

OHR NET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Rav Mendel Weinbach

WHEN A HOUSE IS NOT YOUR HOME *The Succos Experience*

When is a house not your home? On *Succos*, of course. The Torah commands us to move out of our houses on the fifteenth day of the month of *Tishrei* and to make *succos* (popularly translated as “booths” but better defined as shelters) our homes for seven days.

The revealed reason for this commandment is the Torah’s explanation that dwelling in *succos* will remind us of the supernatural protection against the harsh climate of the

desert which Hashem so graciously provided for our ancestors when He brought them out of Egyptian bondage. But, as is the case with all of the mitzvos, there are many lessons to be learned from analyzing and performing this mitzvah of making a *succah* our home for a week.

Perhaps the most elementary lesson of all is the sense of “temporariness.” Although we are certainly expected to make every effort to dignify this mitzvah by making the *succah* as attractive as possible and to truly fulfill our Sages’ guide-

Continued on page eleven

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

“That Will Bring Us Back To Doe...”

Turn on a radio and listen to some ‘Jewish Music.’
It sounds about as Jewish as Led Zeppelin wearing *tefillin*.

Afamous music biz manager once said “I’d rather have a second-class original than a first-class copy.” The problem with any copy is that even if it is *technically* better than the original, it is forever limited by the fact that it came into existence not as an attempt to create *ex nihilo* but as a clone.

If you want to know what original Jewish music sounded like, it probably sounded much like classical music. Classical music has its roots in the Gregorian chants of the Catholic church, and the Gregorian chants were rip-offs of the music that the *Levi'im* played in the Holy Temple. When the Romans burned the House of G-d and exiled the Jewish People, they also exiled our music. They took it into captivity and made it sing for a new master.

Gregorian chant is monophonic, meaning music that consists of only one melodic line without accompaniment. The beauty of the chant lies in the serene, undu-

Continued on page six

TORAH Overview • Insights • Haftorah

PARSHAS HA'AZINU - SHABBOS SHUVA

Overview

Almost all of *Ha'azinu* is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world, and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation – that Hashem “pulls the strings” of world events so that Bnei Yisrael can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. Hashem’s kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become self-satisfied and over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods, and indulge in all kinds of depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When

these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental – that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were *His* enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

Insights

This is the first Shabbos of the year. It is the prototype, the blueprint for the whole year. Because of this, we must be especially careful to guard its sanctity. The Talmud tells us that if the Jewish People had kept the first Shabbos properly, no nation could have ruled over them.

On Rosh Hashanah a new order is created for all the days of the year. Thus if the first Shabbos of the year is correctly observed, then the whole year follows suit.

Man was created on *Erev Shabbos*, on Friday afternoon, in order that he could immediately enter straight into Shabbos. But before Shabbos came, Man had already sinned.

Shabbos is an aid to *teshuvah*. As our Sages teach (*Berachos 37*), a *tzaddik gamur* (completely righteous person) cannot stand in the place of a *ba'al teshuva* (someone who returns to Judaism).

Tzaddikim uphold the world, as it says in Proverbs “The *tzaddik* is the foundation of the world,” but “*teshuvah* preceded the world” (*Pesachim 54*) so the level of the *ba'al teshuva* is before the world and above the world.

Just as the *ba'al teshuva* is before the world, and thus above it, so too Shabbos has a radiance which is higher than the seven days of the week — a reflection of the world to come.

Sympathetic Vibration

“*Ha'azinu....*” (32:1)

Just as all the notes in a chord and all the voices and instruments in an orchestra blend together to form a single sound, so all creation *sings* in harmony

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF

MELVIN STERN ז"ל

לע"נ

משה בן אברהם הלוי ז"ל

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Continued on page eight

TORAH Overview • Insights • Haftorah

PARSHAS V'ZOS HABRACHA

Overview

The Torah draws to its close with V'zos Habracha, which is the only Parsha in the Torah not read specifically on a Shabbos. Rather, V'zos Habracha is read on *Shmini Atzeres/Simchas Torah*, when everyone in the synagogue gets called up to the Torah for an *aliyah* – even boys who are not yet Bar Mitzvah. The Parsha is repeated until everyone has received an *aliyah*.

Moshe continues the tradition of Yaakov by blessing the Tribes of Yisrael before his death. Similar to the blessings bestowed by Yaakov, these blessings are also a combination of the description of each Tribe's essence, together with a definition of its role within the nation of Israel. The only Tribe that does not receive a blessing is Shimon, because they were central to the mass immorality of worshipping the idol *ba'al pe'or*. Another explanation is that this Tribe's population was small and scattered throughout the south of the Land of Israel, and would therefore receive blessings together with the host Tribe amongst whom they would live; i.e., Yehuda. Moshe's last words to his beloved people are of reassurance that Hashem will more than recompense His people for all of the suffering they will endure. Moshe ascends the mountain and Hashem shows him prophetically all that will happen to *Eretz Yisrael* in the future, both in tranquillity and in times of oppression. Hashem also shows him all that will happen to the Jewish People until the time of the Resurrection. Moshe dies there by means of the "Divine Kiss." To this day, no one knows the place of his burial, in order that his grave should not become a shrine for those who wish to make a prophet into a god. Of all the prophets, Moshe was unique in his being able to speak to Hashem whenever he wanted. His centrality and stature are not a product of the Jewish People's "blind faith," but are based on events that were witnessed by an entire nation — at the Red Sea, at Mount Sinai and constantly during 40 years of journeying through the desert.

Insights

What Goes Around

"And this is the blessing that Moshe, the man of G-d, blessed the children of Yisrael." (33:1)

The perfect circle. Complete. The circle unites the beginning and the end. There is no beginning nor end to a circle. If you take one point and call it its beginning, when you get to the end you will find yourself back where you started.

On *Simchas Torah*, we finish reading the Torah and immediately start again from the beginning.

In our joy at having completed the Torah, we dance with it in a circle. Specifically in a circle. The Torah is endless. When we reach its end, we are already back at its beginning.

The final words of the Torah are: "*in the eyes of all Yisrael.*" And its first words: "*In the beginning.*" The circle dance of *Simchas Torah* joins the end to the beginning, that "*the eyes of all Yisrael*" should be fixed on the "*beginning.*"

A Brick of Sapphire - A Plank of Wood

Dear Journal,

Something very strange happened to me yesterday.

Yesterday was *Simchas Torah*. Somehow, I found myself celebrating the festival in a remarkably unremarkable Israeli town.

Graying stucco peeling from grayer concrete testify that this town isn't going to be another little New York, another Tel Aviv.

Anyway, yesterday I made my way to the town's municipal synagogue for *Simchas Torah*. There weren't a lot of people there. It's not a religious town. In fact the majority of those who were there were in their seventies and eighties. Most of them had all come to Israel after the war. Most of them had been in the camps.

The reason I'm writing all this is because something very strange happened there. They were all dancing around with their Torah scrolls, just like a normal *Simchas Torah*, singing and dancing and making a lot of noise. People making "*lechaim.*" Then all of a sudden, the singing and dancing stopped. A hush fell over the shul.

One of the old men went behind the Holy Ark. He brought out a wooden plank about a meter and a half long and put it on the floor in the middle of the Beis Kenesses. Slowly, as though summoned to some atavistic rite, all the older members of the shul handed their Torah scrolls to the youngsters, and silently began to circle the plank on the floor. Round and round they went, round and round. In total silence.

Continued on page nine

ROSH HASHANAH

Q

Why do we blow the shofar during the month of Elul?

A

After the sin of the golden calf, Moshe went up to Mount Sinai to receive the second set of Tablets on Rosh Chodesh Elul. On that day, the Jewish People sounded the shofar to remind themselves to stray no more after idol worship. Also, the sound of the shofar strikes awe into our hearts and inspires us to return to the ways of Torah.

• *Mishna Berura and Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 581*

Q

Where in the written Torah text does it tell us explicitly that the first day of Tisrei is Rosh Hashanah?

A

Nowhere. The Torah calls it “a day of shofar blowing.” (This is one of many examples showing how our observance depends on the continuous oral tradition dating back to Mount Sinai).

• *Bamidbar 29:1*

Q

We eat apples dipped in honey to symbolize a sweet year. Why do we choose apples above other sweet fruits?

A

Isaac blessed Jacob with the words: “The fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field which Hashem has blessed...” (*Bereishis 27:27*). The Talmud identifies this “field” as an apple orchard.

• *Ta’anis 29b, Biyur Hagra*

Q

What two blessings do we say before sounding the shofar?

A

“Blessed are You... who has commanded us to *hear* the sound of the shofar,” and the *shehechyanu* blessing.

• *Orach Chaim 581:2*

Q

Which Book of *Tanach* does the beginning of the *Tashlich* prayer come from?

A

The Book of Micha (7:18-20).

Q

What three barren women were ‘remembered’ by Hashem on Rosh Hashanah?

A

Sara, Rachel and Chana. On Rosh Hashanah it was decreed that these barren women would bear children.

• *Tractate Rosh Hashanah 10b*

Q

A person’s yearly allowance is fixed on Rosh Hashanah, except for three types of expenses. What are they?

A

Expenses for Shabbos, Yom Tov, and the cost of one’s children’s Torah education.

• *Ba’er Hetaiv Orach Chaim 242:1*

Q

We refer to the binding of Isaac in our prayers when we say: “Answer us as You answered Abraham our father on Mount Moriah...” What was Abraham’s prayer on Mount Moriah?

A

He prayed that Mount Moriah should remain a place of prayer for all future generations (*Onkelos 22:14*). Also, he prayed that his sacrifice of the ram should be considered as though he had actually sacrificed Isaac.

• *Rashi 22:13*

Q

Why, even in Israel, are there two days of Rosh Hashanah, whereas other festivals in Israel are celebrated for only one day?

A

Before our current exile, we did not have a fixed calendar as we do today. Rather, the Supreme Torah court in Jerusalem determined our calendar on a month to month basis. They did this on the first day of every month, based on witnesses testifying that they had seen the new moon. Therefore, the people outside Israel had insufficient time to find out the exact date in time for the festivals. The “two-day festival” arose to correct this situation. In Israel, however, the people lived close enough to Jerusalem to find out the exact date of all the festivals except Rosh Hashanah. Since Rosh Hashanah occurs on the first day of the month, even those living in Jerusalem sometimes needed to observe it for two days, if the witnesses failed to arrive.

Q

What halacha applies to the *shehechyanu* blessing on the second night of Rosh Hashanah which does not apply on the second night of any other holiday?

A

On the second night of Rosh Hashanah it is customary to wear a new garment or to have a new fruit on the table when saying the *shehechyanu* blessing. Thus, the

shehechyanu blessing applies not only to the holiday, but to the new garment or new fruit as well. (This is done in order to accommodate the minority of halachic authorities who rule that no *shehechyanu* blessing be said on the second night of Rosh Hashanah.)

• *Taz 600:2*

I Didn't Know That!

The word "shofar" is related to the Hebrew word "*shapair*," which means "to improve." The shofar blast tells us: "Improve your ways!"

YOM KIPPUR

Q

Passover commemorates the going out of Egypt. Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah. What historical event can Yom Kippur be said to commemorate?

A

Moshe came down from Mount Sinai on the tenth of Tishrei with the second set of Tablets, signifying forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. Yom Kippur can be said to commemorate this event, the first national day of forgiveness for the Jewish People.

Q

For what kinds of sins does Yom Kippur *not* atone?

A

Sins committed against other people, including hurting someone's feelings. Yom Kippur does not atone for these sins until the perpetrator gains forgiveness from the victim himself.

• *Orach Chaim 606:1*

Q

What should someone do if the person he wronged does not forgive him the first time?

A

He should try at least two more times to gain forgiveness.

• *Orach Chaim 606:1*

Q

Why is the *vidui* confession included during the *mincha* prayer the afternoon *before* Yom Kippur?

A

Lest one choke while eating the pre-Yom Kippur meal and die without atonement, or lest one become intoxicated and unable to concentrate on the prayers at night.

• *Mishna Berura 607:1*

Q

On Yom Kippur we refrain from: Working, eating, drinking, washing, anointing, family relations and wearing leather shoes. Which three of these prohibitions are more severe than the others?

A

Eating, drinking, working.

• *Mishna Krisus 1:1*

Q

In what two ways does the prohibition against eating food on Yom Kippur differ from the prohibition against eating pork the entire year?

A

1. Although any amount is *forbidden*, eating pork is not punishable by a *Sanhedrin* until one has eaten food equal in volume to the size of an olive. Eating on Yom Kippur, on the other hand, is punishable for eating even a date-sized piece, which is smaller than an olive.

• *Mishna Berura 612:1*

2. Eating on Yom Kippur incurs the punishment of *kares* — spiritual excision, whereas eating pork does not.

Q

Who wrote the prayer "*Unesaneh Tokef*" said during the chazan's repetition of *musaf*?

A

"*Unesaneh Tokef*" was written by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Germany about 1000 years ago. • *Machzor*

Q

Why do we read the book of Yona on Yom Kippur?

A

The repentance of the people of Ninveh serves as an inspiration to us to repent, and shows us that repentance can overturn a Divine decree.

• *Shelah Hakadosh*

Q

In what two ways does *havdalah* after Yom Kippur differ from *havdalah* after Shabbos?

A

After Yom Kippur, the blessing over spices is omitted from *havdalah*. Also, the source of the flame used for *havdalah* after Yom Kippur must be a fire kindled *before* Yom Kippur.

• *Orach Chaim 624:3,4*

Q

Ideally, what mitzvah should one begin immediately after Yom Kippur?

A

Building the *succa*.

• *Rema, Orach Chaim 624:5*

lating shapes of its melody which always returns to the *tonic*, to the fundamental note - *Doe* - as in *Doe, Re, Mi* etc.

The mesmerizing quality of chant comes from an exquisite longing always to return to the root note of the scale, the *tonic*. To return to *Doe*.

The development of Western music shows an increasingly complex use of harmony. In the Baroque period, great importance was attached to the mathematical interlacing of melody lines. This was known as *counterpoint*. Composers such as J.S. Bach were sometimes called upon to instantly compose *fugues* to show their technical prowess. But still the melodic structure always returned to the *tonic*, to *Doe*.

The Breakdown Of Tonality

The Twentieth Century has produced the highest level of technological civilization known to man, and at the same time the greatest violence and barbarism. It has also produced the greatest era of atheism.

This chaos in the modern world-view has been reflected in its music. During the First World War, a revolution in music theory took place, overthrowing all J.S. Bach's rules of harmony and counterpoint, and changing the way music had sounded for hundreds of years.

If you play all the notes on a piano, both black and white, from one *Doe* to the *Doe* above it, you will have played twelve notes. This scale is called the *chromatic* scale. Western music from the earliest times was founded on the diatonic scale which, depending on the key, consists of seven of those twelve notes. Not all of the notes are used at the same time. Everyone knows the diatonic scale. It was made famous by that great musicologist Julie Andrews in her unforgettable contribution to Western culture: "*Doe - a deer, a female deer...etc.*"

During World War One, Arnold Schoenberg invented the twelve-tone scale. Schoenberg decided to use *all* the notes in the chromatic scale. After this, there was no longer a hierarchy of melodic structure where every note inevitably led back to the *tonic*, to the root note, to *Doe*. Now there was no king. No note to which all the others bent their heads in submission. In a sense Schoenberg was saying "All notes are equal! There is no pivotal note. There is no King! There is no *Doe*!"

Schoenberg refined his creation and brought it to

perfection in the 1920's. After Schoenberg, composers became more interested in dissonance than in harmonious consonance. Once Arnold Schoenberg had "dethroned" the rules of diatonic composition, many other composers followed suit with their own compositional styles. The door was now open. These other composers didn't follow Schoenberg but invented their own rules of composition. Their methods and styles, including Schoenberg's twelve-tone music, are called "atonality."

Schoenberg unleashed a genie on the world. After he had breached the walls of the diatonic scale, eventually almost anything came to be called 'music.'

In 1943, Germany was burning a people, composing the darkest cacophony that man could conceive. In the world of music, John Cage achieved notoriety for his "prepared pianos." These were pianos, modified by jamming all types of materials — from wood to screws to weather-stripping — into pianos to alter their sound, and then having pianists strike the keys randomly. In other compositions, he used a variety of radios or altered tape recordings all playing simultaneously, or microphones attached to human bodies in motion.

His most famous composition was "4:33". A piece for the piano in which the pianist sat in silence in front of the keys of the piano for 4 minutes and 33 seconds.

Art reflects life. Music reflects life. Just as tonality became 'a-tonality', so monarchy became 'an-archy'.

Exit The King

As part of the Creation, Hashem wanted there to be a tangible symbol of His Kingship. From this symbol we would be able to catch the smallest glimpse, the most distant echo of the Glory of Heaven, its Awesomeness and its Majesty. For this reason, Hashem created monarchy. Earthly monarchy is the most distant whisper of the ineffable Majesty of the King of Kings.

A few hundred years ago, kings ruled with absolute authority in their lands. More recently, nations have been unwilling to give to their rulers unbounded dominion; rather the king was shackled by the rule of the state. Nowadays,

the notion of kingship has been virtually extinguished. Now, so to speak, "all pigs are equal."

There remain but a few nations who still conserve constitutional kingship, but even in those countries, the monarchy is but a pale puppet show — fodder for the tabloid press. Princes and princesses look and behave

"When the Romans burned the House of God and exiled the Jewish People, they also exiled our music. They took it into captivity and made it sing for a new master."

like creatures of the gutter. Gone is the whisper of Majesty.

Since monarchy was created only to give us a micro-cosmic semblance of the Heavenly Kingship, how should we understand this ebbing of the kings? In other words, if the earthly monarchy is no more than a reflection of Hashem's Kingship, and a means to make it easier for us to accept the dominion of Hashem upon ourselves, why has the power and the status of monarchy been allowed to wane?

Hashem relates to us through measure for measure. When the world at large believed in G-d, we were afforded an ever present representation of Hashem's Kingship in the form of the rule of kings. This was mirrored in the arts, in music, in the diatonic scale, where all notes led back to the king — to *Doe*. When the world turned to atheism, then Hashem withdrew the power of kings and there was a concomitant loss of tonality in music. Similarly in the visual arts, realism gave way to increasing abstraction and nihilism.

I remember as a small boy in 1953 watching one of

the first postwar television broadcasts in England. It was of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. It went on all day. And we watched it all day. We didn't get tired or bored. We squinted at that murky gray fishbowl in awe and fascination. Even in my short life, how has that most distant whisper of the divine Kingdom of Heaven become almost completely inaudible!

And there we stand on Rosh Hashanah at the coronation of the King of Kings. We get tired and bored. It all seems too long. We struggle to have some feeling of connection to this most awesome of days...

The basic tenet of Judaism is that Hashem is One. When a king united his people he was also the symbol of their unity. Like the note to which all the other notes inevitably return.

Only when the world perceives the Oneness of Hashem will

kingship return to mankind.

And only that "will bring us back to *Doe*..."

Sources:

- Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Rabbi Moshe Silverberg
- <http://www.cel.sfsu.edu/msp/Studentworks/Files/Debrief.html>

Rabbi Pinchas Kanterowitz

HEARING THE LION'S ROAR

"When the lion roars, who does not fear?"

• Amos 3:8

The Hebrew word for lion is "aryeh." It is spelled "alef, resh, yud, hey."

The *alef* represents the month of Elul, which begins with the letter *alef*, the *resh* represents Rosh Hashanah, the *yud* represents Yom Kippur, and the *hey* represents Hoshana Raba, the "judgment day" of the festival of Succos. These are the four periods of Divine judgment, known as the "days of awe." Hearing the roar, fearing the roar, we are awakened to repentance to prepare for the judgment. Moreover, we beseech the King of Kings to truly transform the "days of awe" into "days of mercy."

• Rabbi Zeidle Epstein, *shlita*



to proclaim Hashem's Unity. The *Parsha* of *Ha'azinu* is written in the form of a *song* to remind the Jewish People that all creation resonates in harmony with their actions, whether for good or for bad.

Gardening - Jewish Style 1

**"May My teaching drop like rain,
may My utterance flow like the dew" (32:1)**

A violent storm. Winds howling. The rain lashes the ground. It seems as though the earth is being torn apart by the weather. And yet without this heavy downpour, nothing will grow properly. For if only the dew waters the ground, the heat of the sun will burn and shrivel the seeds.

Only if heavy rains water the ground will the dew do its job of bringing forth the flowering blossoms.

This is the way of Torah. If a person labors in the Jewish law, filling himself with the methodology and torrent of Talmudic logic, even though it may seem that he is struggling against a deluge, he will eventually bring forth strong and beautiful flowers.

He may feel storm-driven and pounded by the rains. Nevertheless, the fruits of his labors will also include the esoteric parts of Torah, the 'dew' of *Aggadita*. They will flower in his hands.

However, if he concerns himself only with the 'dew' of the Torah, the *Aggadita*, then in the withering 'sun,' the bright lights of secular cynicism, his Torah wisdom will wither and die, lacking the deep rain to nourish its roots.

Gardening - Jewish Style 2

"May my teaching fall like rain..."

The words of the Torah are like rain. Just as rain, when it falls, seems to leave no impression on the plants, and only later when the sun emerges from the clouds and shines on the earth do we see the results of the rain, so too are the words of the Torah. Even though at the time of hearing them their influence cannot be detected, nevertheless, in due course their effect becomes apparent.

Marriage - Jewish Style

One of the greatest figures in the history of Diaspora Jewry was Rabbeinu Gershom, who lived some one thousand years ago. He was given the title *Meor Hagolah* — the "Illuminator of the Exile." Why was this illustrious title given to him and not to Rashi, or to Maimonides? What was so special about Rabbeinu Gershom that he merited such an august title?

Rabbeinu Gershom instituted a prohibition against

divorcing a wife against her will, and also a ban on having two wives at the same time. But why was that so special?

As we mentioned above, the relationship of the Jewish People to Hashem is that of a wife to a husband. Hashem 'married' the Jewish People at Sinai, and even though when we were sent into exile it seemed that He had divorced us, the decrees of Rabbeinu Gershom are a guarantee to us, so to speak, that *Hashem cannot divorce us against our will, nor can He 'take another wife' from amongst the nations.*

It is for this reason that Rabbeinu Gershom is called the "Illuminator Of the Exile." Because of his decrees, however dark the Exile becomes, it has a silver lining in it. For eventually Hashem must take us back. *We refuse to be divorced, and Hashem can 'marry' no other save His people Israel.*

Haftorah

Hoshea 14:2-10, Yoel 2:11-27; Micha 7:18:20

A Burning Sensation

An unbelievable sight. A young fellow with all the visible signs of an Orthodox Jew walks into MacTreife's Burger Bar and orders a cheeseburger! He then proceeds to eat it in full view of everyone.

Later he suffers tremendous heartburn from the indigestible fast-food. Much later, however, he suffers an even greater 'burn' in the spiritual department.

The Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called *Shabbos Shuva*, the *Shabbos of Return*. The name is taken from the first verse of the Haftorah "*Return O Israel to Hashem for you have stumbled in your iniquity...*"

The Meshech Chochma asks the question, "What does it mean to 'stumble' in 'iniquity'?" If a person is already doing something wrong, how can he make it worse by *stumbling* in it?

There are two aspects to wrongdoing. The offense in itself and the desecration of Hashem's name that may result from it.

It's one thing for a Jew to slink into MacTreife's wearing jeans, in 'plain-clothes.' It's quite another to waltz in wearing full uniform. It's one thing to commit *iniquity*, to give in to one's desires, but it's quite another to *stumble* and desecrate Hashem's name in public.

Sources:

Shabbos Shuva - Sfas Emes

Sympathetic Vibration - Rabbi Gedalia Schorr

Gardening, Jewish Style 1 - based on the *Netziv*, as heard from Rabbi Pinchas Kanterowitz

Gardening, Jewish Style 2 - Rabbi Bunim M'Pshische

Marriage, Jewish Style - Rabbi Moshe Shapiro

A Burning Sensation - Rabbi Calev Gestetner

It was all over in a couple of minutes. As perfunctorily as it had started, so it ended. The shul returned to a typical *Simchas Torah* scene just as though nothing had happened. Children on the shoulders of their fathers waving flags, singing and dancing.

As the man who had brought out the plank emerged from the back of the holy Ark after putting it away, I asked him about what I had just witnessed.

This is what he said to me:

“During the war, we were all in the same camp. By a miracle, someone managed to smuggle in a *Sefer Torah*. It was just before *Simchas Torah*. We were very frightened, maybe the Germans, *yemach shemam*, would find it. So we pulled up the wooden floor and hid it under the floorboards.

“When *Simchas Torah* came, the Germans were everywhere; they must have known something was up. There was no way we could risk taking out the Torah from its hiding place, and we were afraid that the guard would hear us if we made a noise. So we just walked around and around the place on the floor under which the Torah was hidden. They came in once. We just pretended we were going to our bunks or out the door till they left and then we carried on circling.

“So now, every year, we celebrate that *Simchas Torah* in the camps the way you just saw.”

At the end of Parshas Mishpatim, the Torah describes a brick of Sapphire. “*Moshe, Aaron, Nadav and Avihu and seventy of the elders of Israel ascended. They saw the G-d of Israel, and under His feet was the likeness of a brick of sapphire, and its purity was like the essence of the heavens.*”

All the time that the Jewish People were slaves, this brick was before Hashem. This brick was a memorial to their suffering when they built the treasure cities of Egypt with bricks of mortar.

The “essence of heavens” refers to the light and joy before Hashem when they were redeemed.

Whenever the Torah describes the attributes of Hashem, it is so we may strive to emulate them.

Even when “*the essence of the heavens*” was revealed — even in the light and joy of redemption — “*the brick of sapphire,*” of suffering, was still there too.

By reminding ourselves of our suffering at the height of our joy, we experience an entirely new dimension in our rejoicing. Through this, we can understand on a deeper level the good that the Almighty bestows upon us, and thank Him with a full heart that He has brought us again to the great *simcha* of completing the reading of His holy Torah.

Spending and Saving

“The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov.” (33:4)

There is a great difference between an *inheritance* and a *heritage*.

An inheritance is the sole possession of the one who inherits it. It is his to do with as he pleases: To consume,

to invest or to squander. However, a heritage must be cherished and preserved and passed on intact to the next generation.

The Torah is our heritage — *not* our inheritance. We must pass it on to the next generation as we found it, and not abridged, altered or adulterated.

Seeing and Believing

“...before the eyes of all Yisrael.” (34:12)

These are the final words of the Torah. The entire Jewish People were witnesses to all the miracles that were wrought through Moshe Rabbeinu. With their own eyes they saw, and “seeing is believing.”

In other words, their *believing* came from *seeing*; their faith in Moshe came from daily contact with miracles.

These miracles were witnessed not by a small group who then convinced others through charisma or coercion. Rather, the entire nation — *the eyes of all Yisrael* — were witnesses to the miracles. They *all saw* the dividing of the Red Sea, the Voice at Sinai, and the manna.

Manna was the miraculous food that the Jewish People ate every day for forty years. Forty years, day-in day-out. They saw it with enough regularity for it to have become mundane.

This was the seeing that founded the rock-like faithfulness of the Jewish People throughout the long night of exile. With their own eyes they saw that Moshe, the prophet of Hashem, was authentic, and his Torah, the Torah of the Living G-d, was Truth.

Sources:

What Goes Around - adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin
A Brick of Sapphire - A Plank of Wood - Rashi;
 Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz; Zale Newman; Moshe Averick
Spending And Saving - Rabbi Nachman Bulman
Seeing And Believing - Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh

Haftorah - Shmini Atzeres/Simchas Torah

Yehoshua 1:1

Immediately when we finish reading the Torah, we start again “In the beginning of God’s creating the heavens and the earth...” In this way we remind ourselves that immersing ourselves in the truths of the Torah is an eternal task, without beginning or end. The Haftorah states “*And Hashem spoke to Yehoshua bin Nun, Moshe’s lieutenant, saying ‘Moshe my servant is dead. You arise and cross over the Jordan...’*” to remind us that the work of the Torah is not that of a human being, not even the highest, but it is Hashem’s work that began with the revelation at Sinai, and its accomplishment is not dependent on the personality and life of any man, however great and sublime he may be.

Adapted from Dr. Mendel Hirsch,
 based on the words of his father, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

I Didn't Know That!

“Al Chet ...”

The word ‘chet’— sin — has a silent “alef” at the end. This indicates that a person does not sin unless he first forgets about Hashem, who is called “Alufo shel Olam” — “Master of the World.”

- *Ta'amei Haminhagim in the name of the Degel Machaneh Efraim in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov*

SUCCOS

Q

According to the Torah, what three basic requirements define a material as valid for use as a succa roof?

A

It must grow from the ground, no longer be connected to the ground, and not be receptive to *tumah* (ritual defilement).

- *Orach Chaim 629:1*

Q

If the succa causes discomfort (e.g., it's too cold) to the extent that under similar conditions you would leave your very own house, you are exempt from the mitzvah. Why?

A

Because the commandment of living in a succa is to dwell in the succa for seven days the same way you dwell in your house the rest of the year.

- *Mishna Berura 640:13*

Q

What two things are forbidden to do outside of the succa all seven days of the festival?

A

Eat (an ‘established’ meal) or sleep.

- *Orach Chaim 639:2*

Q

What is the absolute minimum number of meals a person is required to eat in the succa during the seven day holiday?

A

One. Eating a meal in the succa the first night of Succos is a requirement. The rest of the festival, a person can eat ‘snacks’ which are not required to be eaten in a succa. (Outside Israel, one must eat a meal the second night of Succos as well. However, there is no requirement to live outside Israel!)

- *Orach Chaim 639:3*

Q

Besides referring to the tree and its fruit, what does the word “esrog” mean literally?

A

Beauty.

- *Ramban Vayikra 23:40*

Q

What is the minimum length of a lulav?

A

Its spine must be at least 4 *tefachim* (halachic handbreadths).

Q

What is the maximum percentage a person is required to add to the purchase price of his esrog in order to obtain an esrog of greater beauty?

A

33.3%

- *Orach Chaim 656:1*

Q

On the Shabbos that occurs during Succos, we read the Book of Koheles, in which King Solomon refers to himself as “Koheles.” Why is King Solomon called Koheles?

A

Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on Succos after the Sabbatical year.

- *Rashi, Koheles 1:1*

Q

What prohibition could a person transgress simply by sitting in the succa on the eighth day of Succos?

A

Bal Tosif — “Do not add to the mitzvos.” The commandment to live in the succa applies for only seven days. To sit in the succa on the eighth day with intent to fulfill the mitzvah transgresses “*bal tosif*.”

- *Orach Chaim 666:1*

Q

We hold a *tallis* over the heads of the people who read the end of the Torah and the beginning of the Torah. Why?

A

It represents the wedding canopy, symbolizing that through the Torah we wed ourselves to Hashem.

I Didn't Know That!

Tishrei is called the seventh month, because it has seven mitzvos in it: Shofar, fasting on Yom Kippur, succa, lulav, esrog, hadass and aravah.

- *Avudraham*

One should dance and sing vigorously in honor of the Torah, just as King David danced ecstatically in front of the Holy Ark of the Torah. It was said about the Gaon of Vilna that he danced before the Torah scroll with all his might.

- *Mishna Berura 669:10*

Hoshana Rabba is identified with the *Ushpizin* guest King David. King David woke every midnight to study Torah. The moon, too, the symbol of David's dynasty, ‘pays tribute’ to King David on this night: The moon rises at midnight on Hoshana Rabba. Its light helps us study Torah till dawn!

line that “you shall dwell in them as you live in your own home,” there is no escaping the feeling that this is only a “temporary dwelling.” When dining room, living room and bedroom all become combined in an area equal in size to only one of these units, and when furniture is kept down to a bare minimum, the dwellers of the *succah* are keenly aware that this is not a permanent situation.

The value of such an experience emerges from the classic tale of the Jew who came to visit the famous Torah giant, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, *atzal*, (the Chafetz Chaim) in his humble abode in the Polish town of Radin. “Where is your furniture?” asked the astonished visitor of the saintly sage when he saw how barely furnished the room was. “And where is yours?” was the Chafetz Chaim’s response. “I have no furniture with me because I am only passing through,” explained the visitor. “I, too, am only passing through this world,” said the Chafetz Chaim, “for our lives here are only a preparation for the real world, the World to Come. For merely passing through this corridor of time I have enough furniture.”

In our pursuit of creature comforts and a higher standard of living we inevitably become ensnared in the illusion that we are here to stay forever and must therefore try make the most of it in terms of enjoyment. A week in a temporary home where there is only room for the bare essentials of survival restores our focus on the transient nature of our entire existence and provides us with at least a part of the transcendent perspective of the Chafetz Chaim.

Another vital lesson of the *succah* was colorfully summarized by a great Chassidic leader who said that “the mitzvah of *succah* is the only one you can immerse yourself in even with your boots.” There are 248 positive commandments, but all of them require only a portion of our physiology for their performance: e.g., for *tefillin* we utilize the arm and head, for prayer, the *Shema* and Torah study our mouths and brains, for waving the four species on *Succos* our hands. Only when it comes to the mitzvah of dwelling in the *succah* do we totally immerse ourselves in the fulfillment of the command.

(*Yishuv Eretz Yisrael* is another *mitzvah* in which a Jew can

totally immerse himself but it is limited by geography, *succah* provides this opportunity wherever a Jew lives.)

This is a crucial perspective for every Jew to develop. His religious life is not limited to the time he spends in the syna-

gogue or when he is fulfilling one of those 248 commands. He is expected to serve Hashem when he eats, sleeps and is involved in the pursuit of his livelihood.

The key to this approach is the Biblical guideline of “know Him in all your ways” which our Sages have interpreted as a challenge to dedicate even our most mundane acts “*leshaim Shamayim*” — for Heaven’s sake. If you eat, sleep and work in order to have the physical and economic well-being required for performing Hashem’s mitzvos you are considered as serving Him all of the time. How effectively does the *succah* home, with its enveloping of all our daily functions in the sanctity of divine service, bring home this important message to our minds and hearts.

One more dimension of the *Succos* experience is based on our preference for the translation of “shelters” rather than “booths.” The nuclear age in which we grew up fostered a certain sense of doomsday, with grim visions of someone on the other side of the world pressing a button and unleashing a deadly storm of missiles capable of destroying a significant portion of the human race. Even with the collapse of such a threat from a Cold War escalation into a hot one there still

lurks the awful menace of suicidal terrorists blowing themselves up along with so many others and the access that such mass murderers have to nuclear weapons sold to the highest bidder.

The most depressing aspect of this doomsday feeling is that there is no salvation in any shelter designed by man. The *succah* reminds us that when Jews in the desert faced the dangers of a blazing sun or merciless cold they were provided with the shelter of pillars of cloud miraculously placed above and around them by Divine Mercy. It is this concept that Heaven will provide shelter against every danger — natural or man-made — which gives us the confidence to joyfully go on living our lives and dedicating

every moment of them to Hashem Who will envelop us in His love and protection just as we envelop ourselves in the sanctity of the *succah*.

“... A week in a temporary home where there is only room for the bare essentials of survival restores our focus on the transient nature of our entire existence...”

“... Heaven will provide shelter against every danger — natural or man-made — which gives us the confidence to joyfully go on living our lives and dedicating every moment of them to Hashem.”

“And inscribe all the children of Your covenant for a good life.”

Rosh Hashanah prayers

THE OHR SOMAYACH FAMILY
wishes you a *Ksiva V'chasima Tova*.

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE DEANS AND FOUNDERS OF OHR SOMAYACH...



ב"ט ז'

Jerusalem / Erev Rosh Hashanah 5758

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On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, Jews traditionally wish one another: "May you be inscribed for a Good Year."

To our Ohrnet Readers - members of the Ohr Somayach family - we would like to personally offer this blessing to you and your loved ones.

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Ksiva V'chasima Tova,

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