

Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חיזוק (ברכות לב:) - שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו (רש"י)

A Sichah from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein shlita, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez - Hoshana Rabbah 5774 # 77

The Time of Our Rejoicing - זמן שמחתנו

We know that the festivals are called by many names. Sukkos is called the Time of Our Rejoicing, Pesach is the Time of Our Freedom, and Shavuos is referred to as the Time of the Giving of Our Torah. I've been asked as to the meaning of the unique name given to Sukkos. The term used for Pesach, namely the Time of Our Freedom, is understandable, given that it was then we left *Mitzrayim* and attained freedom from bondage. Shavuos as well, makes sense, as it was on Shavuos that we received the Torah on Har Sinai. Sukkos though, is a commemoration to the ענני הכבוד - *the Clouds of Glory* that encircled us in the desert. We are not told of any extra joy that was present at that time, and hence the question; why is Sukkos called the Time of Our Rejoicing?

Let us begin by bringing the words of the Ramchal in *Derech Hashem* (this idea is also brought in many other works). The festivals are not days in which we merely remember past events that occurred to our people, rather, every single year at the time of the festivals, the spiritual bounty that descended to the world at the initial time of the event return to the world. The spiritual powers that emanated the world back then, come back and re-energize our current world.

Let us explain this in more depth. Pesach, which is called the Time of Our Freedom, does not merely refer to the physical escape from bondage. Actually, it more accurately refers to the process of freeing our souls from the impurities of Egypt. During Ma'ariv we recite, ויוצא את עמו ישראל מתוכם - *And He took His nation, Yisroel, out from their (Egypt's) midst - an eternal freedom*. How can we understand such a statement given that there have been many exiles since our exodus from Egypt? The answer lies in the term "eternal freedom" which is actually a reference to a spiritual freedom, not a physical one. Upon leaving *Mitzrayim*, *Klal Yisroel* left the 49 levels of impurity that were present in *Mitzrayim* and merited freedom from the *yetzer harah*. Chazal tell us (*Avos* 6:2), "You will not find a free man other

than the man who is involved in Torah". This is the freedom referred to on Pesach; an escape from the spiritual shackles of the *yetzer harah*. This is the spiritual bounty that comes down to our world every Pesach.

During the days of Sfirah between Pesach and Shavuos, the ability to prepare for and desire Torah return to the world. During these days every person can tremendously grow in his התורה - *the ways through which the Torah is acquired*. The Mishna in *Avos* (Ch.6) tells us that there are forty eight ways in which the Torah is acquired, and we know that there are forty nine days of the Omer. Each *kinyan* is paralleled by one of the days of the Sfirah, with the final extra day, strengthening and fortifying all previous 48 levels of growth.

Shavuos, the Time of the Giving of Our Torah, is befittingly the most auspicious time to merit success in Torah learning. This is the spiritual bounty that descends to the world every Shavuos. One of the reasons we stay awake the night of Shavuos, is so that we can take advantage of this precious time to merit success in Torah for the whole year. When we refer to Shavuos as *Zman Matan Toraseinu - the Time of the Giving of Our Torah*, we are not referring to a one-time event many years ago, rather to a recurring process that repeats itself every year. Based upon one's level of preparedness for receiving the Torah (just as was the case in the desert), he will merit great success in Torah for the year following Shavuos.

The names of the festivals are not in reference to yesteryear, but to the current spiritual powers that make themselves available in our world. Every Pesach one can tap into the ability to overcome his physical drives and *yetzer harah*, and attain spiritual freedom. With this in mind, the name of Sukkos, *Zman Simchaseinu - the Time of Our Rejoicing*, is not in reference to the Sukkos in the desert, rather to our present spiritual state during Sukkos. Sukkos is now, and always was and will be, a time of joy.

The Yalkut (*Emor* 654) tells us that the term *simcha* – joy is mentioned regarding Sukkos three times, regarding Shavuos once, and regarding Pesach not at all. The Yalkut explains that the judgment upon one's crops is exacted on Pesach, whereas the judgment upon the fruits of the trees is carried out on Shavuos. Given that people are worried about how their livelihood will play out in the following year, the terms for *simcha* are not emphasized. Sukkos though, follows Yom Kippur, of which we just emerged with a merciful verdict, as the verse says, כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם, – *For on this day He shall grant you atonement*. Furthermore, it is the time that one gathers his crops and brings it into his storehouses. This is the reason that the term *simcha* is used numerous times regarding Sukkos: ושמחת בהגך – *And you shall rejoice in your festival*, ושמחתם לפני השם אלוֹקֵיכֶם, – *And you shall rejoice in front of Hashem your G-d*, והיית אך שמח, – *And you shall be only joyous*.

As we've seen, there is a special mitzvah to be joyous on Sukkos, more so than during the other festivals. Given that we are obligated to be in a state of joy, *Shomayim* will grant assistance with the fulfillment of this obligation. This is the reason Sukkos is called זמן שמחתנו – *the Time of Our Rejoicing*, as there is an increased ability for one to be joyous during this time. As the Yalkut above explained, we are right after our "not guilty" verdict of Yom Kippur, and we have already gathered the crops and fruits into our homes. It stands to reason that one will find it easy to be in a state of joy, and fulfill his obligation of ושמחת בהגך.

One must remember though, that **the main way for one to rejoice is through a joy that is simultaneously serving Hashem**. The Rambam (*Hilchos Yom Tov* 6:20) writes that we were not commanded to be in a state of joy through lightheartedness and frivolity, rather to be joyous in a fashion that serves the Creator. The Midrash (*Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 1:31) says, אמר רבי אבין, זה היום עשה השם נגילה ושמחה בו. בא שלמה המלך ופירש נגילה אין אנו יודעין במה לשמוח אם ביום אם בהקב"ה. בא שלמה המלך ופירש נגילה ושמחה בך בהקב"ה, בך בישועתך, בך בתורתך, בך ביראתך. אמר רבי יצחק – *The verse says, "This is the day that Hashem has made; we shall rejoice in it". Rabbi Avin said, "We do not know if the verse means "in it" referring to the day, or "in Him" referring to Hashem". Shlomo Hamelech came and explained, "We shall be joyous in You - in Hashem, in You - in Your salvation, in You - in Your Torah, in You - in Your fear". Rabbi Yitzchok came and explained, "in You" (spelled בכ) refers to the twenty two letters with which You wrote Your Torah, and hence, "in You" refers to rejoicing in Your Torah*.

The main component of the joy we must feel on Yom Tov is through Torah and mitzvos. Even the joy we feel from the physical aspects, such as the gathering of the crops, is mainly to serve a spiritual purpose, namely, that now one

will be at ease, without worry, and be able to be in a proper state of joy, through Torah and mitzvos. Rabbeinu Yona (*Shaarei Teshuva* 4:9) writes that the purpose of the festive meal is in order to increase our *simcha* that comes from mitzvah observance. **The joy comes from the mitzvos and not from the materialistic, festive meal. The meal is meant as a way of strengthening our simcha which emanates from performing our obligations.** The meal allows one to feel physically satiated and therefore, he can then be free to feel complete joy through his mitzvos.

Joy from Mitzvah Performance – *Ahavas Hashem* (Loving G-d)

At the conclusion of Sukkos we celebrate Hoshana Rabbah, a day known as the final sealing of our verdict for the upcoming year. At the end of the *Hosha'anot* service we recite, ותיטיב לנו ההתימה... והתמנו בספר היים טובים, – *And make our seal (of the verdict) good, and seal us in the book of good life*. Prior to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur we find that people are very involved in preparing for the days of judgment. Everyone is involved in *teshuva*. Throughout Elul we blow the shofar. We have a custom to recite *Tehillim* daily before the Days of Awe. We recite Avinu Malkeinu the whole *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, and we add numerous prayers that show our desire to find favor in G-d's eyes and merit a positive verdict. Why is it, then, that we are not involved in such activities prior to Hoshana Rabbah, a day that is also ascribed as a day of judgment?

There are two levels within the repentance process, *teshuva* that stems from fear, known as תשובה מיראה and *teshuva* that stems from love of Hashem, namely, תשובה מאהבה. The former refers to a fear of being punished for misbehaving. We believe in the concept of *schar va'onesh* – *reward and punishment* based upon one's actions in this world. This is the level of *teshuva* one achieves throughout the Days of Awe, through all the aforementioned preparations. **On Yom Kippur one merits forgiveness, atonement, and full cleansing of all his transgressions. Through this, one's soul becomes pure. At this point, one can now reach the higher level of teshuva me'ahava – repentance out of a love for Hashem. Throughout Sukkos we prepare for this teshuva through our simcha shel mitzvah – the joy that stems from our mitzvah performance.**

Let us develop this idea with the words of the Messilas Yesharim (Ch.19). The Ramchal tells us that the joy one receives from Torah learning and from mitzvah performance is a branch of *ahavas Hashem* – *loving G-d*. It is truly difficult to attain the lofty level of *ahavas Hashem*, given that we cannot actually see Hashem. We know He exists and we believe in Him. But this level has branches. If a person is

caught in a flowing river which is about to carry him away, he will grab on to a nearby branch which stems out of a tree, and slowly he will then proceed to advance towards the tree trunk, located outside the river. The joy and happiness that a person who involves himself in Torah and mitzvos feels, actually stems from his desire to be close to Hashem. This is the way this individual is connected to the level of loving Hashem.

In reality, every single Jew carries within him a deep seeded love of Hashem. This is because the soul is a חלק אלוהי – lit. *A Divine part from Above*. The nature of man is to have *emunah* and *ahavahs Hashem* – *belief and love of Hashem*. There are numerous biases and calculations that allow a person to forget his *emunah*. Kohelles writes (7:29), האלוקים עשה את האדם ישר והמה בקשו השבונות רבים – *G-d has made man straight, yet they desire many calculations*. These “calculations” and biases cover up one’s built-in *emunah*. Just as the roots of a tree are tucked and hidden underground, only exposing the branches, so too, man’s natural love of Hashem is covered up. When one rejoices in Torah and mitzvos, it is equated to a branch which can be seen to all, above ground.

Harav Yisroel Salanter zt”l (*Eitz Pri*) writes of a man who has a prized student, and a son who isn’t following in his footsteps. The man is deeply attached to his beloved student. Some actually benefit greatly from their students, as was the case with Rabbi Yochanan and his student Reish Lakish (*Bava Metziah 84a*). The son, on the other hand, does not follow the father’s ways, nor does he accept his rebuke. Outwardly, it appears as if the man loves his student more than his son, yet if a life and death situation were to arise, in which he would be able to only save one of the two, he would surely save his son. The love for his son is deep seeded, only to be uncovered in a time of danger. In those situations, the love will openly reveal itself.

Love of Hashem is deeply buried within every Jew’s heart. Sometimes this love is covered up, and sometimes certain events can cause this love to explode outwards. There is a story about a man who became a *meshumad* (a Jew who abandons everything to do with *Yiddishkeit* and converts to a different religion). This man would help the Nazis, *Yimach Shmam*. Initially, he only assisted with technical things. When he was told to then facilitate with the actual murder of Jews, he adamantly refused. He commented that he would rather die as a Jew than to help the Nazis kill them. He gave up his life for this principle. This is the love of Hashem which resides deep inside every single Jew.

These stories are found in our generation as well. A simple Jew once told me that while he was in *chutz la’Aretz* (diaspora), he was approached at gun point and told to speak words of heresy. The man was willing to die rather

than utter such words. This is another example of a simple Jew who one cannot discern upon him that he possesses the love of Hashem in his heart, yet when the right situation presented itself, he was willing to die for this deep seeded love.

Another incident which occurred in Russia demonstrates this point. A certain *shul* was engulfed in flames which were about to destroy all the *sifrei Torah* inside. A man jumped in, no questions asked, and quickly saved the *sifrei Torah*. When asked why he acted in such a fashion, after all, in a state of life and death one does not have to risk his life the way he did, he responded that “The *sifrei Torah* would have burnt. How can anyone just stand idly by and watch?!” When one possesses love of Hashem and His holy Torah, there are no calculations. Just as when a father sees his son drowning, he immediately jumps in, not concerned with the risk to his own life. The love of his son negates all other considerations. *Ahavas Hashem* is the same way.

During Sukkos, *Zman Simchaseinu*, there is assistance from *Shomayim* to merit true joy from our mitzvos. This will in turn heighten and strengthen our love of Hashem, as we’ve explained that *simcha shel mitzvah* – *joy that stems from mitzvah observance* is a branch of *ahavas Hashem*. Through this, one will come to repent out a love of Hashem – *teshuva me’ahava*. This is the greatest way to prepare for the final verdict, sealed on Hoshana Rabbah.

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I wanted to add another point regarding the words of Chazal, יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ובמעשים טובים בעולם הזה מכל חיי העולם הבא – *One moment of repentance and good deeds in this world is worth more than all of Olam Habah* (*Avos 4:17*). This needs clarification, as we know that *Olam Habah* is the greatest reward that exists. All of the world’s pleasures pale in comparison with the pleasures of *Olam Habah*. The Prophet tells us (*Yeshaya 64:3*), עין לא ראתה אלוקים וזולתך יעשה למחכה לו, – *No eye other than Yours, Hashem, has seen, that which awaits in Olam Habah*. How then, could the Mishna tell us that one moment of *teshuva* and good deeds in this world is actually greater than the entirety of *Olam Habah*?

We must explain that indeed, *Olam Habah* is the greatest good that exists. Yet we know that there are many levels of *Olam Habah*. Chazal tell us in *Bava Basra* (75a) that every righteous person has his own canopy in *Olam Habah*, in accordance with his spiritual standing. *Kohelles* (12:5) also writes, הולך אדם אל בית עולמו, – *A man shall go to his eternal house*. Chazal explain this (*Vayikra Rabbah 18a*) that each and every person receives his personal share in *Olam Habah*, as the verse does not say בית עולם – “to the eternal house”, rather, to “his eternal house”. Just as in this world every

person has his own dwelling place, so too in *Olam Habah*, everyone will be accorded their appropriate lot, in accordance with their given level.

The Gemara in *Bava Basra* brought above, relates how each lot in *Olam Habah* will contain fire, as every person will be scorched by his friend's canopy. Given that each person shall only receive a portion in *Olam Habah* in exact measure to what he has achieved in this world, **upon seeing that his friend received a higher lot in *Olam Habah*, one will feel tremendous pain and suffering, no different than the feeling of being burnt. He will blame himself for not reaching a higher level. He will berate himself by saying, "Why didn't I try harder to perform more good deeds while in the world? Had I tried harder, with all my efforts, as I should have, I too would have merited a loftier canopy in *Olam Habah*.**

One might be granted *Olam Habah*, given all his good deeds, yet his lot might be limited. He will not merit the "fancier", loftier lot that he could have attained. If he will do more mitzvos and good deeds, or even involve himself in *teshuva* and coming closer to Hashem for even a single moment, he will earn a grander lot in *Olam Habah*. His entire lot in *Olam Habah* is less than it can be if he just engages in

one additional moment of mitzvos, good deeds, or *teshuva*. If he does not do this, he will surely regret it.

It is well known that upon his deathbed, the Gr"a held on to his *tzitzis*, crying and weeping, saying, "Here in *Olam Hazeih* we can perform the mitzvah of *tzitzis* through minimal effort and a minimal expense of a few coins. In *Olam Habah* there will no longer be an opportunity to perform mitzvos." I heard commented, that the fact the Gr"a did not cry over Torah study, is because Torah is indeed learnt in *Olam Habah*, as Chazal tell us (*Berachos* 64a), "The scholars have no rest in this world, or the next." Rashi explains that they go from one yeshiva to another, (here, and in the next world). This is why the Gr"a did not cry over Torah, as he will be learning also in *Olam Habah*, but mitzvos will no longer be available.

This is the explanation to the words of Chazal that a single moment of *teshuva* and good deeds here, is worth more than all of one's *Olam Habah*. One's entire lot in *Olam Habah* can be changed and expanded through one additional good deed or through a single moment of closeness to Hashem, brought by *teshuva*. Through these actions, his eternal lot will be of greater quality, hence, one deed is greater than his entire **current** lot in *Olam Habah*. May it be Hashem's will that we merit this!



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