

זכרון אריה



TORAH THOUGHTS

FOR

ROSH HASHONOH
YOM KIPPUR & SUKKOS



WITH INTRODUCTORY WORDS FROM
DAYAN YONASON ABRAHAM שליט"א



JEREMY RICHARDS







In Memory of my Dear Parents

Ivor and Jacqueline Richards a"h

L'ilui Nishmos Yitzchok Ben Nachman Halevi a"h and Yenta Bas Yisroel a"h
לעלוי נשמת יצחק בן נחמן הלוי ע"ה ולעלוי נשמת יענטע בת ישראל ע"ה

A truly selfless couple, completely devoted to their family, friends and community.

&

In Memory of my Dear Friend and Chavrusa

Dr. Leon Lewis a"h

L'ilui Nishmas Aryeh Ben Eliyohu a"h
לעלוי נשמת אריה בן אליהו ע"ה

זכרון אריה
for whom this is named
Leon was a deeply intelligent yet
sweet, self-effacing family man,
who personified "ללמוד וללמד..."
"to learn and to teach..."



ר"ה תשע"ט ~ R"H 5779



2018

~

ANY COPIES DISTRIBUTED IN YOUR SHUL
PLEASE KEEP IN SHUL UNTIL THE END OF SUKKOS



זכרון אריה



CONTENTS

Page

6. Introductory words from Dayan Yonason Abraham שליט"א
7. Thoughts for Rosh Hashonoh and the Season of Teshuvoh
15. Thoughts on Teshuvoh for Yom Kippur
18. Thoughts for Sukkos





Introductory words from Dayan Yonason Abraham שליט"א

Dayan, London Beis Din | Rav, Kehillas Toras Chaim | Nosi, Shuvu

My sincerest appreciation goes to Dayan Abraham שליט"א for kindly writing these introductory words. I thank him also for the guidance, support and inspiration he has given my family over many years.



כד' אלול תשע"ח

I have had the pleasure of learning through this booklet of insights into the Yomim Noraim and Succos compiled by my dear chaver R' Jeremy Richards שליט"א. Each essay is well researched, containing numerous diverse sources culled from a broad spectrum of Gedolei Torah, clearly structured and lucidly expressed. It will no doubt inform, inspire and enthuse the reader, providing meaning and insight into these special days.

I wish R' Jeremy much Hatzlocho in this, and in his future endeavours in disseminating Torah להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה.

בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה

Dayan Yonason Abraham



Thoughts for Rosh Hashonoh and the Season of Teshuvoh



At this time of year we offer many petitions to the Almighty, in an attempt to regain His favour and appeal to Him to accept our sincere attempts to return to Him in Teshuvoh. The following extracts from our tefillos set the scene for our discussion:

אַבִּינּוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, תְּהֵא הַשְּׁעָה הַזֹּאת שְׁעַת רַחֲמִים וְעֵת רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ. (סידור ומחזור)
Our Father, our King, may this moment be a moment of compassion and a time of favour before You.

*

כְּרַחֵם אָב עַל בְּנָיִם כִּן תְּרַחֵם ה' עָלֵינוּ. וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנו לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ (סידור, סליחות)
As a father acts with compassion to his children, so may You, L-rd, act with compassion towards us, and save us for the sake of Your name.

*

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ, וְקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרַצוֹן אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ:
הֲשִׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשְׁוֹבָה, חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקִדְמָם: (סליחות)
Listen to our voice, L-rd our G-d; spare us and have compassion on us, and accept our prayers with compassion and favour.
Return us, L-rd, to You, and we shall return; renew our days as of old.

*

עֲנֵנוּ ה' עֲנֵנוּ (סליחות)
Answer us, L-rd, answer us!

*

The start of a new year is a significant time. In the wider world it has become an opportunity for giving up smoking, sticking to a diet, drinking less alcohol or doing more regular exercise. While all of these are admirable and worthwhile endeavours, Rosh Hashonoh calls on us to respond to the unveiling of a new calendar with deeper commitments based on profound self-scrutiny. While for others a new year means pressing the reset button on health and physical wellbeing, ours heralds spiritual cleansing and realignment, the return to high personal standards of holiness and purity, and a revitalised relationship with our Creator.

The period which begins on Rosh Hashonoh and ends with climactic grandeur and drama on Yom Kippur is known as the עֶשְׂרֵת יָמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה, the Ten Days of Repentance. The word תְּשׁוּבָה literally means 'return.' This is a time for returning to G-d through a process of rejecting sin and committing to a better-lived future.

But to what relationship between Man and G-d are we to return?

Surely, a meaningful relationship between two people rests upon two essential elements: first, that they know and understand each other, and second, that actions take place between them which lead to favour, trust, understanding, caring, and friendship. When the interpersonal relationship is violated, perhaps through breach of trust, then a distance, even a void, can quickly separate the individuals, until deliberate and determined efforts are successfully made to restore the status quo. When this happens, and as the distance halts positive activity between the two, their knowledge and understanding of each other are somewhat weakened. There remains a connection, but it is by a thinner, more fragile thread. This is true of mature adults as well as young children, it is true between married couples and between work colleagues. Moreover, any relationship of worth requires constant effort to keep it strong, energised, vital.

The relationship between man and G-d breaks down in a similar way, following transgression:

"Sin causes man's remoteness from G-d." (Pinchas H. Peli ON REPENTANCE in the Thought and oral Discourses of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik, Orot Publ. 1980 p.28)

In his 'Shemoneh Perakim' (chapter 7) Rambam cites Yeshayahu 59:2 -

כי אם עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם הָיוּ מִבְּדֵלִים בֵּינְכֶם לְבֵין אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְחַטָּאוֹתֵיכֶם הִסְתִּירוּ פְּנֵים מִכֶּם מִשְׁמוֹעַ:
But your iniquities were separating between you and between your G-d,
and your sins have caused [Him] to hide [His] face from you that He not hear.

"...which means," Rambam writes, "that our sins - which, as we have said, are the evil qualities - are the partitions which separate us from G-d." (שמונה פרקים:ז)

For Rav Kook, sin frustrates the process by which a person seeks to integrate his own life into the unity underlying all things:

"Every sin distresses the heart, since it disrupts the unity between the individual personality and all existence."

(Orot Ha-Teshuva 8:3)

As a result of sin, one may feel a general malaise, a state of being in which "G-d's light does not shine upon him."

(Orot Ha-Teshuva chap.3; Ibid.)

Since the individual is alienated from the Source of all life, he also feels fragmented within himself. Teshuva is a "returning" that restores one to a state of integration, both with G-d and within oneself. In Rabbi Kook's own words, "Through teshuva everything returns to the Divine." (Orot Ha-Teshuva 4:2)

Teshuva is: an effort to return to one's original status, to the source of life and higher being in their fullness, without limitation and diminution, in their highest spiritual character, as illumined by the simple, radiant Divine light.

(Orot Ha-Teshuva 12:9)

This process begins through gentle self-criticism and an honest confrontation with one's character. (Orot Ha-Teshuva 15:1)

Then, with new humility, the individual can begin to rectify the 'fragments' of his deeds. (Orot Ha-Teshuva 14:5)

(L.A. Englander in 'Essays on the Thought and Philosophy of Rabbi Kook,' Ed. R. Ezra Gellman: p.122)

We find the following teachings in the thought of Rabbi Nachman of Breslev:

צריך למסור נפשו בכל יום ויום, ובכל שעה ושעה, ובכל רגע ורגע על מדת האמונה הקדושה,
כי אי אפשר לזכות לאמונה ברורה ומזוככת כי אם על-ידי מסירות נפש ממש... ועל כן אהובי, אחי היקר,
...רק הדבק נפשך במסירות נפש אליו יתברך, וזה יאיר עליך מדת האמונה.
ועל כן הצדיקים הגדולים במעלה נוראה ונפלאה שזוכים לאמונה ברורה ומזוככת
כל זה בא להם מתוקף מסירות נפשם אליו יתברך תמיד,
ובכל עת ורגע הם מוכנים למסור את נפשם אליו יתברך,
ועל כן מאיר עליהם אורו האין סוף, ברוך הוא, בגילוי נפלא. אשריהם ואשרי חלקם!

(אור אמונה י"ב, בספר אוצר האמונה: חסידי ברסלב)

A person should sacrifice his soul every day, and every hour, and every minute, for the holy trait of faithfulness;
for it is not possible to merit clear and pure faith except through true self-sacrifice...therefore my beloved, my precious brother,
...only let your soul cleave in self-sacrifice to Him, may He be blessed, and this will cause the trait of faithfulness to shine upon you.
Therefore, the great, righteous ones whose spiritual level is awesome and wondrous and who merit clear and pure faith,
all of this comes to them by virtue of their constant self-sacrifice towards Him, may He be blessed,
and at all times and in every moment they are ready to sacrifice their souls to Him, may He be blessed.
Through this, the light of the Eternal and Infinite One, may He be blessed, shines upon them, in wondrous revelation -
Fortunate are they, and fortunate is their lot!

צריך שתחוקק היטב בדעתך, ששלמות האמונה הקדושה הוא דיקא כשזוכה להכירו יתברך
בהכרה ברורה ומזוככת, עד שירגיש אותו יתברך שהוא אתו, עמו ואצלו ממש,
ועל-ידי-זה יפתח פיו וידבר עמו כאשר ידבר איש עם רעהו, והבן עם אביו...

(אור אמונה י"ד, בספר אוצר האמונה: חסידי ברסלב)

Etch well on your mind, that completeness of holy faith is reached only when one merits to know Him, may He be blessed
with clear and pure perception and awareness, until he feels Him, may He be blessed, that He is with him and actually next to him;
and through this he will be able to open his mouth and speak with Him just as a person speaks with his friend, and as a son with his
father...

We learn in these passages that emunoh, faith in G-d, rests on clear knowledge of Him, and a sharp awareness of His close presence, as well as on personal self-sacrifice for His sake. Here is the all important partnership of knowledge and understanding together with action that we discussed above, as the necessary foundations for a meaningful relationship. Only through a “clear and pure perception and awareness” of Hashem, together with “constant self-sacrifice” towards Him, can a person merit to have complete faith and to be illuminated by Hashem’s holy light.

The notions of faith in Hashem and knowledge of Him can be found in a dual approach of Rambam, and, in turn, in a fascinating interpretation of Rambam’s position in the writings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Let us enjoy a sublime and important passage from Rav Soloveitchik’s ‘On Repentance.’ Here we are told in no uncertain terms that to *believe* in G-d is not enough. Rather, it is necessary also to *know* Him, which is to achieve a personal, intimate sense of His Presence:

“When speaking of the existence of G-d, which is the content of the first positive commandment, he (Rambam) declares, in Sefer Hamitzvot...that we are commanded “to believe in the Divine”; on the other hand, in the “Laws of the Principles of Faith” (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah) in the Mishne Torah, Maimonides does not use the same word “to believe” (*le’ha’amin*) but rather the word “to know” (*lei’da*). He writes thus: “The foundation and mainstay of all wisdom is to know (*lei’da*) that there is a Primary Being Who is the Creator.” The use of both terms, “to believe” (*le’ha’amin*) and “to know” (*lei’da*), seems to indicate that all the principles of faith involve a dual commandment...

It may be said therefore that all the commandments are permeated by this dual obligation “to believe” and “to know.” The meaning of “to believe” is evident to us; however, the significance of “to know” is less easily defined.

...in the term “to know” (*lei’da*) the reference is to a state of continuous awareness - that the belief in G-d should cause Man to be in a state of perpetual affinity, of constant orientation, G-d should become a living reality that one cannot forget even for a minute...

This “interpretation” actually mirrors an explicit verse of the Bible: “In all thy ways know Him” (Proverbs 3:6). “In all thy ways” - meaning in all situations, in everything you do, whatever path you take, under all conditions - “know Him.” Be conscious of G-d’s existence at all times.

A man wakes at dawn and sees the sun rising or goes out at sunset and sees the fiery clouds which drape the horizon in the twilight of a weekday at dusk, and though he may be a physicist or another kind of scientist who is capable of interpreting the phenomena of sunset and sunrise in quantitative mathematical-scientific terms - still, he must see in the splendour of sunrise and sunset, in this wondrous cosmic regularity, a reflection of the glory of G-d, Whose primeval will was central to the dynamics of Creation and still animates all organic matter...

...“To know” (*lei’da*) means to see the sun rising and to immediately say the blessing “Creator of light and Producer of darkness,” or to see the sun setting and say the blessing “Creator of sunsets,” or to see trees blossom and recite a blessing over this, or to look at the sea and to respond by acknowledging “He Who fashioned Creation.”

In nature as a whole - and especially in its systematic regularity and in the technical character of its processes, in the scientific drama occurring within it, in the exact mathematical relationships between the natural phenomena and especially in the permanent laws of physics, the Primeval will of the Master of the Universe is reflected. A man goes outdoors on a fair summer’s day and sees the whole world blossoming - that man comes “to know” that there exists a Primary Being Who is the Originator of all that is. In every budding flower, in every rose opening its petals, in each ray of light and in every drop of rain - “to know that there is a Primary Being and that He is the Originator of all that is.”

Yet the “knowing” does not refer to nature alone. It is sufficient that a man reflect on past or present events, enough that he read the morning news in the paper - and he discerns the hand of Providence and hears the shofar calls of the Almighty. Man is under the obligation of fulfilling the positive commandment of “knowing” that there exists a Primary Being responsible not only for nature but for all of history as well.”

It is a positive commandment to see G-d’s presence in everything. Thus, in one’s own existence, too. When a person feels satisfied, his wife and children are in good health, his affairs are prospering, and he is able to live comfortably - then he feels gratitude towards the Creator of the Universe: he “knows” that there is a Primary Being.”

(Pinchas H. Peli ON REPENTANCE in the Thought and oral Discourses of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik, Orot Publ. 1980 pp.144-147)

Rabeinu Yonah writes that one should always have his thoughts directed towards G-d, “for a man does not know his time” - he never knows how long he has to live. A person should be constantly filled with anxiety regarding the righteousness of his deeds and determined to ensure that when his life is taken, whenever that may be, he will be returning his spirit in purity to his Maker:

כל עת יכון לקראת אלקיו, כי לא ידע האדם את עתו... (שערי תשובה, שער שני: ט"ו)

The requirement for one to be constantly aware of Hashem's presence is invoked by Rabbi Moshe Isserles, the 'Rema,' on the very first paragraph of the 'Orach Chaim' section of the Shulchan Aruch:

"שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד" (תהלים ט"ז:ח) הוא כלל גדול בתורה ובמעלות הצדיקים אשר הולכים לפני האלקים כי אין ישיבת האדם ותנועותיו ועסקיו והוא לבדו בביתו כשיבתו ותנועותיו ועסקיו והוא לפני מלך גדול ולא דבורו והרחבת פיו כרצונו והוא עם אנשי ביתו וקרוביו כדבורו במושב המלך כל שכן כשישים האדם אל לבו שהמלך הגדול הקב"ה אשר מלא כל הארץ כבודו עומד עליו ורואה במעשיו כמו שנאמר אם יסתר איש במסתרים ואני לא אראנו נאם ה' מיד יגיע אליו היראה וההכנעה בפחד השי"ת ובושתו ממנו תמיד (מורה נבוכים חלק ג' פרק נ"ב) ...

"I have placed the L-rd before me always." (Tehillim 16:8) This is an important rule in the fulfilment of the Torah and among the virtues of the righteous, who walk facing G-d. For the manner in which a person sits, moves about and pursues his business when he is alone at home is not the same as the manner in which he would sit, move about and pursue his business when facing a great king. Neither is his speech and his expansive uninhibited talkativeness when he is with the members of his household or his relatives as his speech would be where the king sits. Consequently, if a person will impress upon his mind that the Great King, the Holy One Blessed is He, Whose glory fills the entire universe, is standing over him and sees his actions (as it says, "Can a person hide in secret places and I will not see him?" says the L-rd [Yirmiyahu 23:24]), the fear and the submission which derives from awe of Hashem, may He be blessed, will certainly reach him immediately and he will always be apprehensive of his actions because of Him." (Guide for the Perplexed Part 3 Chap.52)

The phrase from Tehillim that is cited in partial form at the start of the passage above is worth a look in full:

שׁוֹיִתִּי ה' לְנֶגְדִי תָמִיד כִּי מִיְמִינִי בֵּל אֲמוֹט (תהלים ט"ז:ח)

I have placed the L-rd before me constantly;
because [He is] at my right hand, I will not falter. (Tehillim 16:8)

The appearance of these ideas at the very beginning of such an important sefer, one which became and remains the basic Rabbinic manual for daily Torah practice, speaks volumes about their significance. Moreover, it is fascinating that, as a preamble to this classic halachic work, the Rema quotes at some length from Rambam's philosophic book, the Guide for the Perplexed: Torah Law and Torah Thought are not separate and unrelated, but are inextricably interlinked and interdependent.

The lesson is clear: the integrity of all halachic observance rests on one's ability to constantly sense Hashem's presence at his side. That is the foundation and the safeguard for a life of genuine, enduring and unyielding commitment to halochah.

We saw above that Rabbi Nachman taught:

"A person should sacrifice his soul every day, and every hour, and every minute, for the holy trait of faithfulness."

A classic form of self-sacrifice in Jewish thought is 'Kiddush Hashem,' Sanctification of G-d's Name. In its broader sense, or perhaps in its simplest form, the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem has a more nuanced, constant and comprehensive application than might be apparent at first sight.

The mitzvos of Kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G-d's Name) and Chillul Hashem (Desecration of G-d's Name) are learnt from following pesukim:

וְלֹא תִחַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם קְדֹשִׁי וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' מְקַדְּשֶׁכֶּם:

הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָכֶם לְאֱלֹקִים אֲנִי ה' (ויקרא כ"ב: ל"ב,ל"ג)

You shall not desecrate My Holy Name. I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel.

I am the L-rd Who sanctifies you,

Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to be a G-d to you. I am the L-rd.

(Vayikro 22:32,33)

The Sefer HaChinuch lists and explains two mitzvos based on these pesukim:

רצה: שלא לעשות דבר שיתחלל בו שם שמים בין בני אדם
295: Not to do something that will cause the desecration
of the Name of Heaven amongst people

רצו: מצות קידוש השם
296: The command to sanctify Hashem

Explaining the first of these mitzvos, the Sefer HaChinuch teaches that 'Chillul Hashem,' the desecration of Hashem's Name, is the opposite of 'Kiddush Hashem,' the sanctifying of Hashem's Name (Rambam writes the same in Sefer Hamitzvos, negative mitzvoh 63). He goes on to detail the circumstances in which a Jew would be duty bound to give up his life, thereby effecting a Kiddush Hashem and avoiding a Chillul Hashem; notably, with certain conditions present, upon being compelled by a gentile to commit certain transgressions under pain of death.

While the halachic discussion relating to Kiddush Hashem generally focuses on determining particular actions that would be obligatory in very specific circumstances, there are those who apply the term and concept in a broader sense. The Nesivos Shalom explains that the mitzvoh of Kiddush Hashem is one that accompanies us at all times, is fundamental to our lives as Jews and underpins our ongoing, constant relationship with Hashem and our devoted service to Him:

"You shall not desecrate My holy Name, and I shall be sanctified amongst Bnei Yisroel; I am Hashem, the One who makes you holy, Who takes you out from the Land of Egypt to be for you a G-d."

Rashi explains, from Toras Kohanim, "Who takes you out..." means, 'in order for that to take place.' That is, I took you out from Egypt in order that I would be sanctified amongst Bnei Yisroel. And according to the words of the Toras Kohanim, "Who brought you out from the Land of Egypt" implies "on condition that you will extend yourselves to sanctify My Name. Hence we see that the whole episode of Yetzias Mitzrayim and Israel's coming into being as the chosen nation, all of it was driven by the ultimate target of, "ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל" - "I shall be sanctified amongst Bnei Yisroel." It is necessary to explain: why is this, in particular, the basis and the condition for the Exodus from Egypt? And why is our chosenness also predicated upon Hashem's sanctification in our midst?"

The Nesivos Sholom asks why, at the beginning of the fifth chapter of Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah, Rambam writes:

"All of the House of Israel (כל בית ישראל) are commanded regarding this great mitzvoh of Kiddush Hashem..."

He wonders why Rambam begins with the words,

"All of Bnei Yisroel are commanded..."

Surely, questions the Nesivos Sholom, in all mitzvos it is the case that all of Bnei Yisroel are commanded to observe them; yet, we do not find this wording in any other place. The Nesivos Sholom proceeds to outline the Rambam's rulings regarding the requirement to give up one's life rather than transgress the three most severe prohibitions (idolatry, illicit relations and murder (Sanhedrin 74a)); he notes the great merit for sanctifying G-d's Name through so doing, and the great disgrace and punishment for those who prefer to transgress or manage to run away.

Regarding those who sacrifice their lives to sanctify G-d's name, the Nesivos Sholom notes that they are referred to with honour in Tehillim with the words,

"כי עליך הורגנו כל היום" - "...because for Your sake we are killed each day." (Tehillim: 44,22)

However, he then addresses an obvious difficulty, also citing the Rashbo:

Is it really possible to be killed every day?! Rather, the answer to this is the following: each day that we recite in Kerias Shema the words, "ובכל נפשך" - "...(you shall love Hashem with all your heart) and with all your soul" and we express our commitment and devotion to this ideal, it is as if we have fulfilled it in reality.

The Nesivos Sholom cites the source for this mystical notion in the Zohar Hakodosh.

However, he then points out that this whole idea appears to be at odds with a strict translation of the posuk, for it does not say, "כל יום" - "every day," but rather, "כל היום" - "all day." What does it mean to say, "...for Your sake we are killed all day long"?

The Nesivos Sholom answers this as follows: Rambam places the mitzvoh of Kiddush Hashem in his 'Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah' because this is a general and core mission of a Jew, one in which he is obligated all the days of his life. It does not only relate to circumstances in which a gentile forces a Jew to transgress. Rather, it is a general role of every Jew to sanctify Hashem's name in the ongoing battle against the evil inclination, which constantly tries to draw him to behave contrary to Hashem's will. The evil impulse tries all day long, from morning until evening, to force a Jew to transgress, and the mitzvoh of Kiddush Hashem is the obligation on the Jew to withstand that pressure to act against Hashem's will.

And when a Jew succeeds in resisting the wicked counsel of the Yetzer Hora, when he conquers his physical desires and instead draws his heart close to serving Hashem, this is classified as מסירות נפש, self-sacrifice. And in uprooting the evil inside him in this way, a Jew sanctifies the name of Hashem and fulfils his key role in life which is expressed in the command, ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל - "I shall be sanctified amidst the children of Israel."

This is the reason, explains the Nesivos Sholom, that Rambam used the words, "כל בית ישראל" - that "all the House of Israel are commanded regarding Kiddush Hashem," to teach that the mitzvoh is not only in relation to when a Jew is being forced by a gentile to transgress. Rather, it is a constant mitzvoh that falls on every Jew in Klal Yisroel; every Jew is commanded to uproot the evil inclination within his heart and act in a way that sanctifies Hashem's name.

The Nesivos Sholom goes on to say that we can now understand why Rambam included the mitzvoh of Kiddush Hashem in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah together with the mitzvos to believe / have faith in Hashem, to love Him and to fear Him. It is generally understood that Emunoh (faith, belief), Ahavoh (love) and Yiroh (fear) should be classed as core principles of the Torah, but it is harder to see in what sense Kiddush Hashem and avoiding Chillul Hashem should be in that category. Rambam therefore intentionally indicated the lofty nature of these mitzvos, including them together with the great foundation commandments of Faith / Belief, Love and Fear, establishing also that all of Bnei Yisroel are commanded to fulfil them, for it is the will of Hashem that His name be constantly sanctified through the actions of the Jewish People.

(נתיבות שלום, פרשת אמור: ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל)

Prior to exploring one final idea, let us first review the points we have discussed, and see how they dovetail into a consistent and unified theme.

Recall that at the start of our discussion we asked what relationship between man and Hashem is recovered through the Teshuvoh process. If Teshuvoh means return, then to what are we returning?

Rabbi Nachman taught us that pure faith in Hashem is only possible through a combination of mesirus nefesh (self-sacrifice) for Him and achieving a constant awareness of His presence. Expounding Rambam, Rabbi Soloveitchik explained that we have a dual obligation of 'belief' and 'knowledge,' where knowledge, again, is a state of continuous awareness, in which G-d should become a living reality that one cannot forget even for a minute. Rabeinu Yonah advised that one should always have his thoughts directed towards G-d, "for a man does not know his time." The

idea and importance of constant awareness of Hashem was also explained by the Rema, who cited the posuk, "שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד" - "I have placed the L-rd before me constantly," and a passage from Rambam's Moreh Nevuchim: once a person has a sense of Hashem's presence over him, watching him, he will be overcome with awe and become apprehensive of his actions.

We moved on to a discussion of mesirus nefesh, of which Rabbi Nachman said:

A person should sacrifice his soul every day, and every hour, and every minute, for the holy trait of faithfulness; for it is not possible to merit clear and pure faith except through true self-sacrifice.

The classic notion of mesirus nefesh is Kiddush Hashem; we noted that the command to sanctify Hashem's Name requires that, in certain circumstances, we are obliged to give up our lives to preserve the integrity of Judaism.

But the Nesivos Shalom enabled us to see the mitzvoh of Kiddush Hashem as a fundamental Torah principle which shares a lofty status with the mitzvos to believe in Hashem, to love Him and fear Him. And Kiddush Hashem merits such prestige because, explains the Nesivos Shalom, it is actually the obligation upon every Jew to sanctify Hashem's name by defeating and uprooting his Yetzer Hora and drawing his heart towards service of Hashem. It is a mitzvoh for all Jews for all times; and it is at this point that we can see the two main strands in our discussion coming together.

Rabbi Nachman taught that pure faith requires constant self-sacrifice to Hashem (מסירות נפשם אליו) and constant, clear, pure awareness of Hashem's presence (להכירו יתברך בהכרה ברורה) (ומזוככת). Surely, we can now say that true, devoted fulfilment of mitzvas Kiddush Hashem must be the vehicle for realising both of these aspects of our עבודת ה' - our service to Hashem. For Kiddush Hashem is the constant, dedicated striving to vanquish the evil inclination and make every action one that is done in Divine service. This performace must require,

"that the belief in G-d should cause Man to be in a state of perpetual affinity, of constant orientation, G-d should become a living reality that one cannot forget even for a minute..." (On Repentance, Rav Soloveitchik - see above)

Only by attaining such a constant knowledge and awareness of Hashem, "until he feels Him, may He be blessed, that He is with him and actually next to him," (Rabbi Nachman - see above) can a person hope to successfully withstand the constant urges of his evil inclination and his physical desires, overpower them and act only in sanctification of Hashem's name. Mesirus nefesh and constant awareness of Hashem's presence are therefore bound up together in the mitzvoh of Kiddush Hashem.

Finally, let us return for a moment to the posuk, "כי עליך הורגנו כל היום" - "...because for Your sake we are killed each day." (Tehillim: 44,22) We learnt that each day that we recite in Kerias Shema the words, "ובכל נפשך" - "... (you shall love Hashem with all your heart) and with all your soul" and we express our commitment and devotion to this ideal, it is as if we have fulfilled it in reality. Rabbi Avraham Steinberg ('The Year in Drashos': iUniverse, pp.8,9) cites the great Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto) as teaching that, "there is a vast difference between *actually* forfeiting one's life for the honour of Hashem and the mere emotional exercise of doing so." Rav Steinberg explains that we live within the two different worlds of עולם המעשה - the world of action - and עולם המחשבה - the world of thought. He writes:

"Although there is certainly merit for one's goodness in the עולם המחשבה, most of us require the עולם המעשה - the real world, in order to evoke total commitment from our hearts.

However, there are rare individuals - great people - for whom the distance between the two worlds is not so great."

Rav Steinberg notes that one of the very difficult elements in the story of the Akeidoh is the 'change of plans' -

"First, Avrohom was told to slaughter his son. Then, he was told not to. How are we to understand this? Did Hashem change His Mind? Or did Avrohom, perhaps, initially misunderstand the prophecy he received?"

Rabbi Steinberg continues:

The question is further complicated by the fact that, at some level, Chazal seem to consider it as if Yitzchak was, in fact, offered as a sacrifice. The Gemora says (see Berachos 62b) that the ashes of Yitzchak are collected and preserved on the Heavenly Altar. What does this mean?

The Ohr Gedaliahu (by Rav Gedaliah Schorr 1910-1979) explains that the commandment that was given to Avraham Avinu was to bring his dedication to Hashem to such a high and complete level that he would offer his beloved, and long-awaited, only son as a sacrifice to Hashem. For most people this challenge would have been so great that it could have been truly achieved only through the actual performance of the Mitzvah itself. Anything short of the physical realisation of Hashem's command would have still been lacking emotionally.

But for Avraham Avinu it was not so. His commitment to Hashem was so strong that the emotions in his heart did not require the support of reality. The command he had received was to reach the level of mesiras nefesh, which he was able to do in Machshava (thought) alone. The actual performance of the Akeidah was therefore unnecessary.

The ashes of Yitzchak are collected on the Heavenly Altar because in Avraham Avinu's heart, he did not less than sacrifice his son. He had no resistance and no inhibitions in performing the Mitzvah of Hashem.

For Avraham Avinu the worlds of Machshava and Ma'aseh were one and the same. His Shema Yisrael was tantamount to complete mesiras nefesh. If we too could learn from this paradigm and raise the level of our emotional intensity and commitment, our tefillos and avodas Hashem would be that much more powerful and rewarding."

(Rabbi Avraham Steinberg, The Year in Drashos: iUniverse, pp.8,9)

In this season of תשובה, let us think about where we are in our עבודת ה', in our Divine service. Where are we in our relationship with Hashem? Are we managing to successfully battle against our more negative inclinations and conquer the physical desires and lusts which lead us away from spiritual concerns? To what extent are our lives being lived in קידוש ה', in sanctification of G-d's name? Do we strive to be able to say, "שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד" - "I have placed the L-rd before me always"? Is Hashem a constant presence at our side? Do we merit clear and pure אמונה through true מסירות נפש - self-sacrifice, or is our faith weakened by the constant demands and struggles of the modern world of physical lusts and material idolatries?

May all of our תפילות be answered, לטובה, and may the coming year be one of spiritual fulfilment, brochoh, hatzlochoh, refuos, yeshuos, nechamos, besuros tovos, and the Geulah Shleimoh bekarov.



Wishing everyone a כתיבה והתימה טובה.

Thoughts on Teshuvoh for Yom Kippur



Looking at the following extracts from our tefillos, we notice something interesting: phrases such as “return us,” “bring us near” and “bring us back” make us wonder who it is that is ‘doing’ Teshuvoh, making it happen:

הַשִּׁיבֵנו אֲבִינוּ לְתוֹרָתְךָ, וְקַרְבֵנו מִלְּפָנֶיךָ לְעִבּוּדְךָ, וְהַחְזִירֵנוּ בְּתַשׁוּבָהּ שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הַרוֹצֵה בְּתַשׁוּבָהּ. (סידור)

Return us, our Father, to Your Torah, and bring us near, our King, to Your service, and return us in complete Teshuvoh before You.
Blessed are You (or, You are the Source of all blessing), L-rd, Who desires Teshuvoh.

*

אָבִינוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, הַחְזִירֵנוּ בְּתַשׁוּבָהּ שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ. (סידור)

Our Father, our King, return us in complete Teshuvoh before You.

*

הַשִּׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֵי וְנִשׁוּבָהּ, חַדֵּשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקִדְמָם. (סידור)

Bring us back to You, L-rd, and we shall return, renew our days as of old.

*

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ, וְקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרַצוֹן אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ:

הַשִּׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֵי וְנִשׁוּבָהּ, חַדֵּשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקִדְמָם: (סליחות)

Listen to our voice, L-rd our G-d; spare us and have compassion on us, and accept our prayers with compassion and favour.
Return us, L-rd, to You, and we shall return; renew our days as of old.

*

In these supplications we discover that Hashem, Himself plays an all-important role in our own Teshuvoh, and this is the theme of our discussion below.

-

There is something both invigorating and disconcerting in making the discovery that something you always thought was a certain way is actually entirely different. When this happens, one inevitably feels a little put out to have previous misconceptions smashed; but perhaps the stronger response is curiosity to properly understand what was previously misunderstood. We annually learn about Teshuvoh in the classic sources, often in Rambam's 'Hilchos Teshuvoh' and Rabeinu Yonah's 'Sha'arei Teshuvoh,' and we come away believing we have grasped the essence of this concept and the mechanics of the mitzvoh. It seems clear to us that Teshuvoh is achieved through a person's sincere efforts in Charotoh (regretting his sin), Azivas Hacheit (rejecting and leaving the sin behind), Vidui (verbally confessing) and Kabboloh Al he'Osid (commitment and resolution not to repeat the sin in the future) and ultimately managing to resist the temptation to repeat the same sin when the opportunity to do so arises. However, on further and deeper examination it may become clear that we have not actually achieved a complete understanding of this crucially important mitzvoh; and if we do not properly understand the mitzvoh, then surely we can not perform it satisfactorily.

From all the stages of Teshuvoh that we listed above, it seems as if the mitzvoh is purely upon the person who committed a particular sin to fully achieve repentance for that sin through his own efforts - Charotoh, Azivas Hacheit, etc. However, if we look at the extracts from our tefillos above we see something interesting. In our prayers we repeatedly ask Hashem to “return us” and only then does it seem that we are able to return. We see this also in the following verse:

וְהוּא יִפְדֶּה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל עֲוֹנוֹתָיו: (תהלים ק"ל:ח)

And He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. (Tehillim 130:8)

The siddur Tefilas Yosef cites Radak and Sheloh as teaching that these words indicate how Hashem first influences the hearts of B'nei Yisroel to return to Him, which prepares the way for their own Teshuvoh to take place.

A pattern begins to emerge, in which Teshuvoh is characterised not as a process activated and completed solely by individuals, but one in which G-d plays an active role, if not a critical one. This idea is explained emphatically by Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pinkus זצ"ל. Rav Pinkus writes that the different elements of Teshuvoh enumerated by Rabeinu Yonah in his "Sha'arei Teshuvoh" - 'regret, confession, commitment for the future, etc. - are indeed both essential and obligatory. However, the mechanic is as follows:

בעשיית עיקרי התשובה הללו אנו מבטאים את הרצון לעקור מאתנו את החטא
וכתוצאה מכך הקב"ה מטהרנו מן החטא. אך אחרי הכל
תשובה היא מעשה השי"ת בכבודו ובעצמו!

(שיחות מורנו הגאון רבי שמשון דוד פינקוס זצ"ל על אלול וימים נוראים: רכ"ז)

In performing these fundamental components of Teshuvoh we express our willingness to uproot the sin from ourselves and then as an outcome of this the Holy One blessed be He purifies us from the sin. But in the final analysis Teshuvoh is a deed performed by Hashem, may He be blessed, in His glory and by His Self.

Rav Pinkus wants to establish unequivocally that Teshuvoh is, as he puts it, ביכול שיתוף פעולה בין, a working partnership, as it were, between G-d and Man. We should not think that it is within our powers to effect Teshuvoh purely through our own actions. Teshuvoh is something far beyond our limited capacity, and only the limitless, absolute ability of the Almighty can bring about such a wondrous phenomenon.

He expands on this point with language that is at once surprising and thrilling:

בעצם, תשובה היא הנס הגדול ביותר שישנו בעולמנו.
הנס הטמון בעניינים של עשרת ימי תשובה גדול יותר
מכל הנסים שאירעו לעמנו במהלך הדורות:
יציאת מצרים, קריאת ים סוף, הכל!

In fact, Teshuvoh is the greatest miracle that we have in our world. The miracle that is concealed in the detailed workings of the Ten Days of Repentance is greater than all the miracles that happened for our ancestors throughout the course of the generations: the Exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Reed Sea, the whole lot!

Rav Pinkus then goes on to compare Teshuvoh to 'תחיית המתים' - the future Resurrection of the Dead, except that he proclaims Teshuvoh to be greater even than תחיית המתים. Let us see how he arrives at this remarkable conclusion:

נס הדומה לזה קצת הוא תחיית המתים - תשובה היא מעין תחיית המתים.
ואעפ"כ גדולה תשובה אף יותר מתחיית המתים, כי בתחיית המתים הקב"ה
פשוט מחזיר את הנשמה לתוך הגוף, אבל תשובה - הכפרה על החטא -
עניינה עקירת מעשה העבירה מן המציאות כאילו מעולם לא היה החטא!
מעשה מופלא כזה יכול להיעשות אך ורק ע"י הקב"ה שהוא כל יכול.

A miracle that is somewhat similar to this is תחיית המתים - the Resurrection of the Dead - Teshuvoh is comparable to תחיית המתים. And even so, Teshuvoh is greater even than תחיית המתים, because with תחיית המתים the Holy One blessed be He simply returns the neshomoh back into the body, but with Teshuvoh - atonement for one's sins - that is a matter of uprooting the action of transgression from reality

as if the sin never happened! A wondrous deed such as this can be performed only and solely by the Holy One blessed be He, Who is able to do anything.

At the beginning of our discussion we looked at some extracts from our tefillos which point to the partnership in Teshuvoh between Man and G-d, and Rav Pinkus confirmed for us that Teshuvoh requires Divine activation: we move through the stages of Teshuvoh as prescribed by Halochoh, but this is simply the signal to Hashem that we desire Teshuvoh, which only He can realise.

Rav Pinkus has a more fundamental question regarding Teshuvoh and tefilloh, in relation to instances where the Teshuvoh itself is actually contained within the prayers. He points out that our Sages fixed an instance of practical Teshuvoh within our tefillos in the saying of 'vidui,' in the selichos and in the ten instances of vidui in our Yom Kippur tefillos. Rav Pinkus says that upon considering this we would be justified in wondering why all of the 'viduis' said on Yom Kippur are found within the tefillos. What is the connection, he asks, between the performance of Teshuvoh and the seder tefilloh, the set format of our prayers? He writes that it would surely have been more appropriate for Teshuvoh to take place separately; after the completion of Shacharis on Yom Kippur, he suggests, and prior to the Kerias HaTorah, the chazzan could have struck the bimah and announced, "Now is the time for us to do Teshuvoh!" Everyone present would then close his / her eyes and direct his / her mind to doing Teshuvoh. But the reality is that the vidui of "אשמנו, בגדנו" is located within our tefillos. Why?

Rav Pinkus answers this question on the basis of what we learnt above:

...דמכיון שהתשובה נעשית ע"י הקב"ה בשיטוף עם רצון האדם,
מקור ענין זה הוא בתפילה כשאדם עומד לפני הקב"ה ומתחנן לפניו
שרוצה לשוב אליו ואז נענה הקב"ה ומקבלו בתשובה.

(שיחות מורנו הגאון רבי שמשון דוד פינקוס זצ"ל על אלול וימים נוראים: רכ"ה)

...for since Teshuvoh is effected by Hashem in partnership with Man's will,
the source of this matter is in tefilloh, when Man stands before Hashem and supplicates before Him
expressing his desire to return to Him, and then the Holy One Blessed be He answers
and receives him back in repentance.

May all of our תפילות be answered לטובה, and may our desire to return to Hashem in complete Teshuvoh this Yom Kippur find Divine favour; may the coming year be one of spiritual fulfilment, brochoh, hatzlochoh, refuos, yeshuos, nechamos, besuros tovos, and the Geulah Shleimoh bekarov.



Wishing everyone a גמר חתימה טובה.

Thoughts for Sukkos



Rambam notes:

"אף על פי שכל המועדות מצוה לשמוח בהן,
בחג הסוכות היתה במקדש יום שמחה יתרה,
שנאמר ושמחתם לפני ה' אלקיכם שבעת ימים..."
(משנה תורה – הלכות שופר סוכה ולולב, ה:יב)

"Even though it is a mitzvah to rejoice on all the festivals,
there was an additional celebration in the Temple on the festival of Sukkos,
as the Torah [in Vayikra 23:40] commands: "And you shall rejoice before G-d, your L-rd, for seven days."
(Mishneh Torah - Hilchos Shofar, Sukkoh and Lulov: 8:12)

Rambam refers here to "an additional celebration on the festival of Sukkos." In the following discussion we will look at the special qualities of Sukkos that are at the root of this additional celebration. We will see that the specialness of this festival relates both to its proximity and relationship to the Yomim Noraim (the period from Rosh Hashonoh to Yom Kippur) as well as to characteristics that are inherent within Sukkos itself. Importantly, in terms of the former, it will emerge that Sukkos is the climax of the Tishri period, and in that respect should we not therefore demand of ourselves to properly appreciate the deeper aspects of Sukkos in order to be able to appropriately set our spiritual aspirations at the very start of this distinguished season, which truly commences at the beginning of Ellul?

Let us begin with the commentary of the Sfas Emes on the following pesukim:

בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבוּ בַסֻּכּוֹת: (ויקרא כג:מב)
For a seven day period you shall live in booths. Every resident among the Israelites shall live in booths,
לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (ויקרא כג:מג)
in order that your [ensuing] generations should know that I had the children of Israel live in booths
when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the L-rd, your G-d. (Vayikra 23:42,43)

The Sfas Emes (the third Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, 1847–1905) writes:

בסוכות חשבו כי למען ידעו דורותיכם כי
בסוכות הושבתי כו'. הענין הוא דכתיב
ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים כו' פרש"י שחלונת על
שחשפו בשעה אחד ונענשם לקוחות. פי' שאינו
עפ"י הטבע. אך שנהפכו בשעה אחד ונהייתם עבדים
לפרעה. להיות מושך אחר עבני כבודו ית'. זה חסד
גדול בסוכות הושבתי בהוצאתי כו'. וכמו כן נעשה
זה בכל שנה אחר ר"ה ויהי' שגאלין מלכות
בנה האדם בשעה אחת להחפץ ולכנס תחת לנו
ית'. זה בסוכות חשבו הוא כתיבת רשות לגבי
לשג בסוכות. וענין איתא הפותח שער לדופקי בתשובה.
הש"ת נתן בניו אלו שנהג לגבי כתיב ושמחתם.

" בסוכות תשבו כו' ... למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכות הושבתי כו'.
הענין הוא דכתיב " ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים כו' " (שמות י"ט: ד')
פרש"י שנאמר על שנאספו בשעה אחד מרעמסס לסוכות (שמות י"ב: ל"ז).
פי' שאינו על פי הטבע. איך שנהפכו בשעה אחד מהיותם עבדים לפרעה.
להיות נמשך אחר עבני כבודו ית'. וזה חסד גדול בסוכות הושבתי בהוצאתי כו'.
וכמו כן נעשה מזה בכל שנה אחר ר"ה ויהי' כ"פ שגאלין מ"צה"ר בכה האדם
בשעה אחת להתהפך ולכנוס תחת צלו יתב'. וזה בסוכות תשבו הוא
נתינת רשות לבנ"י לישוב בסוכות. ועל זה איתא הפותח שער לדופקי בתשובה*.
והש"ת נתן בימים אלו שמחה לבנ"י כמ"ש ושמחתם " (ויקרא כ"ג: מ') (שפת אמת על התורה ה': [לסוכות] צ"ח)

" ...you shall live in booths ... in order that your [ensuing] generations should know that I had [the children of Israel] live [in booths]" The intention here is to connect with the words (of Hashem just before the Torah was given), "I carried you on eagles' wings" (Shemos 19:4) which, Rashi explains, is a reference to the miraculously rapid journey of B'nei Yisroel from Raameses to Sukkos (Shemos 12:37) and how the Jewish People were transformed in one moment from being slaves to Paroh to (enjoying freedom and the great spiritual heights of) following after Hashem's holy Clouds of Glory.

And this is a great lovingkindness, "...I had [the children of Israel] live in booths when I took [them] out..." And due to this, every year after Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur, when each of us has similarly been redeemed and transformed in one moment from the power of the Yetzer Hara (the negative inclination) that lies within every person, we enter beneath the shade of the Blessed One.

And this "you shall live in booths" represents Hashem giving permission to the B'nei Yisroel to dwell in booths. In connection with this we have the idea, "Who opens a gate to those who knock in repentance." * And on these days Hashem gives joy to B'nei Yisroel, as it says: "You will rejoice..." (Vayikra 23:40)

* ("וכל מאמינים שהוא" – "Who opens a gate to those who knock in repentance" from the piyut "הפותה שער לדופקי בתשובה") in mussaf of Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur.)

The Sfas Emes explains here that the mitzvoh to dwell in a Sukkah is intended to mark the supernaturally swift journey of the B'nei Yisroel from Raamses to Sukkos, and the accompanying rapid transition of the Jewish people from being Paroh's slaves to being servants of the Almighty. He then builds on this idea, connecting that lightning fast dual transition from Egypt to (the place called) Sukkos and from slavery to freedom with the transition from Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur to the festival of Sukkos.

Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur defeat our Yetzer Hara, writes the Sfas Emes, transporting us in a short instant from being transgressors to a place of Divine favour such that Hashem invites us to take shelter from the elements under his protective shade; and even if we are still struggling to complete our Teshuvoh, as long as we indicate our wish to be close to Him by knocking on His Heavenly gates, He is happy to open the gates and welcome us inside.

And then, as He draws us close to Him, Hashem blesses us with joyfulness: what greater joy could there be, after all, than to know Hashem has accepted us, even despite lingering failings, and drawn us close to Him?

This theme, that the joy of Sukkos follows logically and naturally after Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur, is articulated beautifully in the writings of Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch:

"But to Israel G-d says: בחמשה עשר יום לחדש השביעי הזה (ויקרא כג:לד)

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, at the peak of this Sabbath-month, at its radiant height, after you were called with the Shofar-power to return to G-d and after Yom Kippur fasting and solemnity when you were asked to break your adherence to a life-style which is alienated from G-d, you are to celebrate and experience true joyfulness.

For all time and for all generations this is G-d's eternal truth: Joy, the joy of earthly life, does not flee from G-d's countenance; instead השמחה במעונו – it is a joy which resides with Him. Both seriousness and joy have their place in G-d's presence. Seriousness will find its bloom and perfection in joy, and G-d's truth will lead to the lasting and fulfilling joy on earth.

(ויקרא כג:מא) בחדש השביעי תחגו אתו In the serious month of Tishri you should celebrate the cheerful feast of joy. Only in the serious character of this seventh month can joy be planted, nurtured and permanently acquired. Sukkoth comes only after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur...

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month occurs the Divine festival of the joyous building of the huts lasting שבעת ימים, seven days. There is only one day of Rosh Hashanah, one Yom Kippur-day, but seven days of the joyous Sukkoth festival. Rosh Hashanah is only a beginning, Yom Kippur is the mediator, but Sukkoth is the fruition of life. The first of the month is a dim beginning, the mediating tenth is a growing beacon, but the fifteenth culminates in a profusion of radiant light. Only one day of self-judgement, one day of fasting, but for seven days all aspects of earthly life, peace and joy stand before G-d..."

(Collected writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Feldheim: Vol.II p.85)

We are beginning to build a picture of how our great Torah commentators characterise the spiritual journey from the solemn days of Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur to the Sukkos 'Period of Rejoicing.' Moreover, we see that it is important to understand Sukkos not merely as a welcome, independent joyful festival following

the solemn ימים נוראים, the Days of Awe; rather, Sukkos is the climax of the intense Tishri period, and Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur are days not only of essential preparation for Sukkos but also of enablement. Only by passing through the serious processes of Teshuvoh, atonement and purification, of reflection, self-judgement and fasting, and – we hope – forgiveness and reconciliation, only by that route and by laying those foundations can we prepare ourselves properly for the true joyfulness of Sukkos, which represents our drawing near once again to the Almigh-ty after being estranged from Him. “Seriousness will find its bloom and perfection in joy,” writes Rav Hirsch, which teaches us that the true joyfulness of Sukkos is not a light thing but the outcome of the deepest personal striving to connect with the עולם של רבונו (Master of the World), not an accidental and transient thing but a robust outcome of purposeful spiritual efforts, and something that is merited by those who have worked hard to achieve it.

The Nesivos Sholom, Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky, echoes these ideas, and develops them further:

" וזהו גם כללות ענינו של חג הסוכות זמן שמחתנו, שלאחר הימים הנוראים בהם ישראל נתעלו ונזדככו נתן לנו הקב"ה את מצות סוכה שענינה 'הביאני המלך חדריו' בבחי' הבאה לביתו, והיא מעין בחי' בית המקדש וכדאיתא (סוכה ט.) שיש חלות קדושה על מקום הסוכה..."

חג הסוכות הוא זמן שמחתנו, שישראל שמחים עם גילוי האהבה העלאית בין קוב"ה וישראל המתגלה בחג הסוכות אשר בו 'הביאני המלך חדריו' בבחי' הבאה לביתו. ואי"ז רק מצות שמחה שבכל הרגלים, אלא זמן שמחתנו, זה עיצומו של חג שישראל שמחים עם השי"ת עם גודל האהבה של הבאה לביתו והיחוד."

(נתיבות שלום על סוכות, מאמר ראשון 'זמן שמחתנו': קצ)

"...and this is also the general essence of the festival of Sukkos, the time of our rejoicing: that after the Days of Awe, during which [the people of] Israel are elevated and purified, the Holy One Blessed be He gives us the commandment of 'Sukkah', whose nature is "Heviani haMelech chadarav — the King has brought me into His inner room" (Shir HaShirim 1:4) which is to say that entering the sukkah is comparable to entering His house, the Beis HaMikdosh, as we learn (Sukkah 9a) that there is a certain holiness present in the sukkah..."

...the festival of Sukkos is the time of our rejoicing, since [the people of] Israel rejoice [during Sukkos] in the revelation of the exalted love between the Holy One Blessed be He and Israel, which is manifested on the festival of Sukkos which has the character of "Heviani haMelech chadarav — the King has brought me into His inner room" which means that entering the sukkah is like entering Hashem's house. But this is not merely the same mitzvah of simchah, rejoicing, that is common to all the festivals, rather it is **the season of our rejoicing**, the very essence of the festival on which Israel rejoice together with Hashem, may He be blessed, in the great love that comes from entering His house in closeness and unity with Him." (Nesivos Shalom on Sukkos, Discourse 1, 'The Season of Our Joy': p.190)

Both the Sfas Emes and Rav Hirsch discuss Sukkos in terms of a time and place of true joy borne out of a post-Yomim Noraim renewed closeness between the Jewish People and Hashem. However, the Nesivos Sholom adds a dimension, referring to " גילוי האהבה העלאית בין קוב"ה וישראל " – "the revelation of the exalted love between the Holy One Blessed be He and Israel." He also describes the simchah on Sukkos as " ...עיצומו של חג " "...the very essence of the festival." Sukkos now appears to be more than the finishing post at the end of the spiritual dash from the starting blocks on Rosh Hashonoh (or perhaps in Ellul); it *is* that, but more. Upon reaching Sukkos we do indeed enjoy the rewards of a closeness with Hashem and a resulting joyfulness that are the results of successfully passing through Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur, but a special prize awaits us there, too.

For the Nesivos Sholom, Sukkos has qualities that are not shared by the other Chagim. Significantly, he writes that "...after the Days of Awe, during which [the people of] Israel are elevated and purified, the Holy One Blessed be He *gives us the commandment* of 'Sukkah', whose nature is "Heviani haMelech chadarav — the King has brought me into His inner room" (Shir HaShirim 1:4)." While it may be true that Sukkos brings with it the rewards of successfully negotiating the ימים נוראים, Hashem has not left Sukkos merely as a natural end to and consequence of this period; rather, He has additionally ordained it as an independent festival, with exulted qualities all its own. Sukkos has been endowed with an aspect of closeness between the Jewish People and the Almigh-ty that is not found in the other Festivals. We enter His home, as it were, in a way that is not available to us at any other time; and the outcomes of this are an intense common mood of mutual love, unity and joyfulness, shared by Hashem and his people exclusively at this moment in the year.

Now, when we speak of entering Hashem's 'house' we are reminded of the following posuk, which is particularly emblematic of this season:

"אחת שאלתי מאת ה', אותה אבקש,
שבתי בבית ה' כל ימי חיי,
לחזות בנעם ה', ולבקר בהיכלו" (תהלים כז)
"One thing I asked of Hashem, *that* I shall seek:
to live in the House of Hashem all the days of my life;
to behold the pleasantness of Hashem and to contemplate in His Sanctuary."
(Tehillim chp.27)

Psalm 27 is recited (with some variation in minhag and practice) from the beginning of Ellul and right through until the end of Sukkos. Its inclusion in our tefillos at this time of year is linked with the Midrash, which highlights allusions to the Yomim Noraim:

"*Hashem is my light* - on Rosh Hashonoh, *and my salvation* – on Yom Kippur..."
(Vayikra Rabbah 21:4 & Midrash on Tehillim 37:6)

There is also an allusion to Sukkos, in the words, "*He will hide me in His shelter*".

We see from this that our focus right from the beginning of Ellul is on the whole period extending all the way through Sukkos; and so, as we have already suggested above, a proper understanding of the spiritual unfolding of Ellul and Tishri is needed as a foundation for our spiritual aspirations at the onset of this season.

The first essay in the sefer of Rav Shimshon Pinkus' thoughts on Ellul and the Yomim Tovim is entitled:

אני לדודי ודודי לי*: אלול – זמן קנין השייכות והידידות עם הבורא יתברך
"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine..." *(from Shir Hashirim 6:3)

Ellul – a time for acquiring a strong connection and love with the Creator, may He be blessed.

Rav Pinkus proceeds to break down this theme into many parts, and finally concludes and sums up as follows:

"זוהי אפשרות ההצלה שלנו ב'ימים הנוראים': "אני לדודי ודודי לי" – אני חי אך ורק בתוך התורה של הרבש"ע. עולם של ידידות, שייכות וחביבות עם הרבש"ע." (שיחות מורנו הגאון רבי שמשון דוד פינקוס זצ"ל, אלול וימים נוראים, כב)

This is the possibility for our rescue during the Days of Awe: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" – I have life only within the Torah of the Master of the World. [For the world of Hashem's Torah is] a world of belovedness, connectedness and dearness with the Master of the World."

(Sichos of Moreinu Hagaon Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pinkus ztz"l, Ellul and the Yomim Noraim, p.22)

Rav Pinkus indicates here that our objective during the Yomim Noraim themselves is to transcend the awesomeness of those days, and close any distance between us and Hashem that we may feel due to the seriousness of the time, in order to establish a close, loving bond with Him. Even from the onset of Ellul, then, our sights are fixed on building a loving attachment with our Creator. This attachment will then reach its zenith on Sukkos.

We have already referred to the special relationship between Hashem and the Jewish People that comes about on Sukkos; the Nesivos Sholom uses a moshol, parable, to explain the unique closeness between the two that is achieved during these days. In one sense, this moshol can be understood in terms of again seeing the simchah of Sukkos against the backdrop of the awesomeness of the preceding days. However, there are nuances here which perhaps bring together and fuse those different aspects of Sukkos - her natural interrelatedness with the Yomim Noraim and her independent specialness:

"...משל לבן המלך שעזב את אביו המלך ונתרחק ממנו, ובבוא היום ששב וחזר אליו הרי המלך מקבל אותו אבל עדיין מתייחס אליו בחשד כי אולי לא חזר אליו בכל לבו אלא מיראה, אכן בראות המלך שבנו עושה רצונו בשמחה מתוך אהבה עייז נוכח לראות ששב אליו בכל לבו. עד"ז בימים הנוראים ר"ה ויוהכ"פ שב איש יהודי אל השי"ת מיראה, אך בבוא חג הסוכות שענינו אהבת ה' שהוא זמן שמחתנו, שיהודי שמח בו בהשי"ת, הרי ששב אל השי"ת בכל לבו ונפשו. והיינו שזה עיצומו של חג הסוכות, זמן שמחתנו, שבו עובד יהודי עבודת השם מאהבת ה' ומתוך שמחה גדולה."

(נתיבות שלום על סוכות, מאמר ראשון 'זמן שמחתנו': קצא)

"There is a parable of a king's son who went away from his father, the king, and travelled to a place that was far away from him. And when the day arrived that the son returned to his father, the king welcomed his son back but, initially, related to him harbouring a suspicion that perhaps his son had not returned to him wholeheartedly but rather out of fear. However, when the king saw that his son was performing his wishes joyfully, and out of love, it became clear that the son had indeed returned to his father with his whole heart.

Similarly, during the Days of Awe, Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur, a Jew returns to the Holy One, Blessed be He out of fear; but when the festival of Sukkos comes along, whose character is love of Hashem since it is 'The Time of Our Rejoicing,' when a Jew rejoices with Hashem, may He be blessed, behold he returns to Hashem, may He be blessed, with all his heart and soul. And that is the essence of the festival of Sukkos, the Time of our Rejoicing, that on it a Jew serves Hashem out of love for Hashem and from the midst of great joy."

(Nesivos Shalom on Sukkos, Discourse 1, 'The Season of Our Joy': p.191)

This moshol introduces us to the twin characteristics of the Yomim Noraim and Sukkos, which, respectively, are יראה, fear and אהבה, love. These emotions are at once contrasts and complements: perhaps even as brambly hedgerows and velvety meadows happily share a rural landscape, the one leading seamlessly into the other, the Yomim Noraim inspire fear of the Almighty's awesome greatness and His judgement of all creatures and then this fear is in a short time transformed into love, a mutual love which bonds the Jewish People with their Father and elicits a great, shared joyfulness. This is the landscape, perhaps, of "אני לדודי ודודי לי" – "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" – where, on closer inspection, the hedgerows of fear and meadows of love are intertwined, they mingle and grow into each other; perhaps this very merging and melding of its diverse aspects is the secret of the countryside's splendour, and similarly the power of this season lies in the fusion of fear and love, each drawing strength from the other.

There is a beautiful and magnificent presentation of these themes in the thought of Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pinkus זצ"ל. Rav Pinkus refers to "תשובה מיראה" (Teshuvoh [repentance] from fear) and "תשובה מאהבה" (Teshuvoh from love). He teaches that our Teshuvoh from Rosh Hashonoh to Yom Kippur is תשובה מיראה, Teshuvoh from fear, and then through Sukkos it is תשובה מאהבה, Teshuvoh from love: These are important ideas, notions that may be new and enlightening to many of us:

1. the period of Teshuvoh does not end at Yom Kippur, but continues right through Sukkos;
2. the Yomim Noraim are days of Teshuvoh from fear, then Sukkos is a time of Teshuvoh from love.

Moreover, Rav Pinkus teaches, "the initial pathway to Teshuvoh is through יראה, fear, but the apex of Teshuvoh is in the days of Sukkos." Calling on imagery from the story of Yaakov Avinu's famous dream, He describes this journey thus:

"כל הימים של חודש תשרי הם כסולם המוצב ארצה וראשו בשמים – כולם כהמשך אחד. וכך הביאו בשם האר"י הק' (שער הכוונות, דרושי ר"ה ריש דרוש א) שתחילת העבודה בראש השנה וסיומה בשמיני עצרת, בו מגיעים כלל ישראל לשלימות ההכרה ש"ה' הוא האלקים" ו"אין עוד מלבדו". (שיחות מורנו הגאון רבי שמשון דוד פינקוס זצ"ל, סוכות, קיד)

"All the days of the month of Tishri are like a ladder that is standing on the ground but whose top is in the Heavens – it is all one continuum. And similarly have the Rabbis explained it in the name of the holy Ari, that the beginning of the endeavour [of Teshuvoh] is on Rosh Hashonoh and its conclusion is on Shemini Atzeres, when Klal Yisroel reach a state of completeness in their perception of "ה' הוא האלקים" (Hashem, He is G-d) and "אין עוד מלבדו" (there is no other besides Him)."

(Sichos of Moreinu Hagaon Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pinkus ztz"l, Sukkos, p.114)

Rav Pinkus goes on to say that it is therefore important that we are able to distinguish between the kind of Teshuvoh that is appropriate to the "עשרת ימי תשובה", so that we can be sure to exploit the

benefits of the period of "יראה" – fear – and the kind of Teshuvoh we need to be doing during the days of Sukkos – elevating ourselves to the level of "תשובה מאהבה" until we reach the high point of "אין עוד מלבדו" on Shemini Atzeres. He proceeds to explain at some length a key difference between the period between Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur and the festival of Sukkos.

The עשרת ימי תשובה, notes Rav Pinkus, are days of יראת שמים, Fear of Heaven, which is characterised in terms of building, through many individual efforts to avoid forbidden actions; stage by stage, day by day, I work on a particular aspect of my behaviour – typically, avoiding transgressions – one today and another tomorrow - until I build a firm edifice of יראת שמים:

"...בכל יום ויום אדם יכול לבנות לעצמו חלק אחד מבנין התשובה ביראה שלו. ביום אחד הוא משתדל להיזהר בענין מסויים ומגיע ליראת שמים בו, וביום השני הוא יזהר בנושא אחר...ככל שיצליח כל אחד להתחזק בזהירות מעשיו בימים אלו, הוא יבנה בעצמו את היראת שמים שלו. בכל מעשה ומעשה ובכל יום של זהירות, מתרחבת ומתפשטת היראה בעצמו..." (שם קיז)

"Every single day, a person is able to build for himself an additional part of his Teshuvoh construction through his [growing] fear [of Heaven]. On one day, he strives to be careful in one particular area and [through that effort] achieves a measure of personal Fear of Heaven, and the next day he is careful in another matter... To whatever extent every person is successful in strengthening himself in being careful with his actions on these days, he will build for himself his personal יראת שמים. With every single deed, and with every day of vigilance, his fear will expand and overflow..." (Ibid. p.117)

In contrast to יראת שמים, which is built up through many individual instances of self-improvement, 'אהבת ה' does not split into separate parts or build up through numerous stages; for, "either a person loves, or he doesn't," notes Rav Pinkus (Ibid. p.118). Love of Hashem is something that is whole; it can not be divided, but, rather, the particular quality of love is that it entirely fills a person. One is able on Sukkos to attain this love of ה' through performing the mitzvos of Sukkah and Arba'ah Minim, by taking part in the seven hakafos and through welcoming the Ushpizin. A Sukkah is all encompassing, the four species are held and waved together rather than separately, the seven hakafos on Hoshanoh Rabboh are walked in one long parade of seven circuits, and, even on the first day, when we invite Avrohom Avinu we also invite all the other Ushpizin with him "ועמך כל אושפיזי עילאי".

We have seen that Sukkos is a time when the Jewish People and Hashem enjoy a special relationship, one in which they share unique forms of joyfulness and love, unity and wholeness. Their relationship at this time is exclusive to זמן שמחתנו, 'the Season of our Joy,' and is not found quite in this form during other festivals.

We might well ask, is there anything peculiar to Sukkos, then, which inspires such rich and lofty characteristics? And we turn again to the Nesivos Sholom for an answer. Here, Rabbi Berezovsky enables us again to see both how Sukkos is a continuation of the Tishri season of growth in our relationship with Hashem and also that the festival has elevated qualities all its own. Moreover, here he reveals the secret to attaining the special connection with Hashem that awaits us during זמן שמחתנו:

"והדרך להגיע לאהבתו ית' נתן הקב"ה במצות ניסוך המים. מים ענינם חסד ואהבה כידוע. מצות ניסוך המים היא שיהודי ינסך ע"ג המזבח את כל מדת האהבה שלו ויקריבנה כליל להקב"ה. וזו היתה גודל שמחת בית השואבה בניסוך המים כי על ידה מסרו את כל האהבה שבלב יהודי קודש לה'. וזמן המצוה הוא לאחר הימים הנוראים, כי אחרי שיהודי מזכך את הגוף ואת הנפש רוח ונשמה שלו, יכול הוא שתהי' כל מדת האהבה שבו קודש בלתי לאהבתו ית' לבדו."
(נתיבות שלום על סוכות, מאמר ראשון 'זמן שמחתנו': קצא)

"And the way to attain to love of Him, may He be blessed, the Holy One Blessed is He has placed into the mitzvah of Nisuch Hamayim – the Pouring of Water. Water symbolises kindness and love, as is well known. The [deeper meaning of the] mitzvah of Nisuch Hamayim is that a Jew should pour upon the mizbeich, the altar, all of his quality of love and and dedicate it completely to Hashem. And this was the foundation of the great joy of the 'Simchas Beis Hashoeivoh', for through the pouring of water over the mizbeich a Jew would give over all the love in his heart to be holy and sanctified

for Hashem. And the time of this mitzvah is after the Yomim Noraim, the Days of Awe, because after a Jew purifies his body and every part of his soul – his 'nefesh,' 'ruach' and 'neshomoh' – it is possible for all of the love within him to become sanctified and dedicated solely in love to Him alone."

(Nesivos Shalom on Sukkos, Discourse 1, 'The Season of Our Joy': p.191)

And so we see that it is the Simchas Beis Hashoeivoh that lends Sukkos its unique ability to inspire and create unique forms of love and joy; yet even this beautiful imagery from the Simchas Beis Hashoeivoh, the pouring of water on the mizbeiach – symbolising a Jew sanctifying and dedicating all the love in his heart to Hashem – can not escape being intrinsically associated with the Yomim Noraim, because only after a Jew "purifies his body and every part of his soul – his 'nefesh,' 'ruach' and 'neshomoh' " – is it possible "for all of the love within him to become sanctified and dedicated solely in love to Him alone".

The themes we have discussed are laid out magnificently in the sefer "Pele Yoeitz" by Rabbi Eliezer Papo (1785-1826). In this passage we find the author expressing a deep affection for Sukkos: this is an impassioned and touching manifesto for the festival, in which we gain a strong sense of Rabbi Pappo's gratitude for the gift of joyfulness it provides as an antidote to the heavier Days of Awe:

"ועוד נלוה בחג הקדוש הזה מצות שמחה של מצוה. ואם בכל הרגלים מצוה לשמח על אחת כמה וכמה בחג הקדוש הזה אשר הוא זמן שמחתנו כאשר אנו אומרים בתפלה, ועליה כתיב (דברים טז:ד-טו): ושמחת בחגך, והיית אך שמח. אמנם לא צונו יוצרנו אלא על שמחת הלב שיהיה שבע רצון ומלא שמחה של מצוה, כאשר החי יתן אל לבו, מה אנו ומה חיינו ומה טוב חלקנו ומה נעים גורלנו אשר בחר בנו יוצרנו ולא זו מחבבנו, וחבה יתרה נודעת לנו עד אין חקר ועד מקום שאין יד שכלנו מגעת, ומעט אשר עינינו הן הרואות שיעצנו בעצה טובה ונתן לנו ראשיהשנה ויום הכפורים לכפר בהם עוונותינו, ובאהבתו וחמלתו כאב את בן ירצה, רצה לשמחנו מיגוננו ומצערנו שנצטערנו בימי התשובה ונתן לנו תכף את חגי הסכות וצונו לשמח וקובע לנו שכר טוב על שמחתנו, היש חך מתוק מזה?! ורצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות ונתן לנו מצות סכה לפרס סכת שלומו עלינו, ומצות ארבעה מינים שבלולב, אשר הם סימן טוב לישראל והרמת נס להורות דדין נצח, כמאמר רבותינו זכרונם לברכה במדרש (ויקרא רבה ל-ד): משל לשנים שנכנסו לדין וכו', וצונו לשמח שמחה של מצוה והוא סימן טוב לכל השנה שכתבו גורי האר"י ז"ל שמי שיהא שמח וטוב לב ולא יצטער כלל בחג הקדוש הזה, מבטח לו שתעלה לו שנה טובה ויהיה לעולם שמח:" (פלא יואץ, סכה: תכט)

"Another aspect which accompanies this holy festival is the mitzvah of rejoicing. If on all the festivals there is a mitzvah to rejoice, how much more so on this holy festival, which is "the time of our rejoicing" – as we say in our prayers. Regarding this, it is written (Devarim 16:14-15), "And, you will rejoice in your festival... and, you will only be happy." However, our Maker only commanded us to rejoice in our hearts, and that a person should be satiated and filled with the joy of a mitzvah. For when a living person takes to heart, "What is our worth and the value of our lives? How goodly is our portion and how pleasant is our lot: Our Maker chose us and has not ceased from loving us! He has made known to us His abundant affection – beyond any limit or human comprehension.

The little that our eyes can see is that He has counselled us wisely and has given to us Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur to atone for our sins. In His great love and compassion – as a father seeks good for his son – He wanted to bring us happiness after our pain and grief during the Days of Repentance, and immediately gave us the festival of Sukkoth for rejoicing, and He instituted a good reward for our happiness. Is there a feeling sweeter than this?

The Holy One Blessed Be He wanted to increase Israel's merit, therefore, He increased for us Torah and mitzvah, and gave us the mitzvah of sukkah – to spread His canopy of peace over us, and the mitzvah of the four species associated with the lulav – which are a good sign for the Jewish people ... G-d also commanded us to celebrate the joy of a mitzvah, which is a good sign for the entire year. The disciples of the Arizal wrote that a person who is happy and content and is not distressed at all during this holy festival is guaranteed that he will have a good year and he will always be happy."

(Pele Yoeitz, Sukkoh: p.429) [Translation from www.peleyoetz.com]

Let us conclude with the words of Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch we saw earlier, for there is perhaps no more beautiful expression of the thoughts we have shared:

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, at the peak of this Sabbath-month, at its radiant height, after you were called with the Shofar-power to return to G-d and after Yom Kippur fasting and solemnity when you were asked to break your adherence to a life-style which is alienated from G-d, you are to celebrate and experience true joyfulness...

Seriousness will find its bloom and perfection in joy, and G-d's truth will lead to the lasting and fulfilling joy on earth...

Rosh Hashanah is only a beginning, Yom Kippur is the mediator, but Sukkoth is the fruition of life. The first of the month is a dim beginning, the mediating tenth is a growing beacon, but the fifteenth culminates in a profusion of radiant light. Only one day of self-judgement, one day of fasting, but for seven days all aspects of earthly life, peace and joy stand before G-d..." (Collected writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Feldheim: Vol.II p.85)

May this year indeed see a true and full returning of all Israel to G-d, and may we each enjoy the lasting and fulfilling joy and radiant light that are reserved for those fortunate enough to join Hashem in love on the holy festival of Sukkos.



Wishing everyone a חג שמחה.





זכרון אריה

