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and anti-Semitism, Mesora
launches 2 new websites.

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JewishTimes

VOL. XV NO. 15 — OCT. 17, 2016

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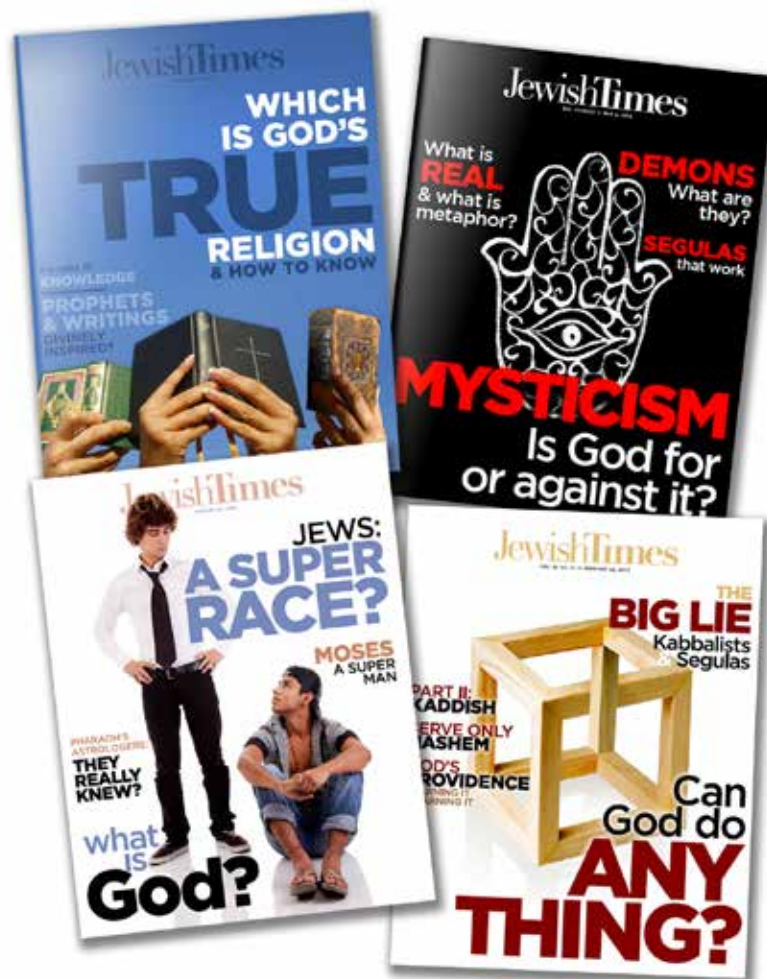
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LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Lulav & Succah: What's the Relationship?

Reader: Can you please explain the relationship of the lulav and etrog to the succah? On most holidays, there is usually a relationship between the mitzvot and the holiday like matzoh on Pesach, or the succah and Succos. So what is the purpose of the lulav and etrog? I am finding it very hard to find any information. Of the many people I have spoken to, little information is 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 I find this response problematic. (CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

Rabbi: In his book entitled Horeb[1], Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explained a close relationship between the succah, etrog and lulav. I will mention his ideas, followed by my thoughts, stimulated by Rabbi Hirsch.

The Succah, a minimalistic structure, is to break man away from his materialistic lifestyle: the physical world is not the goal of our temporal Earthly existence. The 4 species embodies the correct attitude towards the source of all physical good. We give thanks to God for His bountiful harvest: waving produce in all 4 directions, upwards and downwards, we demonstrate that 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 separates the two acts of waving "forward/back/left/right" from "up/down" to teach us that there are two areas of God's dominion which require our affirmation. God is the sole Creator of all. This is why we wave up and down, referring to heaven and Earth: all creation is contained in these two spheres. But if up and down covers all creation, what is left to recognize about God's greatness as we wave in 4 directions too (forward/back/left/right)? This refers not to creation, but to God's government of mankind – that God has complete knowledge of man's travels on Earth (our actions) as alluded to by the "4 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 (waving up/down), 2) God is omniscient, He knows all, as He is aware of all our travels and actions (forward/back/left/right).

This theme is reiterated as the two main themes of the High Holiday prayers, "Malchys" (omnipotence), and "Zichronos" (omniscience). Rabbi Yochanan's view is that waving the four species on Succos must demonstrate God's dominion in all areas; His creation, and His government of man. We wave His creations up and down to demonstrate that He created all



that is above, and all that is below. But He also governs all that He created, demonstrated by waving the species in all 4 directions. God's omnipotence and omniscience is again on display in the Temple: the Menora possesses 7 branches (7=creation) and a table of 12 showbreads displays God's providence (food) over the 12 Tribes.

Why must the Succah be temporal and frail by design? Man continues false attempts to compensate for physical insecurity by striving for riches and Earthly permanence, expressed in building luxurious homes. Succah breaks man away from his desire for physical security. Man must view God as his security, instead of viewing himself as the sole cause of his fortune, removing God from the equation and failing to appreciate His vital role. Therefore, God commands us to dwell in a flimsy structure for a week, as a detachment from our greatest physical security. God must retain central focus.

Lulav complements 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 this proper thanks to God for providing vegetation. All physical objects that we are fortunate to receive should be used in recognition of the Creator of these fruits, and not to reaffirm our own physical strength.

It also makes sense that Succah – 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 – 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. Succah breaks down man's weighty attachment to the physical. Lulav redirects that attachment towards God, the source of all our sustenance. This is the connection.

This explains why we read Koheles (Ecclesiastes) on Succos. In this philosophical masterpiece, King Solomon presents the correct philosophy for man in relation to God, labor, wealth, happiness, death, and accomplishments. King Solomon states numerous times, "What extra is there for man in all his toil that he toils under the sun?" He even commences his work with his summary, "Futility of futilities..." 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 King 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 and a perfected life. There is no contradiction between King Solomon and God. (Rabbi Israel Chait)

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 scach (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 sole Creator of the universe. Wave the 4 species in all horizontal directions demonstrating God's exclusive dominion over all man's affairs. Wave them upwards and downwards, demonstrating God's exclusive creation of that which is up and down – heaven and Earth.

By living in these frail booths, may we strip ourselves of our false security, and may our waving of the lulav and esrog redirect our security towards the One who provides a bountiful life, thereby realizing that our ultimate protection and security comes from God. ■

[1] Soncino Press, 6th English Edition 1997, pp 132

SIN OF THE MINUTE

RABBI
MOSHE
ABARBANEL

“If a person is
“steadfast in his
repentance,”
why repeat the
confessional?”

“*The confessional prayer customarily recited by all Israel is, ‘For we have all sinned...’ This is the essence of the confessional prayer. Sins which were confessed on one Yom Kippur should be confessed on another Yom Kippur, even though one remains steadfast in his repentance, as [Psalms 51:5] states, ‘I acknowledge my transgressions and my sins are always before me’ (Maimonides, Hichot Teshuva 2:8).*”

We were left with a question on this strange Halacha. If a person is “steadfast in his repentance,” why repeat the confessional? The person has not repeated his violation, and thus, need not repeat his Teshuva. Why then repeat the confession?

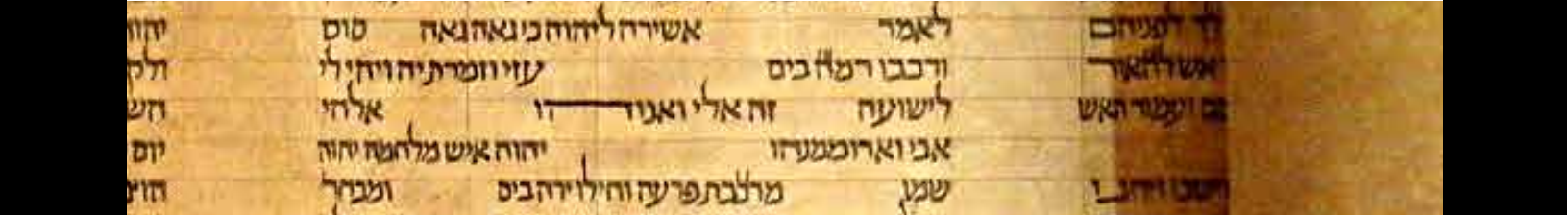
As I walked to Shul on Yom Kippur, I reflected upon this question. I grew up traditional, but not Torah observant, and considered the unrestrained lifestyle I left behind. When a person partakes of a forbidden pleasure, a desire if you will, they are violating God’s Law. Upon the process of Teshuva, they ultimately refrain from the action and recognize it no longer as a virtue, but a vice. This emotional and intellectual process takes time. Interestingly enough, the person, even after completing the process, will usually retain desire for the past activity. A recovering addict will be plagued by the desire perhaps for his entire life. Just because we change our ways and recognize the true path does not mean we no longer desire the pleasure. Just the opposite. In fact, Rambam recognizes this in the first Halacha of chapter 2 in Teshuva:

“[Who has reached] complete Teshuvah? A person who confronts the same situation in

which he sinned when he has the potential to commit [the sin again], and, nevertheless, abstains and does not commit it because of his Teshuvah alone, and not because of fear or a lack of strength. For example, a person engaged in illicit sexual relations with a woman. Afterwards, they met in privacy, in the same country, while his love for her and physical power still persisted, and nevertheless, he abstained and did not transgress. This is a complete Baal-Teshuvah. This was implied by King Solomon in his statement [Ecclesiastes 12:1] ‘Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the bad days come and the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no desire for them.’”

Notice, Rambam states the complete repentance includes the situation where “the repentant person met with the same women, in privacy, in the same country, WHILE HIS LOVE FOR HER and physical power still persisted.” In other words, even though we complete the process, and refrain from the act, we still will suffer from the same lust, desire, attraction and love for the forbidden act. That is why we must repeat the confessional: not because of a repeated sinful act, but because of our continued attraction for what is forbidden. I want to point out this great insight is that we don’t repress the desire, but we control it with our intellectual strength over our lust, our dedication to the Creator.

We now understand that repeating confession is due to the sustained attraction to previously committed sins, for which we might harbor a yearning. Attachment to these thoughts and yearnings is severed via repeated yearly confessions. But as we have not carried out such drives in action, no Teshuva is warranted. ■



Ha'azinu *The Purpose of Song* IN JUDAISM

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Over Yom Kippur, my close friend Rabbi Avraham shared with us a problem. He wondered why Ha'azinu — a parsha containing rebukes (tochachos) — should be written in the “shira” (song) format. All of Torah is written on full lines, with breaks indicating new sections. But Shira — song — is written in a different format; a repeating pattern.

Typically, shira is a response to a great good which God enacts for us. Thus, the Song of the Sea (Az Yashir) sung by Moses, Miriam and the Jews upon God’s miraculous salvation from the pursuing Egyptian army by splitting the sea, is written in this song format. King David’s and Deborah’s response to God’s salvation of our enemies too are “shira.” But Ha’azinu contains rebuke...why is this written in song format?

Let us first understand the definition of song: what is this phenomenon?

Song is a response; our expression for some good we experience. It is man’s nature to express himself, and when a great good has occurred, we find words alone insufficient; singing is necessary to accurately express our joy. Of course, this strengthens Rabbi Avraham’s question.

Reviewing the songs in Torah, we notice a stark distinction between Ha’azinu and others. All other cases are responses to a good. Ha’azinu includes a forecast of punishments: Moses relates to the nation how God will respond to our sins.

Perhaps, song is reserved as a response to good tidings, but only for people in general. However, Moses was the most perfect man. Unlike others, his exuberance with God was not limited to good times alone. Moses



viewed God’s rewards and punishments as equally good. He alone was fit to “sing” about our evil as well as our good, since both are due to God’s perfect ways. Other personalities sung of past goodnesses, but Moses sung also of tragedies, for they too are for our good. The Rabbis state, “One must bless God for the evil just as he blesses God for the good (Tal. Brachos 54a).” We must welcome God’s discipline, “For those whom He loves, does God rebuke... (Proverbs 3:12).”

Song has a structure different than normal speech. Just as we have two modes of verbalization — speech and song — the written word too can convey both: the communication of ideas (normal Torah text), and man’s elation (shira’s stylized text). But why is the structure of the Torah’s text to be changed? The answer is as always, God wishes to teach man in the best fashion. By writing the song’s text in a repeating pattern, more is communicated. Ideas alone are not conveyed, but the pattern of the text conveys the style of a song...a mood. But this begs the question...what is gained through the reader seeing songs of our prophets?

As God wished to express that His Torah is truly the perfect life for man, how does He prove this? It is through recording human song that praises God. When we read of David’s, Deborah’s and Moses’ songs, we see human beings exuberant (read “fully satisfied”) in God’s relationship to man in His Torah lessons, His commands, His salvations, and yes...even His punishments. Recording man’s response, a response of elation, God’s Torah testifies to Torah’s perfection. ■

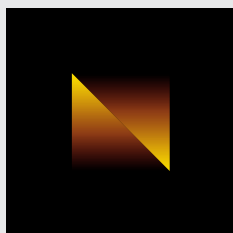
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The Joy of Lulav

Rabbi Yaakov Trachtman

“And you shall take to yourself on the first day the fruit of goodly trees (Etrog), branches of palm-trees (Lulav), and boughs of chained trees (Hadas), and willows of the brook (Arava), and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days (Lev. 23:40).”

The Torah describes the Mitzvah of Lulav as an act of rejoicing. How is picking up a bundle of foliage considered joyful?

In order to understand this, we must first seek an understanding for the action itself. What is the idea of “picking up”? We only pick things up when we have an interest in them. In general we are only interested in practical utility. For example, I will take an Esrog to eat, or a Lulav from which to make a broom. The Mitzvah is telling us to do something very strange, to pick something up with no purpose in mind. Which group of people will enjoy just picking things up without any utility in mind? The one group which stands out, is young

children. We often see young children pick things up and put them down without any apparent reason. What reason do they have to act that way? Children are involved in discovering the world; their natural curiosity has not been affected by social expectations. They enjoy the ‘mere’ experience of discovery. Among adults such pleasure is also possible, as can be seen in the theoretical scientist. The natural world provides ample opportunity to gain new insight into the endless wisdom of the Creator. If we shift our view from a self-centered, pragmatic way of viewing things, to a universal theoretical way of viewing things...we can enjoy the good of the creation itself.

The Mitzvah of Lulav is leading us to this viewpoint. It tells to take this branch, but don’t use it. Take this fruit, but don’t eat it. Just enjoy them for what they are: expressions of the natural order.

In the Torah SheBaal Peh (Oral Law) Lulav has an added dimension. The Rabbis mention the Pasuk, “Then shall

the trees of the wood sing for joy, before the LORD, for He is come to judge the earth”[1] as a reference to Lulav. The Mitzvah of Lulav is a Mitzvah of praise. The trees give praise through reflecting God’s greatness and wisdom as their Creator. This is true even now, however in the future people will recognize the wisdom: studying the trees will move people to praise. That will only happen in a complete sense, in the future when God’s kingship is accepted by all of mankind. However, after we accept God’s kingship on Rosh Hashanah, on Sukkos we can recognize the ‘consequence’ of His kingship, which is that all of nature manifest his greatness.

This idea is especially important at the harvest time. The farmer can easily fall into the trap of thinking that the crop is a result of his own power. If it is his own power, then its purpose will only be to serve himself. Lulav shifts that focus. The crops are given to him to eat, but only as long as he recognizes that his utility is not their highest purpose. Their ultimate ‘purpose’ is to exist as an expression of God’s will. Therefore his eating must be for the purpose of studying the creation.

This explains why Lulav is a Mitzvah of joy. The whole idea of the Mitzvah is that approaching God is the greatest joy possible for man. Ultimately, this is through studying the creation as a whole, but on a micro level it is through studying the wisdom of the Mitzvah system.

This also explains why the Pasuk of Lulav is the source for the Simchas Beis HaShoeva. That celebration is one where the Talmidei Chachamim publicly demonstrate their love for, and joy in doing Mitzvos, even those which are acts of servitude. The rest of the nation comes to witness that joy which gives them a desire for it. People find it hard to believe that wisdom is enjoyable. Seeing living examples makes it something real and worth aspiring to.

Such a celebration is only possible in the Mikdash; the place where God’s existence and wisdom is manifest to all people, even those who don’t see it in the creation. Only in that situation of “being before God” can the Mitzvah of Lulav be expressed for the full seven days. ■

[1] Divrei HaYamim 1 16:33

Oct. 17, 2016

Mesora Announces Two New Websites

<http://www.JewsforMoses.com>

This site responds to Jews for Jesus, now actively stalking Jews on Facebook. The intent is to offer Jewish youth clear, concise and compelling arguments that unveil JFJ claims as false and as lies, while steering them towards Torah resources to learn the truth, and come to value Judaism.



<http://www.Antisemite.net>

Particularly on college campuses, BDS and Palestinian claims are sparking a rise in anti-Semitism. This website's intent is to subdue hate by working with authorities to bring offenders to justice. Awareness alone of our watchdog activities will have impact. We also share the causes of anti-Semitism to appeal to others not prone to crime, but who are ignorant or have accepted the lies about "Occupation."



Seeing Stars

Rabbi Heshy Roth

The scach (roof of the succah) must allow gaps so we might view the stars through it. This is to assist us in witnessing God's stellar creations suspended in the heavens, and recall His majesty. We are to realize that God is essential to our shelter. Why then must a succah's covering exist at all? Would we not see the stars all that much clearer, had no roof been constructed? What is the philosophy behind the succah's "partial" covering, if in fact, any covering obscures the skies?

We are to leave our permanent homes, and dwell in the succah – a minimal dwelling – so as to demonstrate our true dependency is on God, and not the physical protection provided by a sturdy roof. Doing so, gazing through the sparse Schach, helps us achieve this objective. Why then have schach at all?

God does not want man to reject His natural world and its laws, and simply sit back waiting for miracles; that God should do everything for him. No. God designed the natural world for a reason: that man use his mind and harness it, as God says in Genesis 1:28, "...fill the Earth and subdue it." Man must act in accordance with reality. Reality teaches us that we do need shelter, and that there are methods by which to procure that, and all our needs. We are to engage in these methods, be it natural science, engineering, math, etc. However, we cannot depend on physical shelter alone, without God. Schach is a fundamental lesson: it combines man's attempt at sheltering himself with the realization that his efforts always require God's assistance. Schach – a structure which man creates but allows gaps to see God's stars – demonstrates the combination of man's obligatory attempts of physical shelter, with God's providence (the gaps). Thereby, man reflects on God's heavenly bodies, and reminds himself that just as his brick home is equally dependent on God, so too, all else is not exclusively in our hands.

The true lesson of Succos is that man abandons the fallacy that he can address all his needs without God. ■



RELIGION OF JOY

*Succos
Holiday*

RABBI REUVEN MANN

A major facet of the Jewish Holidays is the element of rejoicing. At first glance we do not normally associate religious observance with “having a good time.” We automatically differentiate between the realm of religion and that of personal gratification. The former is seen as something serious and somber in which man sacrifices personal desires in order to serve the Almighty.

The latter area is connected to man's pursuit of pleasure. In America we cherish the right of everyone to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Judaism has a unique outlook on this matter. It affirms that observance of Torah is not contrary to man's desire for emotional fulfillment. All of the Commandments are intended to improve one's character, increase his wisdom and refine the soul. The ultimate objective of our religion is

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

to cause man to be in the best possible condition to live a truly fulfilling life.

The Torah is very concerned about human happiness. In the section known as "the Curses," the explanation put forth for the most extreme Divine punishments is "because you failed to serve Hashem with gladness and a happy heart in the midst of plenty."

The Holidays are regarded as times of celebration. However this idea is challenging when applied to the "Days of Awe." Especially Yom Kippur. This day is extremely somber, as we abstain from food and drink and virtually all creature comforts. The Torah characterizes these ordinances as "affliction of the soul." This would seem to be diametrically opposite to what people would define as a time of joy. And yet it is categorized

as a Holiday on which, therefore, we are supposed to be glad. How can the severe restrictions be reconciled with the obligation to rejoice?

Judaism distinguishes between pleasure and happiness. Most people pursue physical and emotional gratifications which they believe will make them happy. However, they inevitably encounter disappointment. I believe you should not seek to do things that feel good but to do things that make you feel good.

A person may experience pain while undergoing a therapeutic procedure which will save him from a dangerous affliction. Though he is in pain he is extremely happy that his health is being preserved. At the same time one may gorge himself at a lavish banquet which feels

good at the time but brings a sense of disgust when he has to deal with the consequences.

Yom Kippur is a multi dimensional phenomenon. At the same time that we feel the pain of the deprivations we are cognizant of the great gift of atonement afforded by the day and are filled with great joy.

The Rambam in his Code combined the laws of Shofar with those of Succah and Lulav in one section. At first glance the association is not evident. However, we must consider that it is no accident that Succah takes place just five days after Yom Kippur. What is the connection?

The Rambam describes Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as days of awe and fear and "not excessive" joy. However on Succot, he says that we are enjoined to experience "additional" joy.

A great Torah scholar explained that while there is joy on Yom Kippur it is muted. It is something we experience in the heart but can't give tangible expression to through celebratory actions due to the limits imposed by the physical restrictions.

On Succot we enjoy not only the happiness intrinsic to that holiday but that of Yom Kippur as well. We bring into Succot the uncelebrated happiness which was generated on Yom Kippur and there is, thus, additional joy.

Judaism extols the virtue of joy in the Service of Hashem. This is possible only when one cultivates a love of Torah and the virtues of Justice and compassion as well as an appreciation of all of Hashem's blessings. May we merit to attain them.

Chag Succot sameach. ■



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