

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of  
Leah *bas Avrohom a"h*  
a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

## **Tishrei: The Big Picture**

## **PARSHAS HA'AZINU 5776**

In comparison to the rest of the year, there seems to be almost an explosion of sorts in Tishrei – insofar as (Biblically mandated) *yamim tovim* are concerned. The winter is basically bereft of festivals. Pesach occurs in Nisan; a couple of months later, we encounter Shavuot. After this, again there is a respite. But then we arrive at Tishrei, and suddenly we have Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos in rapid succession.

### **Connections**

This is certainly no haphazard arrangement; as such, it must be that the three are somehow related. The connection between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur seems clear enough and indeed is outlined by Chazal. These are the *Yamim Nora'im*, the Days of Awe, with a judgment taking place on Rosh Hashanah and an opportunity extended until Yom Kippur to repent and reverse the ruling (*cf. Rosh Hashanah 16b*). But then, in short order, comes Sukkos, the “time of our rejoicing,” replete with its unique *mitzvos*. How, exactly, does this festival fit in to the same scheme as the other Tishrei events?

Even when focusing on Sukkos on its own we are faced with certain perplexities. Of course, we are all familiar with the unique practices of the holiday – namely, the *mitzvos* of dwelling in a Sukkah and the taking of the four *minim* (species). But what do they have to do with each other? It doesn't seem plausible that they are random ordinances that happen to fall out at the same time of year. Furthermore, Sukkos is also marked, as stated above, as a time of supreme joy. This aspect becomes manifest in truly grand and public style, in the elaborate festivities of song, music and dancing at the *Simchas Beis Hasho'eivah* in the Beis Hamikdash.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos. *Sukkah*, *lulav*, and mass merriment. Seemingly disparate elements, yet collected together in close proximity. It would be truly ideal if we could discover the seamless thread that connects them all.

That thread is provided by the Netziv.

### **The Conflict**

In the lead-up to Rosh Hashanah, we cited the Netziv's enlightening approach to the *Yamim Nora'im*. He explained that there are actually two matters that are adjudicated in Heaven at this time. The more familiar aspect is the judgment affecting individuals, in which Hashem assesses the standing of each and every person and determines his fate for the upcoming year.

But in addition to that, there is another peril hovering over the Jewish people at this time, one involving the nation as a whole. This is the attempt by the Celestial representatives of the nations of the earth to bring about the dissolution of Klal Yisrael. These Heavenly accusers gather together and seek to undo the status of Yisrael as the Chosen nation of Hashem. The Netziv demonstrates how the practices and prayers of the *Yamim Nora'im* period are aimed at defending Yisrael in the wake of this conflict, when their existence as a people is at stake.

This is actually a recurring theme in various places throughout the Netziv's Ha'amek Davar commentary on the Torah. He utilizes it to shed much light, as well, on the *yom tov* of Sukkos – for it also relates to this great Celestial battle. The war itself is waged during the Yamim Nora'im. And the outstanding question of who emerged victorious is clarified on Sukkos.

### A Time to... Dance

The Netziv (*Devarim 16:15*) quotes a most illuminating *medrash* to this effect: “Two litigants appear before a judge; (when they emerge), how do we know who prevailed? The one who raises his spear (as a victory gesture)... Similarly, Yisrael and the nations enter in contention before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, and we do not yet know who prevailed. But when Yisrael emerges... **bearing their *lulavim* and *esrogim***, we know that Yisrael are the victors.”

But it is not only the taking of the four *minim* that serves as a gesture of victory; the Netziv (*Vayikra 23:43*) explains the mitzvah of dwelling in the sukkah in this light, as well. Such is the practice of a prevailing army; they demonstrate their victory by retaining the military formation of their encampment. The *sukkos* reflect this practice. “For I placed Yisrael in *sukkos* when I took them out from the land of Mitzrayim” (*ibid.*). This was a military arrangement, as “B'nei Yisrael were armed in departing from the land of Mitzrayim” (*Shemos 13:18*).

The celebratory nature of the festival is a further manifestation of this idea. In this respect, the Netziv puts forth a novel thought, one unbeknownst to many. He asserts that in addition to *lulav*, *sukkah*, and *simchah* (joy), there is yet another Biblical commandment pertaining to the festival: a mitzvah to dance. It is noteworthy that this was a hallmark of the grand *Simchas Beis Hasho'eivah* celebration in the Temple, as recorded in the Mishnah in Sukkah (5:1,4):

תְּסִידִים וְאֲנָשֵׁי מַעֲשֵׂה הָיוּ מְרַקְדִים לְפָנֵיהֶם בְּאֲבוּקוֹת שֶׁל אֹר שְׂפִידֵיהֶן, וְאוֹמְרִים לְפָנֵיהֶן דְּבָרֵי שִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת...

“Pious people and men of deeds would dance before the people with fiery torches in their hands; they would emote before them words of song and praise...”

This concept is derived from some apparently extraneous words in the Sukkos verses. After already issuing the command to be joyous on the holiday – “*V'samachta b'chagecha*” (*Devarim 16:14*) – the next *passuk* seems to repeat the directive: “*Tachog la'Hashem Elokecha* – ‘Celebrate’ before Hashem your G-d.” Based on Chazal's teaching elsewhere (*cf. Chagigah 10b*), the Netziv defines the term of “*tachog*” here to refer specifically to the act of dancing: “You shall *dance* before Hashem.” Additionally, since the issue of feeling joy was already addressed (in the previous *passuk*), the dancing directive must be based on a different calculation; i.e., it is not simply an expression of this joy, but functions as its own entity.

If the mitzvah to dance on Sukkos is not an outgrowth of the mitzvah of *simchah* – what is it then? The Netziv's explanation rounds out the underlying theme of all the Sukkos practices, and indeed, all of the Tishrei practices. For this dancing is also unique to the victorious party, demonstrating that, with Hashem's mercy, the Jews have once again prevailed over their enemies.