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Succos

RABBI MOSHE BEN CHAIM

Reader: Can you please explain the relationship of the Lulav and Etrog to Succah. On most holidays there is usually a relationship between the mitzvah and the holiday like maztah on Pesach, or the succah and Succos. What is the purpose of the Lulav and Etrog? I am finding it very hard to find any information. Of the many I have spoken to, little information known. The main response I get is "we do it because we are commanded to by God". Well this of course is a given, but find it hard to accept as an answer.

Mesora: Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explained in his book entitled Horeb1, a close relationship between the two. I will mention his ideas, followed by my thoughts - stimulated by Rabbi Hirsch.

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The Joy of Succos

RIVKA OLENICK

"So that your generations may know that in the tabernacles did I make the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am God, your Lord." Leviticus 23:43 "And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, Thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the Fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Deuteronomy 16:14

Just four days ago on Yom Kippur, we all stood before God; we confessed our sins and pleaded for His forgiveness. We have hopefully fulfilled our requirements on Yom Kippur and with renewed life we now look forward to the festival of Succos. God has granted all of us physical and spiritual survival; so with tremendous joy, together we partake of this beautiful Yom Tov. What is the joy of Succos and what should it mean to us individually as Jews and as a community? All the Yom Tovim and the Sabbath are considered to be as sanctuaries, places of refuge and protection, the true reality that is meant for us as Jews.

We treat the entire time allotted to Yom Tov and Sabbath differently, not only by refraining from all work, malacha but with regard to our recognition of our Creator. Each time we observe the Sabbath or Yom Tov it should illuminate in our minds a joyous and constant awareness of Who the Creator of the Universe is and what our relationship to our Creator should be. Otherwise, what is the purpose of these observances and what joy should we partake of in recognizing God during these designated holidays? Of course we celebrate with our family and friends, with special food, with wine and with special clothing set aside for our physical enjoyment, the enjoyment that adds to the simcha, of the Yom Tov. We can engage in all of the normal physical enjoyments as well, that are performed with the intention of Divine service.

But what is also the real simcha of Yom Tov, the true happiness we feel in our minds? We are asked not to burden ourselves with thoughts or conversations involving physical matters or anything pertaining to our occupational or weekday activities. We don't read our business

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AFTER THE EXODUS, THE JEWS DWELT IN "SUCCOS", BOOTHS. ACCORDING TO ONE VIEW, OUR SUCCOS REPRESENT THOSE BOOTHS. ACCORDING TO THE OTHER VIEW, THE BOOTHS MIMIC GOD'S CLOUDS WHICH PROTECTED US FROM THE ELEMENTS. BOTH REMIND US OF GOD'S KINDNESS IN TAKING US OUT OF EGYPT TO ULTIMATELY GIVE US HIS TORAH.

God Cannot Be Physical

Reader: I'm confused. You say that we should not come up with our own definitions of God. Yet, you say it is impossible for God to become physical. Isn't that limiting God? Where are the scripture verses that support your assertion that God can never become physical?

Mesora: Man cannot perceive that which is imperceptible, I refer to God. This is why one cannot come up with "definitions" of God. As Maimonides

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Succos

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The Succah, a minimalistic structure, is to focus man on a minimizing his material lifestyle. This teaches man that pursuit of the physical world is not the goal of our temporary life. The lulav too embodies the correct attitude towards the source of all physical good. We demonstrate our thanks to God for His bountiful harvest. We realize God alone has complete dominion over the world.

The Talmud states, (Succah 37b) "Why do we wave the Lulav? R. Yochanan said, we wave out and back (horizontally) to the One who owns all four directions on earth, and we wave the Lulav up and down to the One Who owns heaven and earth". Rabbi Yochanan - in my opinion - separated the two acts of waving "in/out" from "up/down" to teach us that there are two areas of God's dominion which we need to realize: That God owns all the directions refers to something other than heaven and earth. We see this clearly, i.e. that He is the Creator of all. This is why we wave up/down. But if this covers all creation, what is left to recognize about God's greatness? I believe it is to emphasize His dominion over man's actions - that God has complete knowledge of our travels on earth (our actions) as alluded to by the "four directions", which is limited to earthly activity. This subtle difference points us to the realization that there are two distinct areas in which we must attest to God's greatness: 1) God is omnipotent, He can do all, as He created heaven and earth, 2) God is omniscient, He knows all, as He is aware of all our travels and actions.

Interestingly, these are the two main themes of the High holiday prayers, "Malchios" (omnipotence), and "Zichronos" (omniscience). Rabbi Yochanan's view is that our waving of the four species on Succos must demonstrate God's dominion in all areas; in His creation, and in His government of man.

Why must the Succah be temporal and frail by design? Succah breaks man away from his insecurities regarding his wealth. Man continuously and falsely attempts to compensate for physical insecurity by striving for riches. Man must strive to focus on God as the Sole Benefactor, instead of relying on the work of his hands. The drive towards the physical as an end removes God from man's

life. Lulav contrasts succah by emphasizing the use of the physical for the right reasons. We thank God - the Source of our bounty, replacing our faulted view of the physical with the proper view. All physical objects that we are fortunate to receive should be used in recognition of the 'Supplier' of these fruits, and not to reaffirm our own physical strength.

It also makes sense that succah - and not Lulav - is used to demonstrate man's required break from the physical. Man's home is the one object which embodies earthly permanence,...not so man's food. Therefore, I believe a frail home - a succah - is used as opposed to fruits - which are consumed objects, and do not afford man the satisfaction of permanence. Since man does not attach himself to fruits as he does his home, the home is from where man must make his break.

Perhaps this is why we also read Koheles (Ecclesiastes) on Succos. In this philosophical masterpiece, King Solomon analyzes the correct philosophy for man to abide in relation to work, wealth, happiness, sadness, and primarily, in accomplishments. King Solomon states numerous times, "what extra is there for man in all is toil that he toils under the sun?" He even commences his work with his summary, "All is futility of futility...". The Rabbis questioned King Solomon's statement, "How can King Solomon say all is futile, when God said in Genesis that the world is very good?" The answer is that Solomon was referring only to the physical as an end in itself as futile. When God said it was good, He meant that as long as it serves only as a means to man's pursuit of wisdom. There is no contradiction between King Solomon and God.

In summary, Succah breaks down man's weighty attachment to the physical. Lulav redirects that attachment towards God, the source of all our sustenance.

Fulfill the obligations of this Succos holiday. Adhere to the commands of eating, drinking, and certainly sleeping in the succah, even light naps. Make the seach (succah covering) from detached plant life such as reeds, wood, or bamboo, so you may gaze through the gaps at the stars as you lie on your bed - recognizing your Creator, the Creator of the stars. Wave the lulav and esrog in all four horizontal directions demonstrating God's exclusive dominion over all man's affairs. Wave the lulav upwards and downwards, demonstrating God's exclusive creation of that which is up and down - heaven and earth.

By living in these frail huts, may we strip ourselves of our own false security as recited on Yom Kippur, "L'maan nechdal may-oshek yadenu", "so we may abandon the oppression of our hands". And may our waving of the lulav and esrog redirect our security towards the One Who provides a bountiful life - realizing that our ultimate protection and security comes from God.

Footnotes: 1 Soncino Press, 6th English Edition 1997, pp 132 □

Are Sons Punished for Father's Sins?

RABBI MOSHE BEN CHAIM

Reader: I have a non-religious friend that saw a video, and on that video it said the reason that Jews get murdered viciously in Israel is not because of the Arabs, rather because the Jews sin. He can't accept such an answer. How do I explain this to him?

Mesora: Both views are correct. The fact that God punishes people is clear to anyone who reads history. Also true is the fact that people have free will - Arabs do kill. If God chooses, He will not step in to protect us. See our Shema prayer where God promises reward and punishment in proportion to our correct actions. This is a central theme throughout the Torah. Reward and punishment forms much of the book of Genesis. Had Genesis been false, subsequent generations would not have passed down the story of the Flood or any other story. But in fact the opposite is true, that is, the world accepts Biblical accounts of the Flood, Sodom, Abraham, and all other stories and figures as absolute truths, thereby acting as undeniable proofs of God's devastating punishments and His gracious rewards.

Reader: Thank you very much for your insightful answer. But, one of the things he can't understand is, if I do a sin why should someone else get punished for it?

Mesora: The Torah system - God's system - does not punish others for your own sin. This is unjust. Not only that, but Ezekiel 18 teaches that even the person who sins is not punished if he repents, and his sins are forgotten before God. Certainly another person won't be punished if you are not. When the Torah makes the statement (Exod. 20:5) "God remembers the sin of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations...", this verse ends with an essential idea, "to those who hate Me." Meaning, God does not punish subsequent generations, unless they

"hate God", i.e., if they follow the sins of their parents. If however they cease following their father's sins, they will not be harmed. God only punishes the sinner. Punishment has no meaning or purpose for one who lives correctly, regardless of his father's corrupt actions. Punishment from God is in fact a corrective measure. When no correction is required, no punishment is meted out.

One may ponder God's statement: "He remembers the sin of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations..." Why does God's remembrance of sin cease at the fourth generation? Ibn Ezra explains, for this duration, God will refrain His anger, "perhaps the sinner will repent, or, perhaps a child will be born who is better than the father". God waits three or four generations, but no longer. Why not? As Ibn Ezra says, in the fourth generation, the remembrance of all previous sinners is wiped out. It seems Ibn Ezra teaches, God will not need to prolong His anger to the fifth generation, as there will be no fifth - He kills all in the fourth generation. We see this concept when God promised to take the Jews into the land of Canaan (Israel) only after the Canaanites reached irrevocable corruption in sin, requiring annihilation.

This concept of God prolonging His anger makes sense. Go does this, as Ibn Ezra says, to allow one a chance to repent, or future generations an opportunity at a better life. If however a sin is repeated for three or four generations, it is apparent from this unyielding attachment to sin, that such a society has no remedy, and will produce only wicked individuals. As they have no purpose, and their deviance will corrupt others, God wipes out that civilization. Such was the case with the Flood and with Sodom. Nineveh however heeded God's words and repented when Jonah announced God's plan to destroy them. As they changed their evil ways on their own, God's planned annihilation was no longer needed, and He spared them.

The next verse says, (Exod. 20:6) "(God) does kindness to the thousandth generation to those who watch My commands". Why such an imbalance? Why should this area not also be limited to three or four generations? What is the idea that God will "guard kindness to the thousandth generation"? It is repeated in Exod. 34:7. Doesn't justice demand that God keep kindness to those who keep His commands - even past the 1000th generation? And if they do not keep His commands, why is there a promise of 1000 generations or kindness? God should not keep kindness

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Are Sons Punished for Father's Sins?

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unless they keep His commands - regardless of the number of generations. The Ibn Ezra gives the explanation that God's kindness to the souls of the righteous is eternal, "eternal" being euphemistically phrased as "1000's of generations". This does not mean that God will show kindness to 1000 generations regardless of their corruption. Ibn Ezra's explanation removes the problem.

Sforno explains "God will guard kindness to the thousandth generation" to mean that God will bestow good on the descendants of a righteous individual. This produces a question: What purpose is achieved via this practice? Why should future generations be promised such divine benefit from the righteousness of a single individual who lived centuries earlier? They certainly do not 'deserve' good if they do not yet exist!

I believe this questions points us towards a basic theme in reward and punishment. The fact that God bestows good on future generations indicates a novel principle: God wishes the subsequent generations be influenced by their ancestors' perfection. When they see the good in their lives, they will recall God's principle of bestowing good for 1000 generations. They will then recognize that their ancestor's actions are favored by God, and they in turn will hopefully emulate their perfected ancestors. This is why our recollection of the Akeida - the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham - is so essential. According to Rambam, it teaches just how far one must go in their love of God. It is a lesson for future generations.

We now see a strong parallel between reward and punishment. Both take into consideration not only the person going through the experience, but future generations as well. Ibn Ezra said regarding punishment, God prolongs His anger to allow one a chance to repent, or future generations an opportunity at a better life. Regarding reward, God wishes subsequent generations be influenced by their ancestors' perfection. In God's system of reward and punishment, the individual and the society share equal consideration.

Perhaps this was why God would have spared Sodom had there been ten righteous people. The presence of ten righteous people is a salvation for all five cities either because it indicates the cities were able to produce some good, or because these ten souls could affect the sinners towards repentance.

Prophecies were always given for the nation. Man must have children, not

Equality of Converts

Question: How would you describe the acceptance of converted person? Is the person accepted as equal or are there still some prejudice, besides the fact that by law if you are converted properly you are considered as Jewish.

Mesora: Judaism accepts the convert fully with no discrimination. God didn't discriminate, as our kings (David and Solomon) are descendants from Ruth the Moabite who converted. The prayers we say each day are taken from David.

The Torah is sensitive to our feelings, and therefore protects the converts feeling of "second rate Jew" by commanding our distinct love for the convert. Moses married a Midianite. Joshua married Rachav.

We must follow the Torah's sound principles, not man's corrupt idiosyncrasies.

Editors Comments: Not only does Judaism accept the convert fully, but we are commanded as it says in Deuteronomy 10:19 "and you shall love the converts." Just as we are commanded to love God (Deuteronomy 11:1) "and you shall love God, your Lord." The Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, loves converts as stated in Deuteronomy 10:18: "and He loves converts." A convert is included in the commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18)

In the Book of Ruth, chapter 2:12: Boaz says to Ruth: "May Hashem reward your actions, and may your payment be full from Hashem, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

The Rambam says in Chapter 6 of Hilchot De'ot: "Loving a convert who has come to nestle under the wings of the Shechinah fulfills two positive commandments: one for he is also included among the "neighbors" (whom we are commanded to love-see above) and one because he is a convert and Torah states this." Deuteronomy 10:19) "One's love for the convert should be as unlimited as one's love of God..."

A number of the Rambam's responses are dedicated to strengthening the spirits of the converts. He wrote to a convert Ovadiah that although the Jews trace their lineage to Abraham, the converts' connection to Judaism is dependent on God, Himself and is therefore, more praiseworthy. In another letter to a convert the Rambam praises by saying: "leaving his father and homeland...pursuing God...and reaching such heights..."

merely living for himself. And one who removes himself from the Jewish nation - a "poreish min hatzibur" is punished. As an aside question, I wondered: A person exists only for himself in the afterlife, as one does not form part of a society any longer. But, during Earthly life, does the individual have any significance before God per se, or only in as much as he contributes to the Jewish nation? It deserves thought.

As an ending thought, it is notable that this institution of "Son's not Being Punished for Father's Sins" forms part of the Ten Commandments, perhaps indicating just how central this idea is to man's correct appreciation of our just Creator. □

Avraham Learning God's Justice

RABBI MOSHE BEN CHAIM

How did Avraham know what G-d's justice was prior to G-d's communication with him? As he had no Torah, nor communication with God as of yet, by what means did Avraham arrive at a true understanding of God's will? God said "hamichaseh ani mayAvraham.....", "will I keep hidden from Avraham...?" What knowledge was Avraham bereft of, why couldn't he acquire this knowledge on his

own, and what was it in G-d's words which introduced Avraham to this new concept?

Without the Torah, Avraham first posited that there is a Cause for all existences.

The sciences which relentlessly guide matter were all too well organized - catering precisely to the world's daily needs - that it should exist without a Designer. There is a God. One initial Cause. Monotheism.

Avraham saw man as part of creation. He concluded that man is not merely to live his life without self guidance, drifting aimlessly with no goal. The existence of man's mark of distinction - his mind - taught Avraham that the Creator desired man to engage this faculty. It was given only to man, and thus, it must be God's will that the mind is to be used by man above all other faculties. Avraham therefore thought into all matters. Essentially, Avraham thought, "how does this Creator desire I live my life?"

Avraham understood that the primary acknowledgement of man's thinking must be his acceptance of monotheism. To this end, Avraham debated with many individuals and proved through rational arguments that dualism and atheism are false notions.

Once Avraham saw the involvement in wisdom as God's desired goal for man, Avraham pondered many aspects of the world. They included natural law, and laws

of government. Avraham thought, as God desires many men to populate the world, and all men have the goal of learning, man must work together with others so as to ensure a safe haven geared towards that goal of obtaining wisdom. Therefore, moral codes must be followed, i.e., man must not interfere with another's pursuit of the good.

As Avraham proceeded to teach his neighbors, God desired that Avraham have the correct ideas. Avraham was able to understand a great amount on his own, but evidently he could not grasp everything without Divine intervention.

This brings us to God's statement, "will I keep hidden from Avraham..." God therefore introduced some new idea to Avraham. But what was it? God spoke very few words. He said, (Gen. 18:20):

"The cry of Sodom and Amora is great and their sin is greatly heavy. I (God) will go down and see if in accordance with their cry they do, and I will destroy them, or not, I will know."

In these words alone was the lesson to Avraham about a new concept. (It is essential when learning to isolate wherein lies the answer.) Upon hearing this prophecy from God, Avraham thought, "God knows whether they deserve to be destroyed, He knows all, so he knows their sin. However, God is saying that there are two possibilities here, destroying Sodom, or sparing them. Avraham then responded:

"will you wipe out these cities if there are 50 righteous souls there? It is mundane that You should kill a righteous person with a wicked, and the righteous will suffer the same as the wicked, the Judge of the entire world won't do justice?!" God then responds, "If find 50 righteous in the midst of the city, I will spare the entire place for their sake".

What did Avraham ask, and what did God respond?

Avraham made a few statements, but one was not a question. When Avraham said "It is mundane that You should kill

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Avraham Learning God's Justice

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a righteous person with a wicked, and the righteous will suffer the same as the wicked, the Judge of the entire world won't do justice?!"

He was not asking, but rather he was stating, "this is not how You work". Avraham repeats the concept of justice in that passage, teaching us that he was only talking about justice in the statement. Avraham had no question on this, a righteous person should live, and a wicked person should die. Justice demands this.

What Avraham was asking on was tzedaka, whether God would even save ALL the wicked if enough righteous people were present in the city. And this is precisely what God answered Avraham:

"If find 50 righteous in the midst of the city, I will spare the entire place for their sake".

The question is, where did Avraham get this idea, that God would not only work with justice, but would engage traits over and above pure justice, something we would call charity, or tzedaka?

Avraham got this idea from God's few words. "I (God) will go down and see if in accordance with their cry they do, and I will destroy them, or not..." . God said there was an option here, meaning, although God knew Sodom and Amora were sinful, and He knew the exact measure of their sin, nonetheless, there was an option regarding their fate. Avraham deduced from God's words that there are other criteria than the sinners' own flaws, which God views to evaluate the sinners' fate. This is precisely what God intended Avraham to learn. This is not something a person can determine from his studies. And since Avraham was to be a "mighty nation", and that he was going to "teach his household to keep the ways of God", (Gen. 18:18-19) Avraham needed to be instructed in those ways. (Note: Here we see God teaches man through engaging man's mind, and not simply spelling out the idea. God made Avraham use his reasoning to learn the concept.)

What does this idea represent, that God will spare even the wicked provided righteous people are present? I believe it teaches us that God will tolerate the wicked, provided there are proper influences with the potential to change the wicked. In such a case, the wicked are not doomed to a failed existence, not yet, provided a possible cure is close by. This teaches us the extent to which God endures sinners. "God does not seek the death of the sinner, but in his return from his ways..." We even see earlier that God has the consideration that Avraham should know both charity and justice, (Gen. 18:19) "...and he will keep to God's ways to do charity and justice..."

What is the difference between these two, and why is charity-tzedaka-so essential, that God had to make sure Avraham had this concept? Justice, we understand, is necessary for any society to operate. Deterrents must exist to prevent people from outletting their aggression and destroying society. Where does tzedaka come in?

I believe tzedaka is necessary for the individual, as opposed to justice, which is for the society. What I mean is that with justice alone, if someone is in the wrong, they must make amends. But what if the person has had a tortured existence up to this point, and now faces penalties from a system which treats him as everyone else? Won't this person have the potential to break at some point? Even commit suicide? Without tzedaka, he feels no one has concern for his specific situation.

It is man's nature when things go bad, to close in on himself, feeling that a streak of misery is upon him. This feeling strips him from all hope. He eventually feels alienated from society at large which seems to be 'doing fine', and the "why me" attitude sets in and he begins a downward spiral. Without another person showing him pity, and a desire to assist, he is doomed.

This is where I feel tzedaka plays a vital role in society. If we are to ensure the well being of society with the aforementioned goal of securing mankind's haven for intellectual pursuits, we need to recognize more than justice, but we must also recognize that man needs individual attention in the form of sympathy, empathy, care, hospitality, generosity, and all other forms. The fortunate among us must also initiate such care, and not wait until the fallen person calls out, for it might be too late, and he never calls out, but ends matters drastically. For this reason, the shulchan aruch teaches that giving tzedaka is not simply giving money, but we are obligated to sit down and commiserate with the unfortunate soul. The uplifting of his countenance is the goal, and money is only one item on the list by which we accomplish this goal.

Maimonides states that the highest level of man is when he is concerned with his fellow man.

Man's nature is that he needs to be recognized as an individual, by another. Without this recognition, man feels no integrity, and will not move on with his life. Therefore, tzedaka is essential to a society's laws.

Justice serves the collective group, tzedaka addresses the individual. Both are essential. □

God Cannot Be Physical

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teaches, what we know of God is always in the negative. We cannot know what He is, we can

only know what He is not, i.e. He is not physical, He is not emotional, He is not governed by anything, including time, he is not affected by anything, including His creations' actions.

Following are a few arguments refuting the notion that God can be physical:

1) "Limit" is not a negative. God being limited, in that He never becomes physical, is a perfection. For example, a human judge who can never make a mistake, limited to being right, is more perfect than a judge who can make mistakes. Being limited to perfection, is perfection. Being right is clearly a good. Being physical is definitely an evil, as it subjects the one physical to all sorts of damage, decay, destruction and death. Being physical is worlds apart from being metaphysical.

2) How can that which is not physical 'become' physical? This is an impossibility. Something which exists already in a metaphysical state, means that this is its nature. As God already exists in His perfection as non-physical, this metaphysical state is His very definition. It is as if you suggest that water can become dry. Then it would not be water. But even this impossibility is more plausible than God's transition into corporeality, as water is already matter. Change in moisture is more plausible than change in God. God cannot become physical, then He would not be God. An important point for those who ascribe to the notion of the Trinity.

3) Another absurdity from your premise is as follows: God is the Creator. To become physical means He is now the 'created'. These two are mutually exclusive. Equally impossible is that something physical can become God. Since it is already a created being, by definition, it cannot be the Creator.

4) Change implies imperfection. Something changes either to become more or less perfect. If we say God changes, (which opposes the verse in Malachi, "I am God, I do not change...") we are suggesting that He is either imperfect now, and is moving towards perfection, or He is perfect now, and is moving away from perfection. In either case, we suggest a moment where God is imperfect.

5) God cannot be controlled by the very laws He created. Becoming physical means he is governed by laws of the physical.

6) I quote Maimonides' third principle: "Principle III. The Denial of Corporeality in Connection with G-d

This is to accept that this Oneness that we have mentioned above (2) is not a body and has no strength in the body, and has no shape or image or relationship to a body or parts thereof. This is why the Sages of blessed memory said with regards to heaven there is no sitting, nor standing, no awakens, nor tiredness. This is all to say that He does not partake of any physical actions or qualities. And if He were to be a body then He would be like any other body and would not be God. And all that is written in the holy books regarding descriptions of God, they are all anthropomorphic. Thus said our great Rabbis of blessed memory The Torah spoke in man's language (i.e. using our terms so that we'd have some understanding). And the Rabbis have already spoken at length on this issue. This is the third pillar and is attested to by the verse "For you saw no image" meaning that you did not see an image or any form when you stood at Sinai because as we have just said He has no body nor power of the body." □

The Joy of Succos

□ RIVKA OLENICK

□ (continued from page 1)

documents, our bills or our mail – this is all prohibited for positive reasons, not only for restriction of work. All of the prohibitions of malacha are in place to bring about a different reality for us. The reality of Yom Tov, as mentioned before is to be perceived as a sanctuary a place also in our minds that is a place of protection and a place of peace. We make room in our minds for our own spiritual growth through mental activity – for the ideas related to the service of God, and to Torah since God has once again given us spiritual survival. Since we have invested most of our energies into the physical preparation of Succos, how do we make use of this "spiritual gift" from God? We are now ready to embrace Succos outdoors, by dwelling in booths. Succos falls during the Autumn, when the strong heat of summer is over. We are used to our comfortable and secure homes, but now we are asked to come out of our homes and immerse ourselves in the beauty and bounty of nature, another gift from God. However, in our minds we should remember that we lived and wandered forty years in the wilderness and then God took us out of Egypt to bring us to Israel. Our lives in the wilderness were deficient, we struggled and were overwhelmed with worry in maintaining our existence, yet we lacked nothing! We were tested by God in every way; with the manna and with little possessions, but we were under God's protection! By our living in the "wilderness", our own prowess and skill were put to the test by God. Our reliance for existence would have to come from God, and not from our own creativity. This was our realization then, right now, and should be the awareness for future generations.

God saw that we were worthy and that we would actually keep the commandments. Our realization is that God did maintain us, and He did shelter and care for us during those forty years just as He still does now. "Thy clothes did not wear out, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years." Deuteronomy Chapter 8. We understand from this important truth that it is only God that sustains us, not man. The succah represents the happiness, the joy of living "deficiently" in the wilderness under God's protection, as this is what we are commanded to do! The succah isn't man's mastery of the earth, it is not a building or a strong structure. The succah itself is temporary and "deficient," yet God commands us to live this way now and in the future. This is the way our forefathers "lived" in simple huts with their families and with the happiness in serving God, happiness even before we entered Israel, "the land of milk and honey." Israel, the land God gave us is where we would use all of our human talent and skill to build it successfully and beautifully. We were to build it as our "permanent" home with God as the "foundation" of our existence and nothing else. Everything we had and everything we have now is only because of God. This is the idea of, "that your generations may know." These are the truths we should understand and internalize. It is these truths that we pass along to our future generations. Even in the "wilderness" we "Serve the Lord with gladness, and come before Him in exultation." Psalms 100:2. Hag Sameach! □

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