

water, which most of us take for granted, is not nearly as expensive a commodity as an animal sacrifice or an offering of gold or silver would have been. Nevertheless, it was the offering of water that occasioned the great celebrations of joy in ancient Jerusalem.

Simply because it was almost a relatively mundane offering, it emphasized the perspective of life that Succot was meant to convey. One can be joyful even with plain water if one realizes the blessings of nature and of the benevolence of G-d. In a world of excess and the pursuit of luxuries, Succot comes to remind us of our true priorities and of the necessity of a healthy balance in our lives and behavior. (Rabbi Berel Wein)

Terms of Endearment

“And Moshe, the *ebed Hashem* (servant of G-d) died” (*Debarim* 34:5)

G-d’s eulogy for Moshe should consist of the most poetic words that can describe a man who fulfilled every wish and command that is imaginable of mortal beings. In summarizing Moshe’s life’s achievements, He should choose words that describe his remarkable humility, his unstinting devotion, and his amazing powers of calm and sensibility. He doesn’t.

Ebed Hashem are the two words chosen to encapsulate the life of the greatest living legend in biblical history. Just two simple words – servant of G-d. Do those words truly do Moshe justice? How could the simplest and lowest of compliments, calling the greatest prophet a simple servant help us understand G-d’s adulation for his greatest follower?

Fredrick the Great, King of Prussia during the late 1700s, was reviewing his troops when he noticed a middle-aged soldier wearing an interesting ornament. Dangling from what appeared to be an heirloom watch-chain was the spent casing of a bullet. It had been polished and shined as it replaced a watch that the soldier obviously was unable to afford. The king, in a playful mood, pulled his diamond-studded pocket watch from his vest and held it in the sunlight. As the rays glinted off the diamonds that surrounded its face he stared at his piece intently. Then he looked at the soldier. “My dear soldier,” he said in mock concern as he tugged on the exquisite piece attached to its chain. “My timepiece says that it is half past one. What time does yours tell?”

The soldier looked down at the bullet. “Your honor,” he declared with sincere humility. “The ornament that dangles from my watch chain, does not tell me the time. Rather it is a bullet.”

“A bullet!” scoffed the king. “Why on earth would you wear a bullet instead of a watch?”

“To me your honor, there are no hours, minutes nor seconds. My watch tells me that every moment I am willing to take a bullet – even if it means my life – for your Majesty.”

King Fredrick was so impressed with the soldier’s reply that he promptly removed his exquisite royal watch and presented it to the soldier.

The greatest praise that the Creator of all things can reap upon his beloved are two Hebrew words - *Ebed Hashem* - Servant of G-d. Moshe was totally subservient to the will of his Creator making him a mortal extension of His immortal existence. Those two words - *ebed Hashem* - say a lot. They say more than hundreds of pages of eulogy or tomes of accolades. They tell the *raison d’etre* of mortal man – to serve Hashem. As we ponder our existence as we enter the new year, it’s wonderful to know those words. They help us focus on the meaning of life while keeping it’s complexities quite simple. All we have to yearn for is to reach that great level of simplicity. (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)



SPECIAL SUCCOT EDITION



October 9-18, 2022 15-23 Tishri 5783

Reminders for the Holiday

Succot - This beautiful holiday is enjoyed by all members of the family. All bread meals are eaten in the succah, throughout the eight days of the holiday. Make sure the succah is not under a tree and the roof of the succah is thick enough to give full shade.

Lulab and Etrog - The *Lulab* and *Etrog* are taken every day except for Shabbat. Please consult your *Mahzor* for *berachot*.

Hoshaana Rabbah - Like every year, our synagogue will have an all-night reading and *Shaharit* prayers at sunrise for this special day. On this night the final seal is given for our judgment for the coming year.

Shemini Aseret - This day is a holiday all its own. We do not take the *Lulab* and *Etrog* in our hands that day. However, we do eat in the succah without a *berachah*.

Simhat Torah - We culminate the holiday season with a joyous celebration with the Torah. There will be more than sufficient Simhat Torah bags and refreshments.

Making It Real

Why does the Holiday of Succot come so closely after Yom Kippur? We have a custom to doing something towards the construction of the Succah immediately after Yom Kippur. What’s the reason for that?

It’s not for no reason that for a bride and groom, after the dating period has ended and they are already heading to the wedding, there is a volley of gift giving; a ring, a *Tallet*, a bracelet, a set of *Talmud*.

So too we find that with Abraham *Abinu* when he was informed about Hashem’s desire for him to deliver his son at the *Akedah*, Abraham *Abinu* chopped wood and loaded a donkey even though he had servants prepared to do these things and it was way below his dignity as a “Prince of G-d”. *Rashi* explains that “love upsets the order of things”, in other words love, overpowering love will do that to you.

In a cryptic verse in *Shir Hashirim*, Shlomo *Hamelech* offers some very practical advice, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you neither awaken nor arouse the love while it is desirous. (*Shir Hashirim* 2:7)

It’s hard to translate these words without losing most of the message. The word for desire is “*Shetechpatz*” – from the Hebrew root, “*Chafetz*”, which means desire. All during the Ten Days of *Teshubah* we inserted the words and referred to Hashem as a “*Melech Chafetz B’CHaim*, a King Who desires life!”

The *Ramban* learns an important lesson from this expression, which is mentioned three times in *Shir Hashirim*. There are times when we are gifted with inspiration. Inspiration is like a suntan. After a while it fades. How does one lock in those feelings of spiritual elevation? The word *Chafetz* – desire, is comprised of the same letters and is intimately related to the Hebrew word, “*Chefetz*” – object. When feelings of love are

present, when there is a desire to come closer to the Beloved, produce a present. Take that *Chafetz* and turn it into a *Chefetz*!

Concretize, anchor, realize, demonstrate, and memorialize that feeling by putting it into an action. Write a check, Write a letter. Compose a song. Bake a cake. Build a Sukkah, a dwelling place and meeting place for you and Hashem.

Therefore it's no mistake that at this time of the year Jewish men all over the planet and for many thousands of years shed their white angelic garb of Yom Kippur and changed overnight into lumberjacks and amateur carpenters for a few days. It's because we stood like angels for a whole day and were treated to even a momentary taste of holiness, which aroused a burning desire for even more, because we experienced spiritual heights that now we seek to land our dreams.

It's with a *Lulab* and *Etrog* in hand, surrounded by and immersed in the holy environs of a Sukkah, that we honor those newly discovered feelings of love and devotion to the Creator of the Universe in concrete terms, taking moments of inspiration and expressing them. Like that Challah that's baked with love! The love is so real you can smell it and you can taste it. That's all the holy business of making it real! (Rabbi Label Lam)

Learning to Love from the Lulab

I merited a unique peak behind the scenes a few years back that helped to concretize an old idea that I had been carrying around for some time. It was one of those rare snowy winters in Jerusalem. A remarkable eighteen inches fell in one day, and the most beautiful city was ever more elegant dressed in white.

Early the next morning was a feast for photographers. A friend of mine pointed out something I may have otherwise missed. The wet snow weighed down the large leaves of the palm trees, and there it was in the center, like a finger pointing to the heavens was a single *Lulab*.

Click! I took a picture and gained an insight. The letters of the word *Lulab* can be deconstructed into two words, *Lo-* To Him (Hashem) *Lev-is* Heart. This is the essence of what we hope to accomplish by taking the four species on Succot to dedicate, to point our hearts heavenward.

Each of the species, our Sages tell us, represents a different organ of human anatomy. The *Etrog* resembles the heart, the *Lulab*- the spine, the *Hadassim* the eyes and the *Arabot* the lips. Not only is the year a new year but so are we. Therefore after begging for life on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we step out onto the soil of a brand new year with more than symbols picked from the garden of our inspiration, with a new heart filled with fresh feelings of devotion, and new spine focusing our newly found direction and with clean eyes and pure lips with which to see and express ourselves.

The *Mishnah* in Tractate Sukkah tells us that a *Lulab* that is stolen or dry is no good. A *Lulab* has to be yours as prescribed by the verse, "And you should take for yourself on the first day..." If it is somebody else's devotion that we are emulating and it is not our own then it is lacking in authenticity. If it is dry, a mere leftover from last year, a frozen institutionalized remnant or a souvenir of better years it doesn't qualify.

The *Mishnah* continues to inform us that if it is from a tree that was worshipped or a city that indulged in idolatry it is also invalid. If our new found inspiration emanates from a decrepit source, that also disqualifies it.

If the head is chopped off or the leaves removed it is invalidated. If the leaves are spread apart, a little scattered that's OK but Rabbi Yehuda says that we should bind them from above. If we are acting without our heads altogether impulsive or compulsive or in a way that we are divorced from our source, those are sufficient grounds to disqualify but

if our problem is a lack of focus that's normal and passable but Rabbi Yehuda says, "Get it together!" We can learn an awful lot from its laws and its natural pose, but most of all we can learn to love from the *lulab*. (Rabbi Label Lam)

True Happiness

After the tension filled solemnity of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the holiday of Succot arrives with its many inspiring rituals and its message of joy and rejoicing in the service of G-d. It is regarding Succot that the Torah instructs us "to be joyful on your holiday."

Now, joy, like almost all other emotions is not something that can be turned on and off like a faucet. A person either feels joyful or not. You cannot tell a person who is sad and depressed to just feel joyful and expect that that should somehow happen. The traditional commentators have already remarked that since we have just passed through the cleansing processes of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and feel relieved, forgiven and confident in our faith and in our relationship to our Creator, it is only natural to expect that we will feel joyful at this time of the year.

But, to a certain extent, this type of answer really only begs the question. It is quite difficult for anyone to feel completely satisfied with one's self and one's actions after undergoing a thorough, honest and often painful self-examination. We are now privy to our faults and failings and even though we are confident that Heaven's goodness has forgiven us, we are still well aware of the problems that remain within us and limit, if not even prevent, any feelings of overwhelming joy to take hold. And yet the Torah insists that we be joyful and of good cheer on this holiday of Succot.

The Rabbis have given a markedly different perspective to the emotion of joy and it is this perspective that I feel the Torah is speaking of when commanding us regarding the holiday of Succot. The Rabbis in the *Talmud* stated that there is no joy comparable to the joy one feels when doubts have been resolved and clarity and reality reign.

Much of the sadness that exist in life is based on its uncertainty, in the plethora of options and choices, the consequences of which are never clear to us and in the difficulty we face in placing our lives and their events into proper perspective. A flash of clarity, an insight of perspective, a moment of confident decision can truly bring about a feeling of joy.

Succot can provide us with that clarity and perspective. It teaches us that our physical home and house is not quite as important as we may think it is. It instructs us in the beauty of nature, the necessity for Heaven's blessing of rain and productivity and in the realization that even though our lives and existence are indeed fragile, we should treasure every breathing moment and see it in the perspective of our immortality and eternity.

Succot engenders within us the appreciation of correct priorities in our lives and the achievement of a proper balance between the illusory and reality. It provides us with a most necessary dose of humility – one that can allow a person to see things in proper perspective.

The Jewish people throughout our long and many times difficult years and experiences have always realized that we are living in a sukka. That realization alone was sufficient to allow individual Jews and Jewish society generally to function, survive and even prosper. By absorbing this lesson of the sukka – its beauty, its fragility, its temporary nature, its serenity and its relationship to nature and the world we live in, we immerse ourselves in G-d's perspective, so to speak, of the world and our place in it.

That alone should awaken within us an emotion of joy and satisfaction. In Temple times, the libation of water on the holy altar of the Temple in Jerusalem on the holiday of Succot created a national emotion of joy and rejoicing. It is interesting to note that