

Sukkot – Time of Joy: Cycle of Teshuva

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

The Torah tells us, “*B’Sukkot teishvu shivat yamim.*” You shall sit in the *sukkah* seven days. The Tiferet Shlomo explains that *teishvu* can also be read as *tashuvu*, repent. On *Sukkot* a Jew must engage in the process of repentance. After going through a forty day process of *teshuva*, what is there left to do?

On *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* we repented out of fear but on *Sukkot* we do *teshuva* out of love and joy. We turn our sins into *mitzvot*. Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev taught that on *Rosh Hashana* we throw our sins in the water at *Tashlich* and on *Sukkot* we draw them out as *mitzvot* with the *Nisuch Hamayim* (water libation ceremony).

The *sukkah* teaches us that our existence is not dependent on anything except for the grace of Hashem. Just as the Jews were sustained in the desert for 40 years, we too live only through His kindness. Reb Tzadok taught that wherever a person’s mind is that’s where he can be found. If we can put

ourselves in the mindset of the Jews in the desert we will realize that every moment of our life depends on Him.

The work of *teshuva* begins on *Rosh Hashana* and climaxes on *Shemini Atzeret* when we proclaim, “*Hashem hu Elokim.*” Rav Pincus notes that each day of *Aseret Yemei Teshuva* is a building block which adds up to ten. This is the difference between fear and love. Fear is divided into components. Each sin must be dealt with separately. But *ahavat Hashem* is all-encompassing. Therefore, *Sukkot* is related to the number seven, the concept of entirety. *Elul*, *Rosh Hashana*, and *Yom Kippur* are about searching for Hashem. On *Sukkot* we find Him and don’t let go. The ultimate *teshuva* is gaining such closeness to Hashem.

The Siftei Chaim writes that *atzeret* means to gather in. We must take all of the spiritual treasures we’ve collected throughout these awesome weeks and make them ours. On *Rosh Hashana* we focus on *Hashem* on an intellectual level. Our *avodat Hashem*

becomes transformed as we enter the rarefied atmosphere of the *sukkah*. On *Hoshana Rabbah* we circle the *bima* seven times, reminiscent of the war against Yericho. After all our inner work, the walls between us and the Creator come crashing down with an intensity of love. Then we can enter *Shemini Atzeret*, where we unite as one with our betrothed.

The Shvilei Pinchas quotes the Arizal that the *sukkah* is like the *ohr makif*, an all-encompassing light, a guarded tent where no outside influences can enter. On *Sukkot* we start a new accounting and the satan tries to knock us down again. Therefore, Hashem gives us the light of the *sukkah* to protect us. The acronym of *sukkah* is *somech v’ozar kol hanoflim*. He supports and aids the fallen. *Sukkot* is connected to Yaakov, who personified the attribute of truth. The voice that says you can’t pick yourself up is false. Even if we have fallen to the lowest levels, Hashem will uplift us from the depths.

Sukkot – Service of the Heart

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In *Shir Hashirim*, King Shlomo movingly depicts Hashem’s profound love for the Jewish people. “*B’tzilo chimaditi v’yashavti.* I desired his shade and I have dwelt there, his fruits are sweet to my palate.” According to the *Midrash*, this refers to the *mitzvot* of *sukka* and *lulav*, which are our central methods of connection to Hashem on *Sukkot*. Why did Hashem give us two *mitzvot* on this holiday? Why was one not adequate?

The Shem MiShmuel explains that man is a dual combination of mind and heart. This is reflected in the ten *sefirot*, which are expressed on both intellectual and emotional levels. Moshe, the paragon of intellect, and Aharon, the embodiment of emotion, were the founding fathers of the Jewish nation. Moshe’s role was primarily *moach*, intellect, bringing Torah to Jewry, Aharon’s purpose was *lev*, emotion, achieving harmony between man and Hashem. His prayers and service in the *Mishkan* were the focal point of *Yom*

Kippur. Additionally, he pursued peace and mended troubled relationships between people.

The *Torah* emphasizes, “*Hu Aharon U’Moshe,*” the role of Aharon was equal to Moshe’s. The Shem Mishmuel notes that perfection of intellect is intertwined with perfection of emotion. Both are needed to attain *sheleimut*. Indeed, when we examine the lives of our *Torah* giants we see this combination of wisdom of mind and heart.

The Gemara writes that the *mitzva* of *sukkah* serves as a remembrance to the Clouds of Glory, which were given in the merit of Aharon. The *sukkah* signifies the life and essence of Aharon. Aharon personified peace, fulfillment, humility, and total subservience to Hashem. This is the *sukkah* – modesty, harmony and completion. The *lulav* represents the teachings of Moshe. It is a straight line that corresponds to the direct intellectual logic of *Torah*. Both

mitzvot help us tap into the dual essence of the holiday.

Rosh Hashana is the head of the year. It signifies a new beginning and corresponds to the soul of Moshe, who personified intellect. It is a day to think about our past deeds, make a personal reckoning, and plan for the future. *Yom Kippur* is *lev*, emotion. It symbolizes *Aharon Hakohein*. The *Torah* writes, “*B’zot yavo Aharon el hakodesh.*” It links Aharon specifically with the service in the *Mishkan*. Rav Soloveitchik notes that the essence of *Yom Kippur* was the *avodah* of Aharon, who was the paragon of *ahavat Hashem* and *ahavat Yisrael*.

On *Rosh Hashana* we rededicate our intellect to Hashem. On *Yom Kippur* we reignite our souls to *ahavat Hashem*. All this culminates with *Sukkot* – the pinnacle of joy and completion as we celebrate the melding of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual purification.

Kohelet: Perek 1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

“*Divrei Kohelet ben David melech Yerushalayim*. These are the words of *Kohelet*, the son of David the king of *Yerushalayim*.” While the term *amirah* is conceptual and refers to the bigger picture, *dibur* is incisive and focuses on limits. It’s usually understood as a harsh form of speech but the *Zohar* says it is really sweet. We usually rebuke someone when we feel connected to him. *Daat* (knowledge) and *dibur* (speech) are linked together. Hence the first time we find *daat* mentioned in the Torah is when Adam knew his wife Chavah. He felt connected to her. It follows that all spoken reproof is really a form of connection.

Kohelet means to gather. Shlomo Hamelech calls himself *Kohelet* because one of the primary functions of the Jewish king was to gather the people together in *Yerushalayim* and read from the Torah. A king is meant to impose law and order, but he is also expected to manifest the collective purpose of his nation. A good ruler must articulate what his people are and aspire to it. For a Jewish king this meant assembling the people together and reading from the Torah, which is our national essence. A king is both the heart and the lawgiver of his people, and because of this he will sometimes speak harshly to them. One of the 613 *mitzvot* is to rebuke a sinner. This is mentioned together with the *mitzvah* to love another Jew because reproof is meant to be a statement of love and connection. You sincerely identify with this person and from that perspective whatever they’re doing wrong is limiting and harming them and you don’t want that for them. *Kohelet* is King Shlomo’s

book of rebuke

“*Hevel havalim hakol hevel*. Vanity of vanity, it is all vanity.” *Targum* notes that King Shlomo saw prophetically that nothing in this world is meant to last very long. He saw the splitting of his kingdom that he had spent his whole life developing, the destruction of the *mikdash* he had built, and the exile of the Jewish people. King Shlomo uses the word *hevel* seven times. This symbolizes the physical world which has six sides: the four directions, up, and down, signifying the six days of creation. The seventh inner core is Shabbat. This world is meant for us to attain connection to Hashem by bringing light to a dark place. Its inner core, which is *malchut*, is making Hashem our ruler. Although external materialism may be vanity, its internal essence endures. The *mikdash* may have been physically destroyed but its purpose, that it united us and gave us access to Hashem, remained. King Shlomo’s kingdom may have been lost but *Malchut Yisrael*- making Hashem the core of our lives and following His laws, lived on. Almost everything we have of the oral Torah comes from Rabbi Akiva who lost 24,000 students. This doesn’t mean all his teachings were in vain. Physical reality may be destroyed, but any spiritual attempt lives on for eternity.

The first time the word *hevel* is mentioned in the Torah is in relation to Adam’s son. *Hevel* viewed everything physical as having no value. But he made a mistake. This world is a medium to achieve eternity. Without money one cannot give *tzedakah*, without leather one cannot make *tefillin*. Still if one looks at the world as an end in itself, it is in fact all *hevel*.

No physical achievement is lasting or meaningful unless it is connected to spirituality

“*Dor holech v’dor ba v’haretz l’olam omedet*. A generation comes and goes and the land always endures.” *Dor* comes from the same root word as *dora*, apartment. This world is like a temporary rental apartment. We come down to live here for a short time and then new people move in. Every generation praises Hashem in their unique way by confronting their specific challenges. We’re all here for a limited amount of time and we have to make something of ourselves. Every generation has its *tzadikim* who match the nature of their times.

The Rambam says every person can be a *tzaddik* as great as Moshe. There are two way of looking at this. The *Michtav M’Eliyahu* writes that being a *tzaddik* means filling up your choice box. Hashem’s not expecting you to split the sea or take the people out of Egypt or speak to Him face to face. He does expect you to make *Shabbos* without screaming at your kids and stay honest in business. Your box is where your challenges lie. Everyone’s brand of *tzidkut* is different. Another view is that since all Jewish souls are connected there’s a spark of Moshe in everyone. Moshe was an absolute *anav* (humble person). He was able to move beyond self to know Hashem. We too can become great by rising above our innate desires and transcending our challenges.