *Tosafot* explain (*Megillah* 3a, s.v. *atah*), this response by the angel of *עתה באתי* was understood as a reference to Torah learning based on the verse in *Parshas Vayelech* (31:19), recited each year around the time of Rosh Hashanah, that articulates the *mitzva* of writing a *Sefer Torah* through the same term *עתה* in the phrase *ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת ולמדה בפהם*. *את בני ישראל שימה בפהם*. Significantly, this verse describes Torah as a *שירה* – as a song. Thus, the angel indicated to Yehoshua through this verse that he had come armed with a sword due to the people’s dereliction

of their obligation to learn Torah which is specifically compared to a song.

The Ponovizher Rav derived from this *Tosafot* that the message of the angel was that Torah learning must be viewed like a שירה – a song. This is precisely why there was no excuse for not learning Torah even though the Jewish people were then at war. Someone who has a song on his lips will sing it in all types of circumstances, as in the well-known Walt Disney song, “whistle while you work.” Thus, the angel was pointing out to Yehoshua that Jewish soldiers on the battlefield should continue to learn Torah even while engaged in battle, the same way that a person who enjoys a particular song will sing it all the time.

In the aftermath of the October 7 tragedy last year, it occurred to me that we could supplement the message of the Ponovizher Rav with an additional idea. Whenever an army goes out to battle, the soldiers maintain their spirits and focus by singing a battlefield song that affirms their values and ideals. For example, the American marine corps during World War II marched to the song, “from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli, we fight our country’s battles in the air, on land and sea.” In this sense, the angel was reminding Yehoshua that the Torah is not a sidelight during times of battle, but rather belongs very much on the battlefield as the rallying song of the Jewish people that serves to inspire and reinforce the troops.

Amongst the most powerful images during this war has been the sight of so many Israeli soldiers on their army bases caressing holy *seforim* in their hands, learning Torah alongside each other as they prepare for their next missions. In addition to the Torah learning, the Israeli soldiers have also inspired countless Jews with their dedicated passion to wearing

tzitzis, showing a love for the *mitzvot* of the Torah during this challenging time. These actions are manifestations of the “song of Torah” driving the troops to success in their military pursuits.

Moreover, as we approach *Simchas Torah* for the year 5785, I believe that there is yet another message that directly addresses the quandary of how one can express joy on this selfsame occasion as last year’s bloodshed. The angel was not only reminding Yehoshua that Torah is our battle song, but also that even during a time of war, we are beckoned to embrace the Torah in a spirit of song and happiness. The majesty of Torah enables us to always be uplifted and inspired through its melody, to be driven to dance and sing because of the beauty of its presence in our lives.

Thus, when we dance on *Simchas Torah*, we should not view it as a contradiction to last year’s tragedy, but rather as an affirmation of the legacy of those who have given up their lives to sanctify the name of Heaven so that the song of Torah can march forward. When we dance this year, those who have lived and died for the Jewish people will spiritually be carrying us on their shoulders.

The Tur in his introduction of the laws of *Rosh Hashanah* (*Orach Chaim*, *Siman* 581) contrasts the attitude of a defendant who has been called before an earthly magistrate for judgment to the manner that the Jewish people appear before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, the day of Divine Judgment. The earthly defendant shows up dark and despondent, unshaven and disheveled, trembling in anticipation of the awaited punishment. In contradistinction, we adorn ourselves in our nicest clothing, and we bathe, shave and groom ourselves exquisitely, confident in a positive judgment.

Following this description, the Tur

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Reflections

Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Abramson

Menahel, cRc Beth Din | Rabbi, Congregation Anshe Motele



In the very first paragraph of the liturgical poem composed by Eleazar Kalir in the upcoming prayer *Tefillat Geshem* of *Shemini Atzeret* there is mention of the angel of rain forming “water to crown the valley with green.” The English translation does little justice to the poetic words “*mayim ibim*.” This stanza is both a reference to the providence of Hashem, and the faith we have that Hashem will crown the land of Israel by not withholding rain. I always pay particular attention to this *piyut*, for I had the privilege about a dozen years ago to visit, together with the JUF Rabbinic Action Committee, a small youth *aliyah* village called *Ibim*, just two kilometers from *Sderot* and *Kfar Aza*, scene of the recent and most horrific massacre since the Shoah.

These words were recited by the *Shaliach Tzibur* in synagogues throughout *Eretz Yisroel* and the diaspora on *Shemini Atzeret* at the very same moment that the Jews at the border of *Gaza* were massacred. Words cannot depict the utter destruction left behind, and I need not dwell on the indescribable acts of brutality. Like *Eisenhower* marching the German public to witness firsthand the horrors of *Buchenwald*, we *cRc* and *RCA* Rabbanim, witnessed firsthand the utter inhumanity perpetrated against the Jewish people on that fateful day.

Yet what I also remember during my visit was a vibrant country united against our common enemy. We saw the energy of the people who despite the constant rocket attacks were proud citizens of Israel and

were welcoming of our visit. I recall Rabbi *Rimon* encouraging the Rabbanim and the *chayalim* with courage and resolve. And I remember how we prayed together with and for the *Chayalai Tzava Haganna L'Yisroel*.

Ironically our JUF Rabbinic visit to Israel twelve years ago began with a visit to the killing fields of *Babi Yar*. And in past trips we saw the remnants of *Worms*, *Speyer* and *Mayence*, home to the greatest *Yeshivot* in Jewish history and scenes of some of the most horrific pogroms, and as described in the *selichot* and *kinot*, as an “*Akadet Yitzhak*.” We visited *Treblinka*, *Majdenek*, *Auschwitz*. We prayed at the shoe memorial at the *Danube* in *Budapest* where the fascist *Arrow Cross* militiamen shot Jews and threw their bodies into the river in 1944 and 1945. We explored *Theresienstadt*, like the *Red Cross* during *World War II*, only to discover the subterfuge of the Nazi executioners. We walked the same steps of the *Rambam* and the *Ramban* and their fellow Jews in *Spain* who represented the *Golden age* only to face expulsion by their *Jesuit* oppressors. We visited the *Hypercacher* *Kosher* supermarket in *Paris*, scene of a *Muslim* extremist siege in 2015. Never would we imagine that they would witness such a catastrophe in the Jewish State.

And still Israel is a place of life, vibrancy, smiles, and the future: Parents with their children going to the park, soldiers on leave patriotically awaiting orders to return to combat, Israeli food kiosks serving *falafel* and *shawarma* and rows and rows

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All This Happened Already and We Have the Tefila To Respond

Rabbi Zvi Engel

Rabbi, Congregation Or Torah, Skokie



It sounds eerily familiar: a merciless foe invades the Negev, snatches hundreds of Jews, and sets their town on fire; upon discovery of the catastrophe, everyone weeps uncontrollably; grief stricken family members whose loved ones were abducted turn against leadership, enraged by the security failures that led to the disaster; later, Jewish soldiers embark on a rescue mission, striking down the perpetrators to destroy their ability to carry out such an assault ever again.

This story is not new; it is three millennia old, and it took place in the vicinity of the Gaza Envelope, as recorded at the end of *Shmuel Alef*. The site of the Biblical town of Tziklag lies just North of the road connecting contemporary Israeli towns Netivot and Ofakim. In the same place where the families of David Hamelech and his soldiers lived when the horde of Amalekim descended upon them, Hamas death squads drove in white pickup trucks searching for targets last *Shimini Atzeret - Simchat Torah*.

As the *navi* relates, David Hamelech and his men return to Tziklag after several days away. They find the town burnt. All of the women and children are gone, taken captive by the marauders. Perhaps we are closer to grasping the anguished description of the inconsolable wailing of those who happened upon the devastation in Tziklag in the wake of the horrors of 10/7:

וַיִּשָּׂא דָוִד וְהָעָם אֶשְׁרֵי אִתּוֹ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ עַד
אֲשֶׁר אָיִן בָּהֶם כֹּחַ לִבְכוֹת: (שמואל א ל, ד)

And David and the people with him raised their voices, and wept until they had

no more strength to cry.

Compounding his own grief over the loss of his immediate family, David Hamelech must absorb the enraged reaction of his own men, who blame him for the tragedy:

וַתִּצָר לְדָוִד מְאֹד כִּי אָמְרוּ הָעָם לְסָקְלוֹ כִּי מָרָה
נָפְשׁ כָּל הָעָם אִישׁ עַל בְּנָיו וְעַל בְּנֹתָיו וַיִּתְחַזֵּק דָּוִד
בְּה' אֱלֹהָיו: (שמואל א בראק ל, ו)

And David was extremely distressed, for the people threatened to stone him, for the entire people was embittered, each one over his sons and daughters; and David found strength in Hashem his G-d.

When the shocking news of a catastrophic event first reaches us, we lose our bearings. We feel disoriented. Hearing reports that beggar belief, we feel as if the calamity is without parallel or precedent. We lack the mental language to integrate it into our understanding of the world before. Yet, as those initial waves recede, a principle of *Chazal* comes back into focus: *maaseh avot siman labanim – the actions of the fathers is a sign to the children*. As the Ramban develops the concept sourced in *Chazal*, each step in the lives of Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imenu provides signs for events happening later in Jewish history (see Ramban to *Bereishit* 12:6). *Maaseh avot* does not mean that every detail of these stories will line up perfectly, nor that the strategic or tactical decisions of today are determined by those of the past. Rather, it enables us to view past events as a signpost on the road of Jewish history. *Maaseh avot*

means the uncanny realization that *we have been here before*. And we have been here before, in time and in space. This remains a great source of strength and comfort.

Siman labanim means *this was the direction our forebears took*. It provides guidance now in terms of our spiritual response. In his halachic guide for Jewish soldiers, *Machaneh Yisrael* (Ch. 39), the Chafetz Chaim reads the response of David Hamelech to his impossible situation, וַיִּתְחַזַּק וַיִּתְחַזַּק – *and David found strength in Hashem his G-d*, as the source for the call to a Jewish soldier to strengthen his trust in Hashem, even if facing overwhelming enemy forces. It is this *bitachon* that leads to Divine reassurance of success for David in his dual mission of pursuit and rescue. In other words, in line with *maaseh avot siman labanim*, the Chafetz Chaim urges soldiers to take guidance from David Hamelech himself.

Consider that the Chafetz Chaim wrote his work in 1881 for Jewish soldiers conscripted into the Russian and Polish armies. Could he even imagine the reality of our time? Instead of Jews forced to fight in foreign armies, struggling to retain some modicum of *shmirat Torah umitzvot* in a spiritually hostile environment, today *chayalim* wear *tzitzit* under their armored vests and run towards the source of fire to defend *Am Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael*. They rush in like modern versions of *kivnei maron - k'cheylot shel Beit David - like the legions of the House of David (Rosh Hashana 18a)*. Many of these *chayalim* go into battle carrying *siddurim, chumashim, gemarot* and other *sifrei kodesh* in their pockets. With *Sefer Tehilim* on their lips, they seek guidance in real-time from their *rabeim* via WhatsApp from the front lines.

David Hamelech ran. They run. He led. They lead. He fought. They fight. *Maaseh avot siman labanim*. Before entering

battle, David Hamelech sought counsel through the special *efod* containing the *urim vtumim*—today we are sorely lacking, unable to access *ruach hakodesh* – the Divine inspiration it once provided – yet every *chayal* in active combat wears an *efod*, the modern Hebrew name for armored vests. Crucially, in the war against Amalek and to free the hostages, David Hamelech *davened* throughout. According to R 'Yehoshua ben Levi, his *tefilla* was Tehilim 27:

לְדָוִד ד' אֲרִי וְיִשְׁעֵי מַמְי אִרְא ד' מְעוֹז חַיִּי
מַמְי אֶפְחָד (תהלים כז, א)

Of David. Hashem is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Hashem is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

ר' יהושע בן לוי פתר קרא בעמלקים בקרוב עלי מרעים אלו עמלקים שנא' (שמואל א ל) ועמלקים פשוט אל נב ואל צקלג לאכול את בשרי ושתי נשי דוד נשבו צרי ואויבי לי (שם/שמואל א' ל) ויכם דוד מהנשף ועד הערב למחרתם...מכאן ואילך אמר דוד אם תחנה עלי מחנה של עמלקים לא יירא לבי אם תקום עלי מלחמה של עמלקים בואת אני בוטח (ויקרא רבה כא :ג)

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi interpreted the *pasuk* regarding the Amalekim. "When evildoers approach me," these are the Amalekim, as it is stated: "The Amalekim raided the Negev and Tziklag" (I Samuel 30:1). "To consume my flesh" – "David's two wives were taken captive" (I Samuel 30:5). "My foes and my adversaries are mine" – "David smote them from twilight until evening of the next day" (I Samuel 30:17)... From here on, David said: "If a camp" – of Amalekim "besieges me, my heart will not fear." "If war" – with Amalekim – comes upon me, in this [bezot] I will put my trust" (Psalms 27:3).

L'David Hashem Ori is ours these days. Reciting it twice daily in this season for our
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Simchas Torah – The Power of Joy

Rabbi Baruch Hertz
Rabbi, Bnei Ruven



As we approach *Simchas Torah* this year, we are confronted with a challenging duality. We are taught by our sages and our Chassidic masters that this is the most joyous day of the year. And yet here we are—in the middle of a hard war, mourning the lives of the thousands lost and so many hostages still in captivity. (I hope by the time this reaches print, they will be freed.) It's true we've seen the hand of Hashem in many miracles, but we still need to see complete miracles. People ask me how can we rejoice in the midst of this sorrow knowing the tragedies and atrocities that surround us? This year maybe we should show some seriousness on that day and do some minimal dancing. I would like to share two stories that personally inspired me and can maybe help us reconcile these complex emotions.

A *chassid* once traveled to one of the Chabad rebbes. He related to the Rebbe that his deceased teacher had appeared to him in a dream with a frightening message: it had been decreed in heaven that one of this *chassid's* children would pass away that year. The Rebbe heard his words, sighed, and remained silent – a reaction that certainly did not bode well.

As it was shortly before the holiday of Sukkot, the *chassid* remained there until after the holiday. When it was time for him to return home, he approached the Rebbe for his *bracha*. The Rebbe happily assured him that his family would be well. “Besides,” the rebbe asked, “what special *mitzva* did you do on *Simchas Torah*?”

The *chassid* recounted how during the *hakafot* he was standing on the side crying when he remembered that, after all, it was *Simchas Torah*! He washed his face and joined the dancing, ignoring his dread.

“You should know,” the rebbe said, “this is what caused the change in your situation.”

Another story: Kfar Chabad – which is now a sizeable community in the heart of Israel – began as just a tiny settlement. It was founded in 1949 on the ruins of an abandoned Arab village and populated, incongruously, by Russian Lubavitcher Chassidim. In April 1956, Arab *fedayeen* (terrorists armed and trained mostly by the Egyptian government) entered and attacked the village, leaving five children and one teacher dead at Beit Sefer Lemelacha, murdered in cold blood while they prayed.

Four days after the tragedy, news spread throughout the village: A telegram from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson had arrived! The entire village, men, women and children, assembled in the village square to hear the Rebbe's reply. And the Rebbe was characteristically succinct. The telegram contained a single sentence – three Hebrew words – but these three words sufficed to save the village from disintegration and its inhabitants from despair. *Behemshech habinyan tinacheimu*, the Rebbe wrote. “By your continued building will you be comforted.”

The Chassidim of Kfar Chabad now had a firm grasp on their future: they knew what they had to do. They must build! The Rebbe said to build! And that by their continued

building they will be comforted! That very night the village elders held a meeting to discuss how the Rebbe's directive might be implemented. After a short discussion, a decision was reached: a vocational school would be built where children from disadvantaged backgrounds would be taught the printing trade. On the very spot where the blood was spilled, the building would be raised.

The tragedy of *Simchas Torah* happened on the most joyous day of the year. What they wanted to destroy was our joy and

happiness. The way we combat this is by *responding* with unprecedented joy and happiness channeled with unmatched energy. We embrace this *Simchas Torah* dancing in unity with our brethren in *Eretz Yisroel* and Jews all around the world. We dance together and we commit to building and strengthening our Torah and *mitzvos*, our institutions, our families, and Torah values like never before. Let us daven and hope that we will build to the coming of Moshiach, which will bring the ultimate joy. ■

Celebrating Simchas Torah this Year *(continued from page 8)*

states that the Jewish people on Rosh Hashana "know that Hashem will perform a miracle for them." This seems odd since in general we do not depend on miracles.

Perhaps the explanation is along the lines of the observation of the Maharsha (*Kiddushin* 29b) that miracles are a natural consequence of the prayer of the righteous. During the High Holy Days, we heighten our attention to our prayers, knowing with confidence that we can trust in Hashem to perform miracles on behalf of *Klal Yisroel*.

Similarly, our heightened connection to Hashem during this period propels us to sing the song of Torah with even greater fervor. This everlasting song of the Jewish people, as the angel explained to Yehoshua, carries us through the difficult battles that we need to fight, and should lead us all to a deeper and more meaningful celebration of *Simchas Torah* for this year.

May this be a sweet and happy new year for the entirety of the Jewish people. ■

Reflections *(continued from page 9)*

of benches in the *Batei Midrashim* filled with *talmidim* studying the same Talmud as Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam of Worms and Speyer and the Ramban and Rambam in Spain.

On this, the anniversary of the massacre of Jewish life on *Shemini Atzeret*, we pause

in reflection as we remember this tragedy. The country, and indeed the Jewish world, is reeling with grief, tears shock and fear. But our history and faith are like the *mayim ibim*; water to crown the valley with green. Let this be the enduring message of the Jewish people. ■

Reaction and Action: Responding to Crisis

Rabbi Chaim Pollock
Dean Emeritus and Senior Consultant,
Michlalah Yerushalayim



During the Six-Day War, we, the *talmidim* of the *Rosh Yeshiva*, HaRav Mordechai Rogov ZT”L, did our daily driving bringing the Rav to the Yeshiva. For the entire 15- or 20-minute drive from Albany Park to Skokie, the Rav repeated with great fervor and intent, again and again: *עת צרה ליעקב*, ‘A Time of Distress for *Am Yisroel*’. We had no doubt that those prayers contributed to the miracle of Israel’s victory in that war.

* * * *

In addition to military action, *Chazal* instruct us regarding appropriate responses to crises, natural and man-made. *Masseches Ta’anis* is replete with clear guidance and *Shulchan Aruch* codifies its teachings in two *Simanim* (*Orach Chaim* 288 and 576).

The source for those teachings is *Parshas B’haalosecha* (*Bamidbar* 10:9) where we read about man-induced crisis:

וְכִי תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאַרְצְכֶם עַל הַצָּר הַצָּר
אֲתֶכֶם וְהִרְעֵתֶם בְּחִצְצֹרֹת וְנִזְפְרֹתֶם לִפְנֵי ה'
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְנִשְׁעַתֶּם מֵאִיבֵיכֶם:

When you go to war against an enemy who attacks you in your land, you shall sound a *truah* on the trumpets. You will then be remembered before G-d your L-rd, and will be saved from your enemies.

Alshich HaKodosh writes that there is a prerequisite for that Divine memory:

תחלה יאמרו ללבבם לא חשוד קודשא בריך
הוא דעביד דינא בלא דינא:

First, we have to say to ourselves ‘Certainly this judgement of Hashem against us is justified.’

That is, crises and disasters are not

coincidental; they do not occur by chance. G-d directs the world and perceived good and bad are a fulfillment of Divine Will. Crisis is a judgment against us and first and foremost we must examine our ways, identify our faults and begin the process of *Teshuva* – and then we can be ‘remembered before G-d’.

And we now return to *Parshas B’haalosecha* and ask why its subject is *צָר*, the enemy? That enemy would not seem to be the central figure in the crisis that comes upon Israel. It was the Will of G-d and the catastrophe was a result of our actions and the enemy seems to only be pawn-like in the greater scheme of things.

How, then, are we to view the role of the *צָר*-enemy when we are beset by challenges that suddenly overwhelm us?

Rambam addresses this very issue in his *Hilchos Teshuva*, Perek 6. He questions why we blame the Egyptians for the horrendous enslavement of Israel:

והלא כתוב בתורה (בראשית טו: יג) 'ועבדום
וענו אותם' הרי גור על המצריים לעשות רע?

Is it not written in the Torah, ‘They will enslave and afflict them? Didn’t Hashem decree upon the Egyptians to do evil?’

He continues:

וכתיב (דברים לא: טז) וקם העם הזה וזנה
אחרי אלהי נכר הארץ, הרי גור על ישראל לעבד
כוכבים ומזלות – ולמה נפרע מהן?

Is it not written that ‘This people will arise and stray after the gods of the non-Jews of ‘The Land’? Is it not that it was He Who decreed upon Israel to serve the stars and constellations? Why did He punish them?’

Rambam's response to these age-old questions is relevant to our time and to all times:

לא גזר על איש פלוני הידוע שיהיה הוא הזונה... לעבוד כוכבים ומזלות אילו לא רצה לעבוד לא היה עובד... וכן המצריים כל אחד ואחד מאותן המצירים והמרעים לישראל אילו לא רצה להרע להם הרשות בידו, שלא גזר על איש ידוע אלא הודיעו שסוף זרעו עתיד להשתעבד בארץ לא להם...

G-d did not decree that a specific Jew would stray and be an idolator – if the person did not wish to be an idolator, he would not have been. Similarly, the individual Egyptian who troubled and wickedly harmed Israel – if he did not wish to harm them, he had his free will to refrain from doing harm. Hashem did not decree on any specific individual; He only told Avraham *Ovinu* that eventually his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land.

This is consonant with Rambam's teaching in the preceding *perek* there that man has complete free-will and is fully empowered to independently decide to do good or bad.

Thus, we learn that when we are confronted with evil, we must turn in two directions, simultaneously.

One direction is towards the immediate

perpetrator, the individual or regime who attacks us and seeks our destruction. He is our enemy, attempting to enact a diabolical plan to eliminate Israel from the face of the earth.

אָמְרוּ לְכוּ וְנַכְחִידֵם מִגּוֹי וְלֹא יִזְכָּר שֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד:

They said, 'Let us go and destroy them from being a nation so that the name of Israel will never again be remembered' (*Tehillim* 83:5).

We turn to G-d to utterly destroy them (*ibid.* 18).

However, our attention that is drawn to the perpetrator would be incomplete if he or they become our sole and only focus.

There is a foundation for the event that the immediate perpetrator performed and we have created it. If we created a monster, it is our obligation to seek its obliteration.

As much as the destruction was in the physical hand of the perpetrator, its spiritual underpinnings are our doing.

If we decide to remove the foundation by taking corrective actions, we will be remembered by G-d Who will provide salvation, everlasting and eternal.

This is the Torah's lesson of Jewish History and its teaching for our contemporary circumstances. ■

All This Happened Already... (continued from page 11)

entire lives, this year we know we are living its words. *Tefilat avot siman labanim*. Above all, as David Hamelech derived *chizuk* as an *eved Hashem* from Hashem Himself in those dark days, we hear him signaling to us from across the ages, encouraging us to persevere in ours:

קְוֵה אֵל ד' חֲזַק וְנִצְמָץ לְבָבְךָ וְקִוֵּה אֵל ד' (תהלים כו, יד)

Hope in Hashem – be strong, for He will make your heart courageous – and hope in Hashem. ■

Rabbi Zvi Engel serves as the Rabbi of Congregation Or Torah of Skokie, where L'David Hashem Ori was continually recited twice daily from Simchat Torah until Pesach.

Divrei Chizuk

Rabbi Daniel J. Raccach

Senior Dayan, cRc Beth Din

Rabbi, Ohel Shalom Torah Center



Many decades have passed since we lived a year of such collective suffering that we pined as intensely, as we do today, for the advent of Rosh HaShana with its message of *הנה וקללותיה* (may the year with its curses end)¹ and *תחל שנה וברכותיה* (may the [new] year and its blessings begin).² The events of *Shimini Atzeret/Simchat Torah* have deeply marked our collective soul and permanently changed the Jewish world. First, there were the unspeakable horrors perpetrated upon our brethren in Israel with its continuing anguish in numerous forms, but then, with immediacy, our awakening to a seething hatred towards us throughout the world. Now, with eyes wide open, we look upon the Jewish isolation within the community of nations with bewilderment and concern. Maybe within this isolation lies a lesson for us to consider.

Megilat Eicha, the exposition of exile, opens with a pronouncement of isolation *אֵיכָה יִשְׁכַּח בְּדָד הָעִיר רַבְתֵּי עָם* (איכה א,א) (How does the city once great with people sit forlorn). The word denoting isolation here *בדד* clearly suggests a solitariness of abandonment, dismissal, and debasement. Yet, Rav Tanchum HaYirushalmi³ points out that the same term is utilized elsewhere with the exact opposite intent: one of grandeur. He explains that both terms of solitariness,

although obverse, can be correct, one denoting a solitariness of uniqueness and gravitas, while the other indicating desolation and the absence of inhabitants due to the severity of punishment. Thus, we find positive connotation of this word in verses that speak of the Jewish people: *וַיִּשְׁכֶּן* (And Yisrael resided alone in safety) and *הָרְעַם לְבַדְדָּא* (Here is a nation that dwells alone). In both verses, the isolation and apartness is presented as a virtue and strength, while the verse that opens *Eicha* uses it as a term of weakness and mourning. This is the linguistic approach to this dual usage.

However, the Gemara⁴ finds a spiritual explanation for the contradictory usage of the term *בדד*.

ישבה בדד. אמר רבא אמר רבי יוחנן אמר הקב"ה: אני אמרתי וישכן ישראל בטח בדד עין יעקב אל ארץ דגן ותירוש אף שמיני יערפו טלי (דברים לג, כח), עכשיו יהיה בדד מושבם.

Sits solitary. Rava said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Hashem said: I said 'Yisrael shall reside secure, solitary (בדד), as Yaakov, to a land of grain and wine, even his heaven will drip with dew.' Now, their place of dwelling will be desolate.

The Maharsha explains that initially

1. מגילה (לא ע"ב)
2. מטבע לשון המסיימת פיוט "אחות קטנה" של רבי אברהם חזן גירונדי שנאמר בקהילות רבות בליל ר"ה
3. רבי תנחום הירושלמי, ספר הביאור על איכה (א,א) – מהד' מכון האוצר, ירושלים תשע"ז, עמ' צב) ע"פ הפסוק: ה' בדד יחננו ואין עמו אל נכר (דברים לג, כ). וכזה כתב מדנפשיה רבי שלמה פפנהיים בסי' חשק שלמה (ערך בד, עמ' 76 במהד' מכון שלמה אולמן תשע"ח) והועתקו הדברים בשמו בסי' הכתב והקבלה (דברים לג, כח). ע"ש.
4. סנהדרין (קד ע"א)

their strength allowed them to sit alone but secure, but now their debasement had them sit solitary due to their repulsiveness. The Midrash⁵ provides an explanation that when the Jews did the will of Hashem, they were granted security in their solitude, but now that they have sinned, the city sits forlorn due to their banishment.

The great Rosh Yeshiva of Volozhin, Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the Netziv, presents a different interpretation⁶ with chilling implications. Hashem desired the Jews to be set apart from the nations of the world, and if the Jews accepted this position, then the nations would respect them in their solitariness. However, if the Jews would endeavor to connect with the nations by adopting their behaviors and practices, then Hashem would still have the Jews be solitary, but this would be accomplished by turning the nations against the Jews and isolating them. Either way, the Jews are destined to be solitary, with the distinction being whether their solitariness would be one of elevation and respect or one of hatred and debasement. This explains the apparently contradictory usage of the same term: בדד.

While this concept is expressed by other eminent Rabanim,⁷ it occupied a particularly prominent place in the Netziv's worldview. He records it many times in his writings,⁸ elaborating more in some places than in others. Additionally, he composed

a magisterial study of anti-Semitism titled *She'ar Yisrael* with this concept at its core. Indeed, it was so fundamental to him that it is reported⁹ that yearly at his Pesach Seder, he would review the essence of this study with his Yeshiva students. We will proceed here based upon his fascinating perspective of this concept.

In the aforementioned study on anti-Semitism titled *She'ar Yisrael*,¹⁰ the Netziv explains that Hashem chose the Jewish nation to be a light unto the nations, to serve as a model for them to emulate. Thus, Hashem tells Avraham that he is אב המון – “A father to a host of nations,” which means that he should instruct the nations of the world, whether by word or deed, towards a monotheistic belief and general civility. Since this interaction with the nations could possibly lead to a deeper connection to them, in that very same conversation, Hashem commands him the *mitzva* of Birit Milah, to create a separation and division between the Jews and the nations. Thus, the element of separation (בדד) existed with Avraham at the origin of the Jewish people. However, it was Yaakov who fully embraced this principle of solitariness, because he had a large family and the concern of negative influence was greater for him than it had been for his fathers.¹¹ Indeed, Yaakov was so particular about this separation that he became identified by it (עין יעקב – דברים)

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5. מדרש איכה ע"פ כתי"י (הוצאת ר"ש בובר, וילנא תרנ"ט – א, א – עמ' מב במהד' זכרון אהרן בתוך אוצר מדרשי איכה). וכיוון לזה רבי יצחק יעב"ץ בשי תורת חסד – צדקת תמים על איכה (א, א). ע"ש.
 6. ע"י שו"ת משיב דבר ח"א (סי' מד ד"ה שנית, דכ"ז ע"ב) והעמק דבר (במדבר כג, ט) ועוד.
 7. ראה לדוגמא בית הלוי עה"ת (ריש פרשת שמות).
 8. העמק דבר – בראשית (טו, טד) בהרחב (דבר) שמות (א, ז) וההוספות מכת"י המחבר בסוה"ט) במדבר (כג, ט) דברים (לג, כח), פירוש אמרי שפר על ההגדה (עה"פ והיא שעמדה, ד"יא ע"א), שו"ת משיב דבר ח"א (סי' מד ד"ה שנית, דכ"ז ע"ב) וח"יד (ריש סי' עא, דמ"ט סג"ע), פירוש מטיב שיר על שיר השירים (א, ו – דף ז ע"ב) ומאמר שאר ישראל (נדפס בסוף פירושו על שיר השירים, ווארשא, תרנ"ד, פרקים ד, ה, ו).
 9. רבי אריה קופרמן בהערותיו למהדורתו של פירוש הנצי"ב הנקרא אמרי שפר להגדה של פסח (ירושלים, תשע"א – עה"פ והיא שעמדה, הערה 1, עמ' קב) הביא עדותו של תלמיד הישיבה רבי אפרים ראובן מושביצקי (בדר"ך, כ"ה סיון תרצ"ד, גליון 90).
 10. מאמר שאר ישראל (פי"ד, דף סי' ע"ב).
 11. העמק דבר (בראשית לה, כז בהרחב דבר).
 12. העמק דבר (בראשית לג, טו ו"ח : לה, כז : לו, א : מו, ד : דברים לג, כח)

כח)¹² and thus the aloneness became a piece of צורת ישראל (the Jewish image/identity).¹³

Consequently, according to the Netziv, the Jews are destined for solitude. Preferably, a solitude of elevation and refinement, detached from the nations of the world, by which they would serve as a model to emulate. However, if the Jews were to forgo this noble solitude, and connect with the nations, then Hashem would force solitude upon them by turning the nations against them. The hatred of the nations bringing them an undesired isolation.

Is the explosion of hatred towards us that we are witnessing a manifestation of the Netziv's warning? Have we broken boundaries with excessive and nonessential connection to the people of the country we reside in and thus brought this upon ourselves? We all are familiar with the age-old question: should one be an American Jew or a Jewish American? The difference being that an *American Jew's* primary identity is as a Jew, but with some American characteristics, while the *Jewish American* identifies as an American with some Jewish elements. What would the Netziv think of this question? One may suggest that the Netziv would reject both of these options and present a third one: one should be a Jew living in America, without *any* element of American influence.

This is not an advocacy for disconnection from society, for we are instructed in Pirkei Avot (3:2): רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים אומר, הווי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות (Rebbi Chaneena Sigan HaCohanim says: One should pray for the welfare of the government.) That statement was made for

all governments, even unfriendly ones. All the more so for the American government, known as מלכות של חסד – a government of kindness. We must be grateful to this country and participate fully as citizens. Yet, that does not contradict the position of the Netziv, who would exhort us to be vigilant to not allow ourselves to be influenced by values, beliefs, or perspectives that are not ours, and to be cautious when engaging with the gentiles.

So, we return to the question: are we guilty of overstepping in our connection to Americanism and the American society? Possibly, if we truly turn the magnifying glass of brutal and honest introspection upon ourselves – we may find that boundaries of cultural separation have indeed been breached. This is not the forum for examples, but this writer believes that culture creep is plainly evident, even within our relatively insular Orthodox community.

If indeed we have abandoned our solitariness of elevation and embraced a culture not ours, even in part, then what is the path back? The Netziv's equation already contains the response: we simply need to accept fully our Jewishness and abandon external influence. Again, that does not mean to say that we should become hermetic and antisocial, but rather, we need to live our lives understanding that we are a nation of nobility, truly different from those around us.

The sincere embracement of our Divine imperative as Hashem's messengers will raise us in the eyes of the nations, not lower us. This requires that we create Kiddush Hashem by genuinely embracing our Jewishness, absent outside sway.

13. העמק דבר (דברים לב, יב, ולג, כח) וראה עוד שאר ישראל (פי"ד) והעמק דבר (במדבר כג, ט).

14. סוכה (נה ע"ב)

Simultaneously, we need to completely reverse all the negative stereotypical Jewish behaviors we may be guilty of and work persistently to express behavior that will invite praise, not scorn.

Maybe we can gently reframe this concept. The verse states: *וְהִייתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה', וְנִבְדַּלְתֶּם מִן הָעַמִּים לְהִיּוֹת לִי.* (And you will be holy for me, for I Hashem am Holy, and I have separated you from the nations to be mine.) Hashem has separated us from the nations *to be His*. Accordingly, if one focuses on their Jewishness, then they are with Hashem, and not the nations, but if one integrates and connects with the nations, then they are forgoing their connection to Hashem because they are with the nations. In simple terms: it is one or the other – with Hashem or with the nations. This then goes further: If one is with Hashem, then they are noble and elevated, and the nations can respect that, but if one selects to connect to the nations, then they relinquish the bond with Hashem, and thus *chas v'shalom* the nations turn against us.

This formulation of the idea may possibly provide insight as to the Divine timing of the horrendous October 7th attack that occurred on Shimini Atzeret/Simchat Torah, that are celebrated concurrently in Israel. The Gemara¹⁴ tells us that we offer 70 sacrifices during the 7 days of Sukot corresponding to the 70 nations of the world, while on Shimini Atzeret, we offer one sacrifice corresponding to the singular Jewish nation. Thus, Shimini Atzeret is a celebration of the singularity of the Jewish people in contrast to the other nations of

the world. Rashi¹⁵ frames this in the form of an analogy to a king who asks his sons to stay with him one more day because *קשה עלי פרידתכם* (parting from you is difficult for me). In other words, Shimini Atzeret is a testament to the unique bond Hashem has with us to the exclusion of all other nations. Could the atrocities occurring specifically on that hallowed date serve as a rebuke to us for having relinquished, at some level, our unique bond with Hashem to embrace foreign influences? A sobering and haunting thought.

One of the central themes of Rosh HaShana¹⁶ is the acceptance of Hashem's *מלכות* (kingship/dominion) or in the language of the Gemara¹⁷ *כדי שתמליכוני עליכם* (so that you will accept My Kingship over you). We are called to renounce all other dependency and authority, real or perceived, to accept only Hashem as King. This theme continues and intensifies throughout the High Holiday season and culminates with Shimini Atzeret, when the focus shifts towards the Jewish people, and the King desires our closeness, or in Rashi's language *קשה עלי פרידתכם* (parting from you is difficult for me); a celebration of the unique bond between Hashem and us. Thus, this High Holiday season would serve as an optimal spiritual setting to reconsider our relationship with culture creep and foreign influence upon ourselves, and reaffirm our dedication exclusively to Hashem. May we merit to so fully accept Hashem's Kingship that He see fit to end our suffering, both individual and collective, and bless us all with a year of salvation, protection, health, unity, success, happiness, and growth. ■

15. רש"י עה"ת (ויקרא כג, לו) ובמדבר כט, לו).
16. ראה לדוגמה דברי רבי חיים – מועדים ח"א (מאמר ר"ה – שורש השנה, עמ' סא) ומאמר עבודתנו ברי"ה – תמליכוני עליכם, עמ' פא).
17. ר"ה (טז ע"א ולד ע"ב).

ספר הרזקה הלכות סוכות סימן רי"ט

ויש מפי כשיצרו על ארץ האמורי של סיחון ועוג ועל כרכים שבארץ כנען אז ישבו ישראל בסכות כמו שכתוב וארון וישראל ויחודה יושבים בסכות כי בשדה היה מסכך עליהן עד שכבשו רבת בני עמון כך ישראל עד שכבשו ארץ כנען זהו כי בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל כשיצרים את האומות.



Credit: O'LeChayal

According to the Rokeach (Eleazar of Worms, 1176-1238), one explanation as to why we are commanded to sit in sukkos each year is to commemorate the sukkos that served as our army barracks in the desert when we needed to fight against the enemy nations on our way to securing the land of Israel.

