

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



עילוי נשמת

ALAI DESHE

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

Moving Out

למען ידעו דרתיכם כי בטכות הושבתי את בני
ישראל בהוציאי אותם מארץ מצרים

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

The *Tur* famously asks:¹ Since the Torah provides the reason for the mitzvah of *sukkah* as remembering the *sukkos* in which we dwelled following *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the

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

This is difficult to understand. How can the small inconvenience of sitting in a *sukkah* right outside one's home for a week be counted as a long and arduous exile experience? Furthermore, if we do consider moving out to the *sukkah* as a difficult experience of *galus*, then one would be exempt from the mitzvah, since מצטער פטור מן הסוכה (one who is uncomfortable is exempt from *sukkah*).⁴

The Midrash⁵ relates that Hashem displayed for Avraham Avinu both *Gehinnom* and *galus*, and instructed him to choose a path for his descendants (since a person must be spiritually cleansed to enter *Gan Eden*). The Midrash continues that one opinion maintains that Avraham chose *galus*, and another holds that he chose *Gehinnom*, but Hashem overrode him and chose *galus*.

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Heavy Lifting

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדור,
כפת תמר וגו'

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

The *berachah* we make upon taking a *lulav* and *esrog* is על נטילת לולב – *on taking a lulav*. The *Levush*¹⁰ wonders why we don't say על לקיחת לולב, in accordance with the pasuk's actual phrasing, ולקחתם. The *Levush* answers that לקיחה connotes, in addition to taking, purchasing. If the *berachah* would be על לקיחת לולב, one might think that it is enough to simply gain ownership of a *lulav*, without actually holding it. The *Chachamim* therefore instituted the *berachah* as על נטילת לולב, which denotes taking it in one's hand, as the pasuk says (Yeshayah 63:9), וַיִּנְטְלֵם – *He lifted them and carried them.*

This question of the *Levush* is already discussed by the *Rashba*.¹¹

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10 651:7

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

A Yid who enters the *sukkah* with the proper mindset has transitioned himself from the domain of *gashmiyus* to that of *ruchniyus*.

yom tov of Sukkos should take place during Nissan, the season of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. Why is it in Tishrei?

The *kadmonim*² offer the following explanation, based on a Midrash.³ The month of Tishrei begins with the *yemei hadin*, when all people are judged and

1 O.C. 625

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

3 *Peskita D'Rav Kahana*, 2

4 See *Pri Tzaddik*, Sukkos 18

5 *Bereishis Rabbah* 44:21

Moving Out

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

In what way does *galus* cleanse a person? The Gemara (Pesachim 49b) relates that the ten *shevatim* of *Malchus Yisrael* lived an over-indulgent lifestyle. The Maharsha writes that this is why they were exiled before the rest of Klal Yisrael. It was a perfectly matched correction, *middah k'neged middah*: since they lived lavishly, they were made to go into *galus*, which deprives a person of the pleasures he seeks. Clearly, *galus* purifies a person by removing his access to pleasures and enjoyments.

The Gemara (Sukkah 2a) describes the purpose of the mitzvah of *sukkah*: “Leave your permanent home and live in a temporary dwelling.” *Sefarim hakedoshim* explain that this is meant to be taken as a message for our lives: *Realize that Olam Hazeh is only a temporary dwelling, an antechamber before Olam Haba!*⁶ Since entering the *sukkah* represents viewing our life as the temporal existence that it is, one can achieve thorough it the purpose of *galus*: living with a mentality of *גֵּר אֲנִי בְּאֶרֶץ* – *I am a sojourner in the world* (Tehillim 119:19).

It is true that one week in the *sukkah* cannot take the place of full-fledged exile; but if a person leaves his house

and enters the *sukkah* with a desire to change his lifestyle, to minimize his worldly pleasures and focus on what is truly important, then he has embarked on a journey that has the benefits of *galus*. Although he has only taken a few steps from his house to his *sukkah*, he is worthy of the words of the *yehi ratzon*: *In the merit of leaving our houses for the outdoors, please consider it as if I wandered far away.* Just as one can transfer ownership of an item into his domain by simply moving it,⁷ a Yid who simply enters the *sukkah* with the proper mindset has transitioned himself from the domain of *gashmiyus* to that of *ruchniyus*. It is “as if he wandered far away.”

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

The Sfas Emes writes⁸ that during Sukkos, the *sukkah* should be seen as more permanent than any permanent abode in the world. If one views the *sukkah* in this way, he can break free from his attachment to *Olam Hazeh* and enter the *sukkah* as one truly going into *galus*.

The Gemara (Sukkah 3a) states that one must enter the *sukkah* to the extent that “his head, most of his body, and his table are inside the *sukkah*.” One cannot sit in the *sukkah* and eat from a table inside

the house, because if he does so he might be drawn after the table into the house. When we sit in the *sukkah*, it must be with our “head, most of our body, and our table” – our *neshamah*, our heart, and our resources, in order that we don’t find ourselves “drawn after the table into the house,” losing the *madreigah* we achieved of “Leave your permanent home and live in a temporary dwelling.”

* * *

The Gemara (Sukkah 28b) derives from the pasuk (Vayikra 23:42) *כָּל הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בְּסֻכּוֹת* – *every native in Yisrael shall dwell in sukkos*, that even a *ger* is included in the mitzvah of *sukkah*. The *Rishonim*⁹ wonder about this: a *ger* is included in every mitzvah like a born Jew; why might we think he should be exempted from *sukkah*?

We may suggest that since *geirim* do not inherit a share of the Eretz Yisrael, they do not find themselves so deeply entrenched in the mundanity of this world. Also, they chose of their own volition to forgo much of *Olam Hazeh* and become a Jew. Perhaps they would not need the mitzvah of *sukkah* to shape their mentality and remind them to “leave their permanent home and live in a temporary dwelling.” The pasuk therefore teaches that every person, no matter his background, will eventually begin to feel comfortable and will face *nisyonos* in life; everybody needs to be reminded that this world is only a transient entranceway to *Olam Haba*.

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

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

7 See *Bava Basra* 75b

8 5653 s.v. *Issa b'Gemara*

9 *Tosafos* and others

Heavy Lifting

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

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

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

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

The *Chinuch*¹² writes that the *arba'ah minim* naturally arouse feelings of *simchah* within a person. One might

think, then, that fulfilling the mitzvah properly is easy: just pick up the *lulav* and *esrog* and enjoy the happiness they inspire. After all, everyone likes good feelings. But that is simplistic and wrong. The mitzvah of *arba'ah minim* is much deeper than that.

This is what the *Chachamim* were alluding to with the phrasing of the *berachah*. It is clear from *pesukim*¹³ that an expression of נטילה implies lifting a heavy load, more so than an expression of לקיחה. The message: the mitzvah of *arba'ah minim* is not lightweight. It is not easy to reach its depths and fulfill it in a profound manner; it takes hard work.

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

The *Kuzari* writes¹⁴ that we can achieve closeness to Hashem through the joy of Shabbos and *yom tov* just as much as through the humbling feelings we experience on a fast day. He continues, "If your joy in mitzvos reaches a level of singing and dancing, this too will be *avodas Hashem*, and through this too you will become attached to G-dliness." However, it is not so simple. When fasting, the body is weakened, and the person is easily humbled before Hashem. But in

rejoicing, the body wants to take part, too. It is thus much harder to utilize joy as a vehicle for closeness to Hashem than to utilize bodily affliction.¹⁵ Even on *yamim tovim*, when there is a mitzvah of *simchah*, it takes hard work to ensure that our joy does not become just another physical pleasure. In the *Kuzari's* words: "Just as prayer needs thought and concentration, so does joy in mitzvos and matters of G-dliness require thought and concentration. This is necessary so that one is joyous in the mitzvah itself, out of love for the One Who commanded it, recognizing how much good He granted him..."

The Torah wants us to experience the intense spiritual joy that follows the purity we attain through Yom Kippur. The *Chinuch* explains¹⁶ that this is the reason for the mitzvah of *arba'ah minim*: "Since happiness strongly attracts the physical element and leads one to momentarily forget his *yiras Shamayim*, Hashem commanded us to hold in our hands items that remind us that the joy in our hearts is only for His Name and His glory."

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

(בנאות דשא – יו"ט סוכות תשפ"א)

¹² 324

¹³ See Shmuel II 24:12; Mishlei 27:3; Eichah 3:28

¹⁴ 2:50

¹⁵ See *Tanya, Igeres HaTeshuvah*, end of chap. 2; *Likutei Torah, derushim* for Yom Kippur s.v. *v'shev shabbason*, no. 5

¹⁶ *Ibid*

רגל בפני עצמו – A Foot All Its Own

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

The Ruzhiner Rebbe explained what “one foot” alludes to: Shemini Atzeres, which is called a רגל בפני עצמו (a *yom tov* all its own),¹⁷ which can be translated as “a foot all its own.” On the “one foot” of Shemini Atzeres it is possible to relate to the entire Torah, since on that day we complete the Torah. The message through which to tap into the entirety of Torah on Shemini Atzeres is, “What you dislike do not do to your friend.” Rashi explains which friend Hillel referred to: Hashem, about Whom it is written (Mishlei 27:10), רַעַךְ וְרַעַךְ אֲבִיךָ אַל תַּעֲזֹב, *Do not forsake your Friend and the Friend of your father.* Hillel was teaching the *ger*, “Do not transgress Hashem’s words, just as you would not like your friend to transgress your words.”

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

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

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

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

This is an additional reason Shemini Atzeres is called a רגל בפני עצמו. The words רגל בפני עצמו can be read as “for each individual person.” In other words, to the degree that a person deepens his attachment to the Torah and thus strengthens his *ahavas Hashem*, his Friend, Hashem, will likewise express His love back for him. Then he will have spanned the entirety of Torah on one foot, on this day of רגל בפני עצמו.

It is important to know that there is a prerequisite to attaining *ahavas Hashem*: deeply contemplating and realizing that the only true love is love of Hashem, His Torah and His mitzvos. Any other *ahavah* a person

may feel is only a perversion of the deep *ahavah* his *neshamah* has for Hashem. In the darkness of this world, the *neshamah*’s love for Hashem can become hidden, and can manifest in various and often unsuitable ways.

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

Commenting on the pasuk (Tehillim 19:8) תּוֹרַת ה' תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ – *The Torah of Hashem is perfect, restoring the soul,* the Sfas Emes writes¹⁸ that every *Yiddische neshamah* has an extraordinary draw toward its Creator, as it yearns to attach itself to the Source of life. (We may conceptualize this as a magnetic pull, although it is many times stronger than that.) But there are multiple things that stand in the *neshamah*’s way: the darkness of this world, the separation caused by sin, and a person’s physical inclinations, which layer over the *neshamah*’s innermost desire. So how can a person uncover his *neshamah*’s deepest longing? When one delves into Torah – which is called חֲמֹדָה גְּנוּזָה, *a hidden treasure*¹⁹ – he merits מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ, as the deepest and most hidden desires of his *nefesh* are restored to him. He then experiences a deep yearning to draw close and attach himself to Hashem and His Torah and mitzvos.

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

17 Sukkah 48a

18 Ad loc., from Terumah 5662 and Naso 5654

19 Shabbos 88b