

## TWO LEVELS OF CLOSENESS TO HASHEM

### Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres – Two Levels of Closeness With Hashem

#### The Inner Meaning Behind The Four Species and the Sukkah

In the festival of Sukkos, the main *mitzvos* are to shake the four species and to sit in the *sukkah*. (Aside for the times of the Beis HaMikdash, when we had the *mitzvah* of *nisuch hamayim*<sup>1</sup> in the Beis Hamikdash on Sukkos).

The *mitzvah* of the four species involves the concept of movement: we shake them and move them around. On a deep level, this act symbolizes how we want to “move” away from evil - and instead “move” ourselves closer to Hashem. By contrast, the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *sukkah* involves no movement at all; we sit in it, and don’t move at all. This symbolizes a different aspect of our *Avodas Hashem*: the point of “non-movement.”

In other words, there are two steps that we ascend on in our *Avodas Hashem*. The first step is to move towards the palace of the King, and then we sit in His company – in His *tzeil* (*shade*), which alludes to the *tzeila d'meheimenusa* (“in the shade of *emunah*/faith”), the term that describes the *sukkah*.<sup>2</sup>

### Sukkos of Today and Sukkos of the Future

In the future, where we will sit in the “*sukkah* made of the leviathan skin”, the “skin” (עור, spelled with the letter ע) of the *sukkah* will instead become “light” (אור). The *sukkah* of nowadays, which acts a skin-covering over us, serves as a *tzeil* (*shade*) to shade us from the sun’s rays, but on a deeper level, it also conceals us from the spiritual light of Hashem’s radiance which will be fully revealed in the future. In the *sukkah* of the future, where the original spiritual light will be once again revealed, the concealment will be removed; we will graduate from עור to the higher level, אור.

The *sukkah* of the future will be an entirely spiritual light. It will be the perfect *sukkah*, in which “all passerby” (“*kol ha’ezerach*”) will be enveloped within it; a hint to this is that the word “*ezerach*”, “passerby”, is rooted in the word “*zerichah*”, “light.” This alludes to the *sukkah* of the future, which will be totally a spiritual light. The depth behind is because the *sukkah* is not just about dwelling “in the shade” of the *sukkah*, but to dwell in Hashem’s light.

Dovid Hamelech says, “*Hashem is my light, and my salvation.*” Chazal expound on this verse that the words “*my light*” are referring to Rosh Hashanah, while the words “*my salvation*” are referring to Yom

<sup>1</sup> The offering of the water libation

<sup>2</sup> Zohar III, parshas Emor, 103a.

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Kippur. And Sukkos, which is the continuation of this, is the actual revelation of “*my light*”, which was Rosh Hashanah; it is entirely Hashem’s light.

It is only nowadays that the *sukkah* is like a “shade” (or *shadow*), because since there is currently evil in the world, the evil places a “shadow” on the “light” of Rosh Hashanah and dims it from its full effect. But in the future, when all evil will be removed from the world, the festival of Sukkos will no longer be a concept of “shade”; it will rather be a concept of complete spiritual light.

## Shemini Atzeres – A Day of Complete D’veykus With Hashem, Above All Spiritual Light

Higher than the level of Sukkos is the level of *Shemini Atzeres*, which is the day of unity (*yichud*) between Hashem and the Jewish people. Its spiritual

light is above the spiritual light that is revealed through Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos.<sup>3</sup> Chazal say of this day that Hashem says, “Remain with me one more day”.

This is the great desire (*cheishek*) that Hashem has for the Jewish people, and it is above all spiritual light. It was around before Hashem created light on the first day, thus it is above light. This great desire of Hashem for us returns on *Shemini Ateres*.

[ בלבבי סוכות הקדמה ]

3 Editor’s Note: See sefer *Sifsei Chaim: Moadim (Vol. I)* who explains how the spirituality of Shemini Atzeres is deeper than the first days of Sukkos. On Sukkos, we have the mitzvah of sukkah and the four species, because we are given these tools on Sukkos to reach closeness to Hashem through them. However, Shemini Atzeres is a higher connection we have with Hashem, as it is the culmination of the entire Yomim Noraim; thus, it doesn’t require us to sit in the sukkah or to shake the four species, because it is more of a direct connection with Hashem.

## JOY OF SHEMINI ATZERES\SIMCHAS TORAH

### Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah: Two Different Aspects of Joy

*Shemini Atzeres* is called by two names: *Shemini Atzeres*, and *Simchas Torah*. They represent two different kinds of joy.

One kind of joy is the joy of “*Atzeres*”. “*Atzeres*” means to “remain”. This is hinting to the *Midrash* that says that Hashem desired to remain with the Jewish people even after Sukkos ends, saying to them, “Remain with me one more day.”

What exactly is this joy? It is the joy that one can have just in being attached to Hashem, to simply feel

with Him in a sense of companionship.

*Simchas Torah* offers a different kind of joy. It is the joy one has in being attached to the Torah, and thus we make a celebration that we have completed the Torah.

### Joy Within Nature and Joy Above Nature

A *chosson* and *kallah*<sup>4</sup> have a certain joy; and it lasts for 7 days. The joy of *Shemini Atzeres* is a joy found on the “eighth day”, hinting to the fact that it is a joy that is connected with the number “8”

4 groom and bride

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In other words, the regular kind of joy is represented by the number 7, whereas the higher joy is represented by the number 8. We always find how the number 7 corresponds with nature, such as that there are 7 days of the week. The joy of a *chosson* and *kallah*, which lasts for 7 days, represents the natural joy; the joy is that two natures are fusing together. Such joy is a joy within the bounds of nature.

But there is a higher kind of joy, the joy of *Shemini Atzeres*. It is a joy that is above nature, for “8” is above “7.” Let us explain what it is.

## Above Nature

It is the custom that when we finish the Torah, we immediately begin with *Beraishis*. The reason behind this is because the Torah is unlimited and endless, and we want to show that it has no end.

The last letter of the Torah is ך, and the first letter of the Torah is ב, which forms the word לב (*heart*). The heart is king of the body; a king is above his people. A king is allowed to break fences, and no one can protest him.<sup>5</sup> A king – or the heart of a person – is not bound to the regular rules.

This is the joy of *Simchas Torah*; it represents the heart of a person, which is above the regular limits, for it is “king” over the body. The joy of *Simchas Torah* is thus a joy that is above the natural kind of joy. It is the unlimited joy one can have in the Torah.

The same is true for the joy of *Shemini Atzeres*. Our *avodah* during the seven days of Sukkos is to realize how all of the world and nature is futile, to erase our attachment to this world (*see the chapter before*)<sup>6</sup>.

After a person has hopefully nullified his

attachment to this world – and there are seven traits inherent in nature<sup>7</sup> – he is now able to connect totally to Hashem, a state of being that is essentially above nature; that is the joy of *Shemini Atzeres*.

## Within The Struggles, and Above the Struggles

The word “*simcha*” (שמחה) comes from word *someach* (סמח), and if we rearrange the letters, we get the word *chamesh* (חמש). *Chamesh* can mean two different things:

1. It can mean the number “five.”
2. *Chamesh* is also from the word “*chamushim*”, which means “armies”; we find this when the Jewish people left Egypt, that they left in “armies.”<sup>8</sup> Rashi states that these armies were unarmed with any weapons. From here we see that the word “*chamesh*” normally refers to weapons of war.

The words “*Simcha*” (שמחה) and “*chamesh*” (חמש) have the same root letters (ח, מ, ש); there is a rule in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that whenever there is a root word<sup>9</sup>, there are two opposite meanings to it. In our case, this will apply as follows.

שמחה\*Simcha* is when a person ends his wars, representing a level that is above nature. He has left the level of “*Seven times a righteous person falls and gets up*”, and he is above the regular ups and downs. He is above “seven” – and he is now on the level of “eight”. He no longer has the normal, natural struggles he used to deal with.

חמש\*Chamesh* represents the lower kind of joy – when one is happy upon overcoming challenges. He wages war with the seven “nations” inside him – the seven primary bad *middos*. He still hasn’t completely

<sup>5</sup> Pesachim 110a

<sup>6</sup> Hence, we read Koheles on Sukkos, which talks about how futile this physical world is.

<sup>7</sup> the seven middos: chessed, gevurah, tiferes, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Shemos 13: 18

<sup>9</sup> shorash

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overcome them yet – he's still within the normal fights of nature, fighting with his natural abilities.

## After Yom Tov Is Over

When *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* is over, what does a person remain with? The higher joy of “8” reached on *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* has now gone; what does a person have left from Yom Tov?

*Simcha* is when a person is happy with something has become added onto his existence. We see that people don't find happiness in the fact that they merely exist; people are naturally unhappy. (*There is a kind of happiness that a person can have in just being happy with what he has, but no one is happy with their mere existence.*) *Simcha* is only present when a person receives something, which adds on something to his existence.

If a person would take something he gets and make it a part of his essence, he would no longer be happy with what he has gotten, because now it's part of who he is – and he needs something *more* than what he is in order to be happy.

Yet, this is actually our *avodah*: we need to take what we have gained so far, and make it into a part of our essence, even though this will no longer provide us with a feeling of *simcha*.

Our *avodah* on *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* is to find joy in Hashem and in His Torah – a joy that is above nature. After a person merits this joy,

he has to take it and make it a part of who he is. One needs to feel a total connection with Hashem that transcends nature, and an attachment with Torah that transcends nature.

When a person takes the happiness of being attached to Hashem and the Torah (*and this happiness can be reached on the Yom Tov*) and he makes into a part of himself, the *simcha* goes away with this, because now there is nothing “more” to be happy about, for it is now part of the person.

For this reason, there is no *simcha* after Yom Tov ends. There can't be. It is not because the great spirituality of Yom Tov has gone. It is because if we have succeeded in our *avodah* on Yom Tov, that means we have transformed the spirituality of Yom Tov into a part of our essence. It has gone from being something great that surrounded us into something that has been absorbed into our being.<sup>10</sup> With this attainment, our *simcha* has to go away with it, but the gain is far worth it.

What is the *avodah* now, as we start the rest of the year? It is now upon us to aspire for an even higher level than what we gained until now – and from there we will derive our next upgrade to our *simcha* next year.

[בלבבי חלק ה. עמ' רפד]

<sup>10</sup> In the Hebrew sefer, the author calls this “going from the “*ohr makif*” (“surrounding light”) to an “*ohr penimi*” (inner light).



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