

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

HAAZINU/SUCCOT

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 61:10-63:9

OCTOBER 14-15, 2016 13 TISHREI 5777

DEDICATIONS: In Memory of Al August – 12 Tishrei

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Editors Notes

As I completed the repetition of the amidah this morning and proceeded with the words Yehi Shem, the words Yehi Shem echoed all around me. It was as if everyone in synagogue wanted to remind me or perhaps themselves that we are entering a four day period which goes into Sukkot and continues for the rest of this celebratory month where we cease saying tachanun (or supplication in English) and pounding our hearts as we enumerate our transgressions. Standing at the bimah in the center of the sanctuary, I thought about how these four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot are very different. My desk is covered with lulavim and etrogim, with hadasim and aravot. The sukkah is built and we contemplate the lighting and decoration plan we will execute Saturday night and Sunday. Food is being prepared and ordered, guests are invited and wine being delivered for the festive days of sukkot. These days are a time for rehabilitation.

On Yom Kippur we explained per the teachings of the Ramach – Rav Moshe Cordevero – that the day itself is a gift. It is a gift that grew out of Moses' plea for forgiveness after the sin of the Golden Calf. It is the day we received the luchot – the tables – all over again. It is a day of a special light that extends to the world in the merit of Moses and through it forgiveness for those who abide by the day's restrictions, who take care of their vows and emulate Hashem in caring for others. It is a day of rebirth.

But at that moment I thought that it is as if we have gone through a thorough surgical procedure on Yom Kippur. The light I imagined was a knife cutting away the kelipot of impure spiritual forces and the chitzonim we created through our actions over the previous year which are spiritual leeches which suck away at our spiritual energy. We are like a patient who has had tumors removed; growths which were drawing away the body's strength have been detached. We are as a patient whose arteries were clogged and with the help of a surgeon has those

arteries opened and perhaps even bypassed. We are born anew.

These four days are days where we can recover from the surgery. These are days where we can discover what life can mean without the spiritual tumors and blockages which kept us down and obstructed from us the light of blessing. These are days filled with joyful misvot; the sukkah, the four species, the food and drink. These are days where we can truly commit to going forward and keeping our new healthy spiritual selves spiritually fit.

Unfortunately they are also days where given our new strength and new lease on life we can emulate the patient who after successful surgery returns to his cigarettes and the bad habits and practices which brought the problems in the first place. These days represent a challenge. We can live in the light without the shell or as the fearful turtle crawl back into the darkness.

The reward for those who are willing to remain within the light is a holiday of spiritual light, the holiday of sukkot.

When we reside within the sukkah, we are not merely entering a hut in our yard, we are entering into the shechina, into the light of Hashem.

We should remember that we celebrate Sukkot on the fifteenth day of the month. The 15th can be represented by the letters yud and heh (numerically 10 and 5) this is a name of Hashem and represents the first two letters of the Tetragrammaton.

We have learned before that the word sukkah has the same numerical value (91) as the Tetragrammaton which are the letters Yud and Heh and Vav and Heh (26) combined with the way we pronounce the name of Hashem – Aleph Daled Nun and Yud Ado-nai (65) together.

To the yud-hei of the fifteen of the month, we add the letters vav and hei of the word sukkah and we complete the four letter Tetragrammaton connect the above yud and heh with the lower vav and heh and through that connection enlightening the world.

Furthermore we are left with the remaining letters of sukkah, samech and caph, which form the word sach – a designation for the Shechinah.

If we can keep this light over these four days and then truly enter and live within it over the next week afterwards, we can truly on Simchat Torah reach a level we reached when we received the Torah, a level of Adam before the sin, a level of Gan Eden, and a level of mankind basking in the light.

This election season has brought darkness and depression not only to this country but to people throughout the world. I don't recall ever in my life seeing a choice between two evils and whoever wins, I fear will find a world of even more darkness.

The Jewish people are called on to be the light of the world. Perfect timing people. Let's choose to be the light. Let's not resort to the behavior that caused the spiritual maladies. Let's keep off the leeches and let's not crawl out of the shell.

Through our efforts we can bring the Yud and the He to connect with the Vav and the Heh, through our efforts we can do what the kabbalists have been dreaming about for centuries. We can unify the Name of G-d, to the point that the Shechinah will arise from the dust and salvation will arise, quickly in our days.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameyach
David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha

1st Aliya: Moshe begins by describing the presence of Hashem in nature as being as evident as the rain or dew that nourish the fields and gardens. G-d is entirely just, always good, always compassionate and forgiving. Therefore, all destruction and negativity must be ascribed directly to the ill fated decisions and actions of His children.

2nd Aliya: The Jew must always remember that he was chosen from among all other nations to be nurtured by the direct ministrations of the Creator. We were born in a "desolate, howling, wasteland" and protected till we were able to assume responsibility for our unique relationship with the Creator of heaven and earth.

3rd Aliya: Unfortunately, humankind's tendency is to forget the degree of their dependency upon Hashem and to create the illusion of self sufficiency and independence. "Yeshurun thus became fat and rebelled..."

4th Aliya: We will then be punished with exile and persecution. Chased from our land and sold into slavery, the Chosen People will experience what it

means to be independent of Hashem's direct protection and benevolence.

5th Aliya: However, the other nations will fail in the very same manner that we did. They will assume that their ability to enslave the Chosen People and ravage Israel is proof of G-d's impotence and their own prowess and strength. Therefore, they will be punished and destroyed and the Chosen People will again recognize Hashem's primacy and control.

6th Aliya: Moshe's song ends with the Jewish people singing forth their acceptance and understanding of divine purpose and justice.

7th Aliya: Moshe presents the entire "song" to the nation and reemphasizes that the condition for keeping the Land is adherence to Torah and serving Hashem.

FROM THE JERSEY SHORE NEWSLETTER

"And you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, for a seven day period." (Vayikra 23:40)

Not only are we required to be happy on Succot itself, but these days of Yom Tob are meant to be a source of gladness for the entire year. Happiness is a vital, inseparable part of the service of Hashem throughout the year, and the very fact that the Torah commands us to rejoice on the holiday proves it is within our means to overcome any challenges and achieve happiness, regardless of our particular circumstances.

Sometimes a person has difficulty in achieving happiness because one fails to have a sense of accomplishment in life, and this leads to feelings of frustration and depression. The solution for this challenge is to reflect on the incredible merit of simply being a Jew and the loftiness of every single misvah.

Rabbi A.Y. Heschel tells a story that Harav Elazar Shach told about Harav Avraham, the brother of the Vilna Gaon. Harav Avraham was a lifelong resident of the town of Kaiden, and even after his children all moved to the great Torah center of Vilna, he stayed in Kaiden. As years passed, his children pleaded with him that he and his wife join them in Vilna, but they steadfastly refused.

In his old age Harav Avraham was once asked why he was so opposed to relocating to Vilna, and he revealed that it was his wife who would not even contemplate moving away. He related that many years earlier, when they were still a young couple, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur had arrived and not a single etrog was available for the residents of Kaiden. When finally an etrog was brought to the town, the seller wanted an astronomical price. A

price that the Jews of the town, even after pooling their resources, could not afford.

When she learned about the etrog crisis, Harav Avraham's wife said that they would sell their home to buy the etrog and ensure that the town would be able to fulfill this lofty misvah. But Harav Avraham and his wife never again owned a house, and for many decades that followed, they endured much poverty.

"As much as my wife would like to live near our children," Rav Avraham related, "she cannot possibly forgo the joy she feels when she passes – several times a day – the house we once owned. Each time she walks by, she is filled with gratitude for having this merit. I can't take this joy away from her," he concluded.

While we are not on the level of being able to sell a house for an etrog, on a daily basis each of us has tests and challenges and rise to the occasion. This is a source of unlimited joy Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Hashem created you forgetful and you forgot your Creator." (Debarim 32:18)

There was once a person who owed many people money, and every time they asked him for it he would get under tremendous pressure and have no way to respond. One day, his friend saw his suffering and suggested to him that any time a creditor asked him for money he should act crazy as if he cracked from the pressure of his financial burden. This way, they would eventually leave him alone. Sure enough, every time one of his creditors approached him for money he would talk about the weather, the stock market, etc., and carry on as if he'd snapped. In no time, the word was out that he had lost his mind because of his financial burden and people start leaving him alone. One day, the original friend who gave him this idea approached him and told him that the loan that he had given him was due. This so called crazy fellow began to carry on like he did for his other creditors. His friend then replied, "I gave you the idea to do this and you're trying to pull it off on me?"

Hashem created a human being with the ability to forget his problems and worries. Without this, a person would be overcome with all of the burdens life has to offer. If a person forgets Hashem or his obligation to keep the Torah and misvot, he is acting like the fellow in the story, since he is using the very gift that Hashem gave him for his benefit against his Benefactor. Let's not forget this lesson. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

To the Limit

"Because you trespassed against Me in the midst of B'nei Yisrael at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh in the wilderness of Sin, because you did not sanctify Me in the midst of B'nei Yisrael." (Debarim 32:51)

Rashi explains that Hashem was blaming Moshe and Aharon for limiting the opportunity for a heightened effect of Kiddush Hashem (sanctifying G-d's Name) when they caused water to flow from the stone. Had they spoken to the stone rather than hit it twice, Hashem's Name would have reflected a more sublime level of sanctification. B'nei Yisrael would have remarked, "If a mere stone which does not receive reward or punishment nevertheless fulfills Hashem's imperative, we should certainly fulfill His misvot." This grievance seems demanding. Although a greater miracle could have transpired had Moshe and Aharon spoken to the stone, nonetheless, a miracle did occur. We are differentiating between various degrees of Kiddush Hashem. It seems peculiar that the term "trespass," which connotes a grave transgression, should be used to describe this sin.

We may derive from this pasuk that maintenance of the status quo is, in fact, reactionary. One who is capable of attaining greater levels of erudition by applying his abilities to a greater extent but does not, is guilty of a grave sin. One who does not use his G-d-given talents to their fullest extent, one who lacks the motivation to rise to the occasion and proceed in Hashem's service, actually stagnates. In essence, such a person "trespasses" and sins. As the Talmud in Megillah 18a explains, the term "trespass" implies a change which signifies a regression from a previous loftier level of sanctity. By not reaching the higher level of sanctity, Moshe was in effect "trespassing" the wishes of Hashem. We should take note of this lesson in order to catalyze us to stretch our abilities to their fullest extent, so that we can contribute to fulfilling Hashem's objectives for each one of us, individually Demanding

Sports are considered competitive activities, in which participants try to outperform their opponents in achieving the goal of the game. In baseball, the goal is to score the most runs by crossing home plate, while in basketball, it is to score the most points by throwing the ball through the hoop. In races, the object is to be the first to reach the finish line, and in golf, it is to get the ball into the hole using the fewest strokes.

Other activities, also categorized as sports, have participants trying to outdo their own best performances. Runners try and go further or faster than they have before. Bikers try to outdistance their all-time high or increase their speed. Strength

trainers lift weights that exceed their previous performances. Of course, these activities are sometimes done in a competitive environment, yet there is also the "beat my own best" scenario, which removes external challengers from the equation.

In the game of life, we also compete with others. Our egos demand that we "win" in all aspects of performance. To satisfy the urge to come out on top, we sometimes judge others and find them wanting. Thus, an older brother will criticize a younger sibling for behavior which does not meet the standard he demands of the young one – even though the big brother himself does not meet those standards, either. A manager will push an employee to work longer and harder than she does herself. A husband will criticize his wife – or vice versa – for any assortment of shortcomings.

We have no problem seeing the faults of others – even the microscopic ones. We demand that others perform to perfection in spite of the fact that we ourselves are less than perfect.

But smart people demand more of themselves than they expect of others. Such people are much more successful than those who criticize others.

Rather than focus on another person's faults, look at your own achievements. Find an area with room for improvement, and work on it. Hashem gave you two eyes. One is to see the good in others, and the other is to observe your own faults. Redirect your focus inward and grow from the self-analysis. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

The Arrogant Etrog

"You shall take for yourself on the first day the fruit of a citron tree." (Vayikra 23:40)

Pri ess hadar, "the fruit of a beautiful tree," is commonly accepted as referring to the etrog tree. In Sefer Likutim, the Arizal says that the letters of the word etrog: aleph, taf, resh, gimel form an acronym for the pasuk in Tehillim 36:12, Al tevoeni regel gaavah, "Let not the foot of arrogance come to me." Horav Yaakov Galinsky, z"l, explains this pragmatically. The pasuk in which David Hamelech deplores arrogance and prays that it not affect him in any way, is truly a pasuk fitting for the etrog. This could be termed the "etrog's prayer," for the etrog is the one fruit that has a right to be arrogant. It is a beautiful fruit, completely unblemished, with nary a spot and bumps out of place, perfectly symmetrical, and very expensive. It is the specie of the "four species" that symbolizes the Torah Jew who observes misvot, studies Torah and performs acts of lovingkindness. It is the fruit replete with laudatory qualities, the fruit that all other fruits "envy." Thus, it

prays to Hashem not to allow it to become arrogant, to elevate itself above others.

In Sha'ar Abodat Elokim 4, the Hobot Halebabot relates a dialogue between a hassid and his students. The hassid said, "If you would not have sins, I would fear something even greater than sin. "What is greater (more egregious) than sin?" they asked. "Arrogance," the hassid replied.

Rav Galinsky relates a well-known episode concerning a middle-aged couple who came to Harav Aharon Leib Shteinman to seek his sage advice concerning an "issue" which was causing tension in their relationship. Apparently, the husband was quite well-to-do. Yet, despite his enormous wealth, he drove a ten-year-old car, which his wife felt was demeaning. She had decided that the time had come for them to purchase a new car. Indeed, she had already selected the color!

Rav Shteinman looked at the husband and asked, "Nu, so what is the problem? [As if he had nothing else with which to occupy his time.] Why do you not buy a new car?" "Rebbe, I fear an ayin hara, becoming the victim of an evil eye." (If someone will notice the new vehicle and become envious of its owner, it could create an evil eye, which is a sort of spiritual curse).

Rav Shteinman heard this and was impressed. Apparently, this individual did not want to bring attention to himself. He must be a person replete with qualities which people envy. "Tell me," Rav Shteinman asked, "can I test you on Shas?"

"What - am I a Kollel fellow; that I study all day, so that I can master the entire Talmud?"

"I understand," countered Rav Shteinman, "Perhaps you have mastered one or two sedarim of the Talmud?" "Rebbe, I said that I am not a Kollel fellow; I have not mastered an entire Seder." "Perhaps you are proficient in one masechet, tractate?" "No, not even one tractate. I am a simple layman," the man replied, somewhat agitated.

"Let me see," replied Rav Shteinman, "You have neither mastered Shas, nor are you proficient in even one Seder. Worse, you claim not to have completed even one tractate! Yet, you fear someone's envy? Why would anyone be envious of you?"

Rav Galinsky concludes with a powerful statement from the Oheb Yisrael, the Apter Rav, zl, who said, "There is no reason to have a discussion concerning arrogance. All one has to remember is, 'Nine Apter Ravs (individuals of such distinction) do not comprise a minyan, quorum. Ten wagon drivers (representative of the simple, usually illiterate Jew), create a minyan, which is a setting for kedushah and Kaddish. It becomes, a place to which the Shechinah, Divine Presence, comes and goes."

It is not who one is, with whom he is affiliated, from whom he descends, or how much money he is worth: it is before Whom he stands - Hashem Yitbarach; and, before Him, we are all the same. Even the etrog, by itself, without the support of the other three species, each representing another aspect of Klal Yisrael, does not effect the misvah. It requires all four minim, species. Moshe Rabenu clearly represented the etrog of Klal Yisrael. Yet, when the nation sinned with the Golden-Calf, Hashem told him Lech red, "Go down," from your high position (Shemot 32:7). A leader is only as exalted as his flock. When the flock fails, he fails.

I will add that, when one is endowed with a special gift, be it exceptional acumen, illustrious lineage, material abundance, all of which he uses properly for the betterment of others - while it is no reason to arrogate oneself - he is certainly worthy of kin'at sofrim, the envy of scribes, which spurs one to greater growth. One who truly cares about achievement is spurred on by the desire to emulate, and even surpass others. This form of jealousy may not be the ideal, but, if it serves as an incentive, it cannot really be that bad. (Peninim on the Torah)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR **History through the Prism of Torah**

The Torah instructs in Parashat Haazinu, "Remember the days of yore, understand the years of every generation; ask your father and he shall inform you – your elders, and they will tell you" (32:7). This verse encourages us to study history, to inquire about past events and understand how and why they transpired.

But the Torah here instructs not only with regard to the importance of studying history, but also as to how one must study history. It has been said that the word "history" is actually a combination of two words: "his story," the story of the one who tells it. Every writer of history tells events from his particular perspective, through the prism of his orientation. Economic historians will naturally understand events off the backdrop of economic developments; military analysts will interpret them on the basis of wartime strategy. We are to study history through the unique prism of Torah, from the perspective of our spiritual tradition. The Torah here urges us to "remember" and "understand" past events by consulting with our "elders," our Torah Sages, whose knowledge of Torah affords them a unique religious perspective on historical developments.

The Talmud in Masechet Shabbat (21b) poses the famous question, "Mai Hanukah?" – "What is Hanukah?" Of course, the events of Hanukah involve several centuries of interaction between the Jews

and the Greeks, a long, complex series of events and developments. The Gemara essentially asks, "Which aspects of this history are relevant to us? From the perspective of Torah, what lessons must we extract from this series of events?" Many history books are available to tell the many details of the historical process of Hanukah, but we are urged to assess these events through the prism of Torah, as conveyed to us by our Sages.

Similarly, towards the end of Megilat Ester (10:2) we read, "And the entire story of his [Ahashverosh's] dominion and power, and the event of Mordechai's rise to greatness...behold, they are documented in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia." One Rabbi understood this verse to mean that if one wishes to learn the irrelevant facts and details of the history of Mordechai's period, then he should consult the historical records of that era. The Torah's perspective, however, is adequately presented in Megilat Ester; it contains the information necessary for us to extract the critical lessons that emerge from the events that transpired in Persia during Mordechai's time.

This concept applies to more recent historical events, as well. Historians provide all kinds of theories to explain events and developments such as the Holocaust, each approaching the subject through the prism of his particular orientation. It behooves us to approach these events through the unique prism of Torah, through consultation with our Torah Sages. Theirs is the perspective and frame and reference that will enable us to properly identify and apply the lessons of history, and work towards ensuring that the tragic mistakes of the past will never repeat themselves, neither in the present nor in the future.

VICTOR BIBI **SOD HAPARASHA**

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Rabbi Wein

The festival of Succot marks the culmination, so to speak, of the holy month of Tishrei. Though all of the festivals of the Jewish year retain a solemnity regarding their observance, the festival of Succot is marked as being a time of joy and celebration. The natural beauty of the holiday, as it is accompanied by the climate and agricultural bounty of the Land of Israel, enhances the celebration of the festival itself. The fact that the special commandments that distinguish this holiday from all others are of a natural and agricultural type reinforces within us the

understanding of the viewpoint of the Torah towards the wonders of the natural world in which we live.

Even in the snow and cold of autumn in Eastern Europe (or in my childhood in Chicago) the holiday spoke to the Jewish people of the natural beauty of the Land of Israel and of the glories of God's world. While the pagan world worshiped nature itself, Judaism taught its adherents to worship the Creator of nature and its enabler. Plus, it was the view of nature and its awesome powers and enormous beauty that marked the dividing line between Judaism and the pagan world.

The other differences in behavior and outlook, values and our observances, stem from this original divergence as how we view the natural world that we inhabit. The festival of Succot serves to remind us as to this basic fault line in human thought and civilization.

Aside from the natural beauty of the world that the holiday emphasizes there is also a strong message of freedom that Succot represents. Succot symbolizes simple pleasures in life, without unnecessary luxuries and burdensome appurtenances. We are able to live, enjoy and experience life even under a flimsy roof and seemingly temporary quarters.

The Torah does not demand from us discomfort. If for various reasons it is uncomfortable and even painful to sit in the succah then we are freed from that obligation. However the Torah does demand from us a proper perspective as to the necessities of life. The succah is a temporary dwelling but the truth of the matter is that even our mansion-like home is also only a temporary dwelling for mortal human beings.

We are all travelers so to speak in this world and sometimes the demands of travel give us simple and temporary accommodations. The Torah wishes for our home to also be comfortable but one should never view it as being permanent. In spite of this serious thought, we are bidden to be happy and to rejoice in the present and in the blessings of life, family, the Land of Israel and our relationship to the Creator of all natural beauty and human satisfaction.

The only happiness that is lasting and meaningful, an inner happiness not caused by outside stimuli or fleeting factors. The festival of Succot comes to help us experience this inner happiness and to negate within us any extraneous reliance on outside factors to create the happiness that we so long for and desire.

Succot also comes to teach us that somehow we could take a minimalistic view of life. Not everything is perfect and not everything is beautiful and there are many circumstances in life when we are forced to settle for less than we had hoped for. So, a succah is kosher even if it has barely more than two walls. We try to purchase and own the most beautiful blemish-free etrog possible. But any etrog, as long as it meets the minimum standards of halacha is also acceptable.

I remember as a child growing up in Chicago during World War II that there were only three etrogim in the synagogue on Succot to service the more than seven-hundred-fifty worshipers present. It took well over an hour and a half for everyone to mount the bimah and recite the blessing over the etrog. Needless to say, towards the end of the line the etrog was somewhat blemished after being handled by so many people over such a length of time. Nevertheless, the last person in line recited the blessing with fervor and commitment equal to those who had long before preceded him.

It is desirable to have a perfect etrog on which to make the blessing. But, it is not always possible and the reality of the matter is that we should always make do with what we have and not be prevented from serving God and man properly by the lack of perfection within others or ourselves.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Spirituality of Song

With Ha'azinu we climb to one of the peaks of Jewish spirituality. For a month Moses had taught the people. He had told them their history and destiny, and the laws that would make theirs a unique society of people bound in covenant with one another and with God. He renewed the covenant and then handed the leadership on to his successor and disciple Joshua. His final act would be blessing the people, tribe by tribe. But before that, there was one more thing he had to do. He had to sum up his prophetic message in a way the people would always remember and be inspired by. He knew that the best way of doing so is by music. So the last thing Moses did before giving the people his deathbed blessing was to teach them a song.

There is something profoundly spiritual about music. When language aspires to the transcendent, and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Jewish history is not so much read as sung. The rabbis enumerated ten songs at key moments in the life of the nation. There was the song of the Israelites in Egypt (see Is.

30:29), the song at the Red Sea (Ex. 15), the song at the well (Num. 21), and Ha'azinu, Moses' song at the end of his life. Joshua sang a song (Josh. 10:12-13). So did Deborah (Jud. 5), Hannah (1 Sam. 2) and David (2 Sam. 22). There was the Song of Solomon, Shir ha-Shirim, about which Rabbi Akiva said, "All songs are holy but the Song of Songs is the holy of holies." [1] The tenth song has not yet been sung. It is the song of the Messiah. [2]

Many biblical texts speak of the power of music to restore the soul. When Saul was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (1 Sam. 16). David himself was known as the "sweet singer of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (2 Kings 3:15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with Pesukei de-Zimra, the 'Verses of Song' with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing God's praises.

Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called "the music of the spheres". This is what Psalm 19 means when it says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands . . . There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music [3] carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world." Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.

So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for shacharit, mincha and maariv, the morning, afternoon and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the Yamim Noraim, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation for Torah, another for the haftarah from the prophetic books, and yet another for Ketuvim, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the written Torah: Mishnah and Gemarah. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is and what kind of text is being used. Jewish texts and times are not colour-coded but music-coded. The map of holy words is written in melodies and songs.

Music has extraordinary power to evoke emotion. The Kol Nidrei prayer with which Yom Kippur begins is not really a prayer at all. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. There can be little doubt that it is its ancient, haunting melody that has given it its hold over the Jewish imagination. It is hard to hear those notes and not feel that you are in the presence of God on the Day of Judgment, standing in the company of Jews of all places and times as they plead with heaven for forgiveness. It is the holy of holies of the Jewish soul. [4]

Nor can you sit on Tisha B'av reading Eichah, the book of Lamentations, with its own unique cantillation, and not feel the tears of Jews through the ages as they suffered for their faith and wept as they remembered what they had lost, the pain as fresh as it was the day the Temple was destroyed. Words without music are like a body without a soul.

Beethoven wrote over the manuscript of the third movement of his A Minor Quartet the words *Neue Kraft fühlend*, "Feeling new strength." That is what music expresses and evokes. It is the language of emotion unsicklied by the pale cast of thought. That is what King David meant when he sang to God the words: "You turned my grief into dance; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent." You feel the strength of the human spirit no terror can destroy.

In his book, *Musicophilia*, the late Oliver Sacks (no relative, alas) told the poignant story of Clive Wearing, an eminent musicologist who was struck by a devastating brain infection. The result was acute amnesia. He was unable to remember anything for more than a few seconds. As his wife Deborah put it, "It was as if every waking moment was the first waking moment."

Unable to thread experiences together, he was caught in an endless present that had no connection with anything that had gone before. One day his wife found him holding a chocolate in one hand and repeatedly covering and uncovering it with the other hand, saying each time, "Look, it's new." "It's the same chocolate," she said. "No," he replied, "Look. It's changed." He had no past at all.

Two things broke through his isolation. One was his love for his wife. The other was music. He could still sing, play the organ and conduct a choir with all his old skill and verve. What was it about music, Sacks asked, that enabled him, while playing or conducting, to overcome his amnesia? He suggests that when we "remember" a melody, we recall one note at a time, yet each note relates to the whole. He quotes the

philosopher of music, Victor Zuckerkandl, who wrote, "Hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once. Every melody declares to us that the past can be there without being remembered, the future without being foreknown." Music is a form of sensed continuity that can sometimes break through the most overpowering disconnections in our experience of time.

Faith is more like music than science.[5] Science analyses, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. God is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of God's song. Faith is the ability to hear the music beneath the noise.

So music is a signal of transcendence. The philosopher and musician Roger Scruton writes that it is "an encounter with the pure subject, released from the world of objects, and moving in obedience to the laws of freedom alone." [6] He quotes Rilke: "Words still go softly out towards the unsayable / And music, always new, from palpitating stones / builds in useless space its godly home." [7] The history of the Jewish spirit is written in its songs.

I once watched a teacher explaining to young children the difference between a physical possession and a spiritual one. He had them build a paper model of Jerusalem. Then (this was in the days of tape-recorders) he put on a tape with a song about Jerusalem that he taught to the class. At the end of the session he did something very dramatic. He tore up the model and shredded the tape. He asked the children, "Do we still have the model?" They replied, No. "Do we still have the song?" They replied, Yes.

We lose physical possessions, but not spiritual ones. We lost the physical Moses. But we still have the song.

[1] Mishna, Yadayim 3:5.

[2] Tanhuma, Beshallah, 10; Midrash Zuta, Shir ha-Shirim, 1:1.

[3] Kavam, literally "their line", possibly meaning the reverberating string of a musical instrument.

[4] Beethoven came close to it in the opening notes of the sixth movement of the C Sharp Minor Quartet op. 131, his most sublime and spiritual work.

[5] I once said to the well-known atheist Richard Dawkins, in the course of a radio conversation, "Richard, religion is music, and you are tone deaf." He replied, "Yes, it's true, I am tone deaf, but there is no music."

[6] Roger Scruton, An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy, Duckworth, 1996, 151.

[7] Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, II, 10.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

A Succah, if properly utilized, can be a place of very great achievement. Here are a few ideas as heard from Rabbi Miller ZT"L on how to maximize this opportunity.

1. Keep in mind that every minute you spend in the Succah, you are performing a positive commandment from the Torah. The longer you sit there and contend "I am doing the will of Hashem", you are getting more Mitzvot. The more kavanah/intent the greater the reward.

2. The Succah is a temporary dwelling which serves to remind us that this world is only temporary. It is the place we prepare, through improvement, in order to gain entry to Olam Haba.

3. The Succah is a symbol of being "in Hashem" all of our lives. "Hashem, m'aon atah h'ayitah lanu." "You are our dwelling, You are our complete protection, You are all around us always."

"Hashem Echad", there is nothing but Hashem in the world. "Yifros alenu succat shelomecha", we are in Hashem's Succah which is all around us. This is why He is called 'Hamakom', The Place.

4. The humility of the Succah is in order to humble us. Reminding us to act with kindness and patience toward people in emulation of Hashem's patience and kindness to us.

The Abot lived in tents in order that they never forget that they are just visitors in this world.

5. The Succah means isolation from the nations of the world. "V'avdil etchem mikol ha'amim", "And I have separated you from all the nations"

6. The 'Peshat', reason for the Mitzvah of Succah, is in order that we should know that Hashem caused Israel to dwell in Succot and took them out of Egypt. We should look at the sechach/roof and remember, "L'maan yedeu derotechem", that we were once in the wilderness unprotected and yet more secure than any other time in our history.

The only true security is Hashem; that is the lesson of Succot. We enter the Succah and endeavor to gain more True Knowledge with sensory perception, that Hashem alone is our Succah and our sole Protection in all matters, forever and in both worlds.

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