

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

Sefer Devarim
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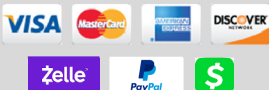
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בעזה"ש

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With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

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נא לא לקרוא בעת התפלה וקריאת התורה

Part I. Hashem's House

TEMPORARY LIVING

We read in the *possuk* the following words: כָּל הָאִזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בְּסֹכֶת (Every citizen in Yisroel must dwell in Sukkos (Vayikra 23:42). This is an unusual introduction to a *mitzvah*. Mentioning *אִזְרָח*, a citizen, a blue blood, is peculiar. The *Torah* is emphasizing that even important people, the aristocrats who have belonged to the *Am Yisroel* since the days of *Avraham Avinu* – they can trace their pedigree all the way back to the beginning of our people; that's what *אִזְרָח* means – even they must dwell in *sukkos*.

And immediately we learn a fundamental principle about the *sukkah*. It's function – one of its functions – is to humble people. Even the important ones – those that dwell in big homes, in palatial residences – must move out of their homes and enter into this flimsy dwelling for the purpose of learning humility. As we'll soon explain, that is the lesson of living in the *sukkah*.

The *sukkah*, as you know, must be a *דִּירַת אֶרֶץ*, a temporary dwelling. It has to be built in such a way that it could be a temporary dwelling. It can be of stone; you can even have a steel

sukkah. But you cannot make it of so high a construction that you will be forced to have sturdy walls. If it's more than a certain height it's *possul*, it's not a kosher *sukkah* because a certain height requires sturdy walls. And we want a *דירת ארעי*, something that at least is *possible* to be flimsy. That's a fundamental *halacha* of building a *sukkah*.

So we see it's not merely a leniency. It's not merely that the Torah gives you a *kulah*, making it easier for you, so that you can get by with a less expensive *sukkah*. No; *דירת ארעי* is not a leniency. The Torah is *insisting* on a *דירת ארעי*. Hashem says that your *sukkah* must be structured like a temporary dwelling.

Also, the Torah insists that the *s'chach* cannot be a regular roof. It cannot be a *בית של כל השנה*, like your home that you use all year long. Even if the year-round roof is made of *גדילי קרקע*, of things that grow from the ground which is a requirement of *s'chach*, it still won't be *kosher* for the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*. Wooden beams grow from the ground. Planks grow from the ground. Heavy logs grow from the ground. And still, if it's made in such a way that it's a *permanent* construction, like a regular roof, then it's *possul*. It has to be something that is not a *בית של כל השנה*.

So again we see that there is an insistence on this theme of something that is temporary and flimsy, a dwelling which humbles the one who dwells there. You can't be too important, too arrogant, if you're living in a little booth made of almost nothing, exposed to the neighbors and the elements.

So we see now, that one function, one purpose of this requirement that a *sukkah* should be a *דירת ארעי*, a weak form of construction, is to teach us that we are not as important as we imagined. And while we dwell in that *דירת ארעי*, we should remind ourselves of that. You have to get that into your head on *Sukkos*: you are not as important as you imagine. And even though you are an *אזרח*, an important burgher, an established citizen who knows his *yichus* and is aware of his pure pedigree; and of course you have your own palatial home, and other things too, still you must move out. *צא מדירת קבע ושב בדירת ארעי* - "You must leave your permanent home, and dwell in that temporary and flimsy hut" (*Sukkah* 2a). We already see here a purpose: in order that people should remind

themselves that they're not so important. You're not as important as you think!

TIME TO VISIT THE LANDLORD

Now, actually, when you think about *yom tov* in general, you'll understand that every *yom tov*, to some extent, has this function. **שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָּל זָכָר אֶת פְּנֵי הָאֲדוֹן הַשָּׁמַיִם** – *Three times a year every male must present himself before the Master Hashem* (Shemos 34:23). If you'll study this *possuk* carefully you'll see something remarkable. Three times a year every *zachar*, every male, must show himself before the Master, Hashem. Now, the word **אֲדוֹן**, Master, is not used ordinarily when describing Hashem – even *aleph daled nun yud* is rarely used. *Yud kay vav kay* is what's used.

Now, if the word *Adon* is used here, you have to know that it is emphasizing a basic function of *yom tov*. Every *yom tov* the whole *Am Yisroel* left their homes; that was the old time system of celebrating a *yom tov*. They all left their homes and went up to the *Mishkan* in *Shiloh*, and later in our history to the *Beis Hamikdash* in *Yerushalayim*. And what's the purpose of that trip? **יֵרָאֶה אֶת פְּנֵי הָאֲדוֹן הַשָּׁמַיִם**: *To show yourself before the Master of the land; to visit the landlord and thereby demonstrate that you are only a tenant.*

Because the Torah says (D'varim 4:25), **כִּי תוֹלִיד בָּנִים וּבָנִים בָּנִים וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ** – *When you will have children and then grandchildren and you become old in the land; you get accustomed to dwelling on your land.* **וְהִשְׁחַתְּתָם** – *You'll become corrupt.* You begin to believe that the land is yours, that it belongs to you. "You'll forget that it's My land," says Hashem. **וְהִשְׁחַתְּתָם** – That's a corruption of character! And so, in order to remind yourselves that you are only a visitor here, **כִּי גֵרִים אַתֶּם עִמָּדִי וְתוֹשָׁבִים אִתִּי** – *You are only visitors here with Me* (Vayikra 25:23), therefore you must come on every occasion of the *shalosh regalim* to show yourself before the Landlord.

It's like a declaration that **כִּי לִי הָאֶרֶץ** – "I am the one who owns the land" (Vayikra 25:23). "I'm the *macher* here," says the Adon Hashem, "Not you." And so we see that is the purpose, the function, of all the *yomim tovim* in general – to remind us that we are merely tenants, visitors, in this world.

Of course, every *yom tov* has more purposes than that. But if it is a *chag* of *chag hamatzos*, or if it is *zman matan toraseinu*, whatever it is, that is only in addition to this fundamental principle of אדון, of recognizing the Master. Because whatever else it may be, this certainly is a function of *yom tov*, to demonstrate that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the Owner, בִּי לֵי הָאָרֶץ – not only that He owns Eretz Yisroel. He owns America too. בִּי לֵי הָאָרֶץ the world is Mine!

And that's the purpose of *Shemitta* and *Yovel* too. הָאָרֶץ לֵא – תִּמְכַר לְצִמִּיתוֹת – *You can't sell the land outright forever* (Va'yikra *ibid.*). When *Yovel* comes, the land reverts back to the previous owner. He has no right to transfer ownership of the land to someone else permanently. It's not his. "Who do you think you are?! בִּי לֵי הָאָרֶץ – "It's My land!" says Hashem. "You're just a visitor, a tenant, in this world. It's not your property to sell forever."

LEARNING HUMILITY

And so we see that the purpose of these arrangements is to teach humility. You shouldn't be arrogant and feel that you are here forever. Now of course anyone who has a little bit of understanding, anyone who thinks a little bit, understands that nobody is here forever. לִפְנֵי יִכְרְעוּ כָּל יוֹרְדֵי עֶפֶר – *Before Hashem kneel all those who go down to the grave* (Tehillim 22:30). What does that mean "all those who go down to the grave," that *they* are the ones who kneel before Hashem? It means this: It's because we know that someday we are going down to buried in the *affar*, you're going to be lowered into the ground one day, *that's* why we kneel before Hashem right now.

If you remember always where you are heading, then you'll kneel before Hashem always, because you're always thinking about that great day when you'll be standing in front of Him. But most people are forgetful; most people never think about that. As far as they're concerned they're going to live forever. Deep down, that's what people think, that they'll be around forever – only *other* people die. And therefore, in order to remind us, Hashem gives us certain *mitzvos* so that we should keep in mind always that He is the owner, and that we are only visitors passing through.

And when we come to *Sukkos*, we understand that these days are *especially* dedicated to this principle. We move out of our

affluent homes into a place where there's almost nothing, a flimsy roof, some paper ornaments hanging from the ceiling, whatever it is. And even though you'll spend money to beautify the *sukkah*, but it's still nothing like your home. And by taking up residence in your little hut, you're reminded that this world is only a *דירת ארעי*, a temporary dwelling.

Even the palace where the millionaire lives is nothing but a temporary dwelling. *צא מדירת קבע ושב בדירת ארעי* - *Leave your home, and go into the temporary dwelling* (Sukkah 2a). That's why it's kosher with just two walls and a *tefach*. Two walls and a flimsy roof?! That's a very weak protection against the elements. If a cold wind is blowing on *Sukkos* and you have two walls and a *tefach*, you'll need an overcoat. And even if it's not cold, the people passing by won't give you much privacy there. You can't sit like a *melech*, like a king, when you're in a place that has only two walls and a *tefach*.

And all that is for the purpose to let you know that you have a Master. That's the purpose of the *sukkah*, so that we should feel *nichna*, to let us know that there's an *Adon*. *אדון עולם אשר מלך*. He is in charge of the world. *בבטרתם כל יציר נברא*. Before anyone appeared in this world, He was in charge already. And we are just latecomers; we came on the last day and we are not here to stay for too long. And therefore, we should never forget the great principle of *גר אנכי בארץ* - I am only a sojourner in this world".

WE HAVE IT TOO GOOD TODAY

Now, we have to realize what a great disadvantage we are suffering today. And that's because we have all of these conveniences, and in addition to that, we have the idea that we're here forever! Who doesn't think that he's here in this world for the next ten thousand years? Everybody imagines so!

There was a man once who moved in next door to me. He wasn't a young man, this new *shachein* of mine. When he moved in he put up a big iron fence, a fancy wrought-iron fence, with a big "P" in the middle - that was his initial - a big "P" in iron. A fence like that would stand for a thousand years! The man who owns the house now still has the "P" on his gate! The man next door has a big fancy wrought-iron fence with a big "P". The man who made the "P" however, he didn't last long.

We are at a big disadvantage today. There's nothing to remind us that we're not going to be here for a very long time. And so people put everything they have into the house, all types of luxuries; and of course expensive rugs. It'll last forever! "We'll be here forever!" That's what we think, and that's a very great impediment to success.

But in the *midbar*, Hakodosh Boruch Hu was preparing His people for a career of success. So that they should be able to succeed when they would leave the wilderness and go into permanent homes. They needed this preparation for when they would enter into Eretz Yisroel. Because there would be a very big temptation to forget *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* when they began to live in בָּתִּים מְלֵאִים כֵּל טוב, houses filled with all good things. And so He prepared them in the *midbar*, in the *sukkah*, to learn the *middah* of *anavah*.

And that's what happened. When they came into *Eretz Yisroel*, and they saw all the plenty that was waiting for them; fertile fields with luscious fruit and beautiful homes that were full of all good things, they moved in humbly. They moved into these big beautiful houses of stone with humility: "Ahhh," they said. "*Baruch Atah Hashem*. It's not ours. Thank You for giving us this!" And as soon as they could, they were *oleh regel* to *Shilo*, to the *Mishkan*: יָרְאוּהוּ. כֹּל זְכוּרְךָ אֶת פְּנֵי הָאָדָם הַשֵּׁם. They came to the Master, and they declared to Him, "You're our Master! We're only tenants!"

WE NEED A YEARLY REMINDER

But how long would that last? *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* wanted it to last forever! לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ יְמֵיכֶם וְיָמֵי בְנֵיכֶם כַּיְמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ - *You should be on the land, like the heavens are over the land, forever*. I want it forever! Only, that you have to keep on working very hard to retain that feeling of *anavah* before *Hashem*. You have to constantly remind yourself.

So every *Sukkos* they reminded themselves. Everyone moved out of his beautiful home that he had found when he moved into the land. He left everything, and went into the *sukkah*, a flimsy little building and he sat there for seven days. "Ah! בֵּי בְּסֻכּוֹת הַשָּׁבֹתִי. אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. This is where our forefathers sat for forty years, and that's how they prepared themselves to remember *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* even when they would be sitting in their big beautiful homes in

Eretz Yisroel. And we will also keep that in mind.” “We’ll never forget!” they said. At the beginning, that’s what they said. But it’s a very big danger. **בֵּי תוֹלֵד בָּנִים וּבְנֵי בָנִים** – *You’ll have children, and your children will have children*, **וְנִשְׁתַּתֵּם בְּאֶרֶץ** – *And you’ll be long in the land*, **וְהִשְׁחַתֵּם** – *You’re going to be spoiled!*

It doesn’t mean you *have* to be spoiled, and it doesn’t mean everybody was spoiled. Not everybody was spoiled. However, it’s not easy. It’s very difficult to have conveniences and to remember Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And that’s why every added convenience that you get, makes it a requirement that you learn more and more *yiras shamayim*. There’s no question that it’s a *sakanah*, a very big danger. A rich man has to keep the *Mesillas Yesharim* open on his table all the time! Because he’s sure to fall into the pitfall; it’s a snare. Any kind of wealth is a *sakanah*.

And therefore the *sukkah* is a **דִּירַת אֶרְעֵי**, a flimsy, temporary dwelling, and it’s a glorious opportunity once a year, to go out in the *sukkah* and remind ourselves that we dwelt in the *midbar* in such flimsy habitations. And we sit there for seven days in order to teach us that **כָּל הָאֲזֻרָה**, even though you’re an aristocrat, an important fellow, and you own many things of your own; still every Jew must **יֵשְׁבוּ בְּסֻכּוֹת**, to teach us that nobody has anything. We’re only visitors here, and *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* is the Landlord.

Part II. Two Lessons

HUMILITY IN PRACTICE

Now, since we’re on this subject, that the *sukkah* has to teach us this great principle – by the way, that’s not the only principle, we’ll soon see another important principle – but that’s one of the very great lessons. So you must understand: Why is it that the *sukkah* cannot be very high? We learned one reason so far: Because if it is a very tall *sukkah*, then it must be built with sound and solid construction and then it won’t be a **דִּירַת עֲרָאִי**. You can’t make a flimsy building that’s very high. It would have to be a strong building. And we don’t want to be sitting in a strong *sukkah*.

There's another reason however; and the other reason is, so that you should be able to see the s'chach. If the s'chach is high, you won't crane your neck to look at it that way. But if the s'chach is not too high, you can be sitting in the sukkah and still see it. לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דְרוֹתֵיכֶם דְּדוֹרוֹתֵיכֶם. You should remember when you sit in the sukkah what the sukkah is for. If you sit in the sukkah, but you don't think what it's about, it's a rachmanus on you! The Torah says a reason for this mitzvah, לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דְרוֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בְּסֻכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "In order that you should remember that we once sat in sukkos in the midbar! So you see that the purpose of sitting in the sukkah is to remind yourself. So when you sit in the sukkah, immediately the first result should be, you're נִכְנָע, you're humbled before Hashem. It's very important to keep that in mind when you come into the sukkah.

And one of the most important means of בְּנִיעָה, one of the most necessary demonstrations of בְּנִיעָה is to keep the mouth closed. You have to be careful what you say in the sukkah. You cannot fool around, you can't joke in the sukkah. No place for leitzanus. A מוֹשָׁב לִצְיָיִם in the sukkah is entirely contradictory to the purpose of being humbled before the Presence of Hashem. The purpose of the sukkah is anavah – you have to be humble in the sukkah. And an av doesn't open a big mouth.

That's what the Rambam says: לְעוֹלָם יִרְבֶּה אָדָם בְּשִׁתִּיקָה - "A person should always produce a lot of silence." Not only in the sukkah, but always. In this sukkah of Olam Hazeh where we are – we are only temporary visitors here. לְעוֹלָם יִרְבֶּה אָדָם בְּשִׁתִּיקָה. You know what that means? A man should always produce a lot of silence. Not just to keep quiet. You have to produce silence. That's what you have to produce in this world. It doesn't say לְעוֹלָם יִשְׁתַּק - that you should always be quiet. It says יִרְבֶּה בְּשִׁתִּיקָה - that means that you should produce a lot of silence. Silence is an achievement. Now, why is it that silence is such an achievement? You're just keeping your mouth closed! What's the big achievement there?

And the answer is this: Because silence is anavah. Silence means that you know that you are standing in the presence of someone. חָכָם אֵינוֹ מְדַבֵּר בְּפָנָיו מִי שְׁגֹדוֹל הֵימָנוּ - If you're a chochom, a wise man, you won't talk when you know that someone bigger than you is in front of you (Avos 5:7). And therefore shtikah, silence, is a

golden achievement. To be silent because you know that you're standing in front of Hashem is a greatness of character.

Of course *divrei torah* is something else. The Gemara says (Chulin 89a): מָה אֲמָנוּתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם – What is a man's profession in this world? יַעֲשֶׂה עֵצְמוֹ כְּאַלֵּם – He should make himself like an אַלֵּם, like a mute fellow, as if he cannot talk. That is a man's profession in this world. And you have to learn that profession. Just like you go to school to learn how to be a doctor, to be an accountant, you have to go to school to learn how to keep your mouth closed too. You have to learn that.

מָה אֲמָנוּתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם. What's a man's profession in this world? יַעֲשֶׂה עֵצְמוֹ כְּאַלֵּם. He has to make himself as if he cannot talk. It's a profession! It takes a lot of work! It doesn't mean he shouldn't talk. יַעֲשֶׂה עֵצְמוֹ – He should make himself as if he couldn't talk. He has to talk but whatever he says, he is talking like an אַלֵּם. That means he is limited in what he talks. You have to say good Shabbos. Good yomtiv, you have to say. You can't be stupid, a mute mamash. But you have to be like an אַלֵּם.

Then the Gemara says: יָכֵל לִכָּל – I might think that for everything you have to be quiet. תְּלַמּוּד לְיוֹמֵר צְדָקָה תִּדְבְּרוּן – Righteousness, *divrei Torah* you should speak. Yes, words of Torah you can speak. Words of chesed, kindness, you can speak. Otherwise in this Sukkan of this world, we don't talk. We have to remind ourselves that we are only visitors here. Producing quiet means producing anavah. And so, in Olam Hazeh, in this great Sukkan of Olam Hazeh, the job is to learn כְּנִיעָה. And especially when you enter the sukkah on the Yom Tov of Sukkos, it's important to keep in mind the great opportunity to learn this מִדָּה of humility in front of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And so, we'll sum up the first lesson of the the *sukkah* with one word – *anavah*, you're humbled before Hashem. And if you want your *Sukkos* to be a successful one, you'll make sure to keep that in mind every time you walk into the *sukkah*. At least for one minute, for the first minute, be sure to think these thoughts. Even one minute a day, and you're a great success. Add another minute, and another minute, you're even greater.

HASHEM IS TAKING CARE OF US

Now there is another important lesson that we should thinking about when sitting in the *sukkah*. And that is that our only true security is *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*. They didn't have walls around the *machaneh*, around the camp in the *midbar*. Everyone else, all the nations, had walled cities. But the *Am Yisroel* were vulnerable to attack. And yet in the forty years in the *midbar* they were more safe than at any time in their history! There wasn't a single instance of anybody attacking them; and nobody would even dare! Overhead were the עֲנַנֵי כְבוֹד. There was Moshe Rabeinu leading us, and *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* was standing guard over the *Am Yisroel*.

And that's the symbolism of the *sukkah*: that we don't need anything to protect us, because Hashem is watching over us! That's why the *s'chach* is so flimsy. Because what is the *s'chach* a symbol of? The עֲנַנֵי כְבוֹד that protected us. We sit outside in an exposed hut, with flimsy *s'chach* in order to reenact that journey in the *midbar* where we sat for forty years exposed to all the nations and all the elements. But we were more secure than any other people, because we were sitting under the watchful eyes of *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*.

So the *sukkah* says *bitachon*. The *sukkah* says *emunah*. *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* is protecting us. When a man moves into a substantial home, he thinks his home is what stands between him and the cold. He thinks it's his home that protects him from the rain. But suppose a man is in a *sukkah*, then only *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* can protect him against the cold and the rain. He knows that it's only Hashem.

And that's what happened! The enemies couldn't do a thing to them. And they were sitting there for forty years, day after day, night after night, and learning the lesson that בְּרוּךְ הַגֹּבֵר אֲשֶׁר יְבַטֵּחַ. בְּהֵשֶׁם וְהָיָה הַשֵּׁם מְבֹטָחוֹ. Hashem is the only trust of human beings. All else is self-deception. That's the great lesson that they studied for forty years.

They didn't have any fields to cultivate; what would they eat? They should have starved to death in the *midbar*! Where would they find food? And it fell from the sky! לֶחֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם. It was unbelievable that people could exist in a place where nothing grew. אֶרֶץ וְצִמָּחוּן אֲשֶׁר אֵין שָׁם מַיִם. Even water you couldn't find. And who was

there? It wasn't one person; one traveling Arab. It was a nation of millions. And it didn't happen for one day. It happened for forty years! For forty years we lived in a wilderness where food and water were not available, and where danger lurked at any moment. And yet this nation of millions was protected and sustained!

And so, לִמְעַן יִדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם, we have to sit in *sukkos* in order that your generations should know בְּיַשְׂרָאֵל, that the Am Yisroel were seated in *sukkos*; in *sukkos* and nothing else! And still they were safe. For forty years! And as we sit in the *sukkah* we're learning the lesson of *bitachon*.

BITACHON AND HISHTADLUS

And that lesson is that even though we do everything to protect ourselves - and you should; you should have locks on your doors, and you should have alarms if necessary. You should do everything. On the contrary, it's a *chiyuv* to protect yourself. But while you are doing all these things, you must beware of falling into the trap of thinking that you are protecting yourself.

בִּי חֲזַק בְּרִיחֵי שַׁעְרֶיךָ - He is the One who fortified the bars of your gates. So you see that there were bars on the gates of the cities. They had bars. But Dovid Hamelech told them, "When you are lowering those heavy bars in place and you retire for the night and you feel secure behind the walls of the city; forget about it! It's Hashem Who is protecting you. בִּי חֲזַק - "Because He is the One who is strengthening those bars."

Otherwise, it's like the man who came into his house, and locked the door and went to bed with security. All night he slept soundly; he knows he has a strong iron door, not a plain wooden door so he slept well. He got up in the morning, walked outside to go to shul, and he saw that his keys were sticking in the door from the outside. He had left his keys sticking in the door from the outside! "That's how I slept all night with security?!!" (*On a different tape, the Rav revealed that he himself was the man in this story*). Oh, it was a glorious opportunity, a real lesson in *bitachon*. And it's always that way. It's only imagination.

Of course, you have to do the mitzvah. וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת נַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם. You have to watch yourself. Next time don't do such a stupid thing;

don't leave your keys in the door! But it was a glorious lesson. I slept *geshmak* last night! Oh, it was a pleasure. I was so secure. But it was nothing; it was only a dream. I wasn't secure at all because of my iron door. בִּי חֲזִיק בְּרִיחִי שְׁעָרַיִךְ. Certainly I was secure! Because Hakodosh Boruch Hu is my security!

And so when you get into the *sukkah*, that is one of the great lessons to study. And even though we must do everything, we must guard our health, we must protect our homes, we have to go out and look for *parnassah*; yet we are still in the *midbar*. It's still *mann* that falls from the sky. The check that your boss gives you every week is nothing but *mann*. The food that you buy in the store, it's Hakodosh Boruch Hu, not the grocer is handing you the food. בִּי לְעוֹלָם. נִתֵּן לָחֶם לְכֹל בְּשָׂר׃. He is the One that is handing you the food. חֲסִדוֹ. All kindness is from Him.

Of course, it needs a lot of training to get our minds out of the habit of *gashmiyus*, but that's what's necessary. And therefore because they had such a *hachanah*, they were prepared for forty years in the *midbar* to realize it's Hashem that's doing everything. Forty years of training that Hashem is doing everything and we are nothing. We don't have any farms in the *midbar*. We don't have any homes in the *midbar*. We don't have any springs of water. We have nothing! And still we existed for forty years. We did more than exist. We increased and multiplied, and nobody could harass us. We were one hundred percent safe.

So now we are going into *Eretz Yisroel*, and we are going to have walled cities, and we are going to have stone houses. We'll have farms and orchards and vineyards and everything else. Ahhhh, now we are going to be on guard not to deceive ourselves. We were prepared for this test. That forty years of living in *sukkos* was the lesson, that was the *hakdamah*.

THE LESSONS

And therefore on *Sukkos* we have two big tasks that the *sukkah* is supposed to teach us. One is the job of learning how weak we are, how unimportant we are. That we are standing in the Presence of Hashem and that in this world we are only visitors in His Sukkah. We have nothing of our own.

We have to work on that, and understand that we are living in a *דִּירַת אֲרָעִי*, a temporary world. And we are *nichna* in this *דִּירַת אֲרָעִי*. We learn *בְּנִיָּעָה*, humility, *anavah*. We keep our mouths closed as much as possible, and open them only for Torah and *chesed* – especially in the sukkah. And also in this Sukkah of this world, the Sukkah of Olam Hazeh, *דַּע לְפָנֶי מִי אֲתָה עוֹמֵד* – We remember at all times that we are standing in the Presence of Hashem. And we're careful before we say anything.

And the second lesson we learn is to remind ourselves that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is supplying us with all that we have. Everything comes from Him. Everything! And as you walk to the refrigerator – a refrigerator is a big benefactor; it keeps your food fresh, you think. No, it doesn't keep your food fresh! It's Hashem Who is keeping your food fresh. Forget about the refrigerator. It's only a dream.

You have gas ranges, and they cook tasty meals, and you think what a good thing it is to have such a stove. In the olden days when they wanted to cook something they had to build a fire of wood and put over it some bricks. And now, look, you press a button and the flame springs out and it starts cooking efficiently. No, that's just a deception. Nothing is being done by the gas range. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing everything!

You have a degree, a profession, or you have a store that's supplying you with *parnassah*, you have some sort of business – forget about it. It's nothing but *mann*. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving you everything. And only Hakodosh Boruch Hu! That's how we have to train ourselves as we sit in the *sukkah* and learn the lesson of *bitachon* in *Hashem*.

Part III. Singing to Him

GET EXCITED ABOUT HASHEM

Now this brings us to understand a little bit better the inyan of Hallel. As an example we will speak about the first mizmor of Hallel. *הַלְלוּ-ה'* – Praise Hashem. Now the word *הַלְלוּ* means specifically something more than just praise. Hallel means to be excited about Hashem. To be excited!

How do I know? Because the word הלל means "wild." אַמְרָתִי - "I said to those who are jovial and wild, 'Don't be wild' " (Tehillim 75:5). "Hallel" means to be wild. And the word is what you call onomatopoeic. It's a word that it expresses itself through the sound of the word itself. "Hallel!" It's a word of excitement and shouting! When people get drunk they say Hallel - only that it's not to Hashem. They are shouting "HALLEL! HALLEL!" about all the wrong things. The word "hallel" is suited to shouting.

So Dovid Hamelech says, "Yes, you have to shout in this world! You have to shout with happiness. But to whom should you shout? הִלְלוּ-ה - Shout out in wild simcha only to י-ה, only to Him. Shout out in happiness and gratitude only to Hashem. It means this: If you're happy, then He's the One to express your gratitude to. He is the author of your happiness. And י-ה means an abbreviation of הַיְהוָה, הַיְהוּה, הַיְהוֹה. He is the One who is around always, י-ה means "Being, the One that has true existence." We don't have any true existence. We're only imaginary; we're only the imagination of Hashem.

Of course, we like this imagination. We want to keep up this imagination for a long time, but still we're only imagination. He is the only one that has true being. And therefore, He is the one Who is providing you with everything you have. He is the only One. The words הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהִים אֶמֶת, the Rambam says it means הוּא לְבַדּוֹ אֶמֶת - He is the only One who is really true. We are only a dream that Hashem dreamed up into existence.

REJOICE IN YOUR GIFTS

And so we say הִלְלוּ עַבְדֵי הַשֵּׁם - "You, who are the servants of Hashem, should be wild over Hashem" (Tehillim 103:1). So your job in this world is - if you're an עַבְד הַשֵּׁם do you know what your job is in this world? Your job is to הִלְלוּ אֶת שֵׁם הַשֵּׁם - Call out in excitement to give thanks to Hashem" (ibid.). In this world your job is to praise Hashem! All the time, to attribute everything to Hashem. Everything!

You have two good eyes? "I have two good eyes," you think. "I'm born with two good eyes." No, you're not born with two good eyes! You have two good eyes that are given to you every day by

Hashem. Every day, it's a special gift; Two good eyes! That's how to think, if you're an eved Hashem. And you have to say every day, בְּרַךְ אֶתְּהָ הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הָעוֹלָם פּוֹקֵחַ עֵינַיִם "You open up the eyes of the blind." Why don't you say "I thank You that You gave me two good eyes"? No! You have to act like you're blind, and now you got two good eyes. Ohhhh!! A blind man who suddenly gets two good eyes, he wouldn't say "muh-muh-muh-muh" (the Rav mumbled the bracha and laughed). No! He would say it with dancing! He would be meshuga! He would be drunk with happiness! He would shout! He'd say hallel! Not half hallel – the whole Hallel! And that's how you have to say the bracha of פּוֹקֵחַ עֵינַיִם – "He opens up the eyes of the blind."

And that's the function of *avdei Hashem*. You have to thank Hashem for everything that you have. You have teeth? Most of you have teeth, don't you? Your own teeth. Ahhhhhh! Ah ah ah! How lucky you are! You have to thank Hashem for that great gift. Teeth are a great gift! Now, people say that's silly. They think, "You came here for such foolish talk?! You came here to say this?! You came here to say *sodos*, and *sisrei torah* and *chidushim*! But such things – thanking Hashem for your teeth – you can't waste your time with that." But you have to know that what I'm telling you now is the biggest chiddush. To thank Hashem that you have teeth! And if you don't, then you have to know that you're not an *eved Hashem*.

HALLELU-KAH!! Who? Who has the function of הַהֲלֵלוּ-הָ? Avdei Hashem, You the servants of Hashem. הַהֲלֵלוּ עַבְדֵי הַשֵּׁם! That's your job in this world. Thank Him for your teeth! It's the first time you heard it?! Then you're lucky you came tonight!

HIS NAME FILLS THE WORLD

Now, why does it say "Sheim Hashem"? הַהֲלֵלוּ שֵׁם הַשֵּׁם. "Sheim" means whatever we heard about Hashem. We heard a lot of things. We heard that he took us out of Mitzryaim. We heard that He created the world. We heard that He gave us the manna. We also heard that He causes the sun to shine every day. Yes, we heard that He causes the sun to shine every day. We heard that He gives us our garments. We heard that as well.

– וַיַּעַשׂ הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ פַתְנוֹת עוֹר וַיְלַבֵּשֵׁם "And Hashem made for Adam and his wife garments for their skin, to cover their

skin, and He clothed them" (B'reishis 3:21). How do you get garments? Hashem gave us garments! Rabeinu Sadya Gaon says that this passuk means that Hashem caused linen to grow and wool to grow. Why should linen grow? You can't eat linen. If the world is made only for animals, like the scientists say, and man is only an accident that came along later, so what do you need linen for? Linen is not something animals can eat. Animals can't eat wool. You know that don't you? Animals don't need wool.

So you see that it's made especially for human beings who want clothing. Ooooooh! וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים כְּתָנוּת עוֹר לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְיִלְבִּישֵׁם - Hashem gave garments for their skin, to cover their skin. So it's a neis. It's a miracle that wool grows on sheep's backs. Why should wool grow on a sheep's back? It's a miracle! And therefore, everything is the sheim Hashem. It's the "name of Hashem," - everything that we hear and see, proclaims, "It's Me, Hashem!" His name fills the world!

And so you say יהי שם השם מברך מעתה ועד עולם - The name of Hashem should be blessed forever and ever" (ibid. 103:2). How often should you do this? On Rosh Chodesh? Once a month you should say Hallel? No! You should say Hallel מעתה ועד עולם - forever and ever. And if you do it in this world, then you'll continue to do so in the next world as well!

That's our job as avdei Hashem. We have to attribute everything that we have to Hashem. If you're able to walk - look how many people cannot walk. How many people need wheelchairs? How many people have walkers? Or crutches? Or canes? And you're able to walk! And even those who have canes have to thank Hashem. Even those who have crutches have to thank Hashem. Even those who have wheelchairs have to thank Hashem. As long as you can open your mouth and say something, you have to thank Hashem! Because there are many people who can't even talk - they know sign language, that's all. And even with sign language you have to thank Hashem in sign language. At least you have hands to make the motions.

And so we have our job open for us for our whole lifetime. מעתה ועד עולם! It's a career for a lifetime. It's not just a figure of

speech, some nice words to make a *niggun*, and then you forget about it. No. It's a career for your whole life.

THE LESSON OF SUKKOS

That's the truth of what Sukkos is saying. That's the lesson of Sukkos. Only that everything else in the world is saying it too. And therefore, Hallel keeps on going. It says *ממזרח שמש עד מבואו* - "From the rising of the sun until the setting of the sun, Hashem's name is to be praised." That means, that there's so much to be said in this world - if you look around this universe, this world and outside of the world, the sun, the moon, the planets, the far off stars. There are so many wonderful things for our benefit, that there is never an end to this task of praising Hashem.

Now Dovid Hamelech says - I'll skip something to save time - *מקימי מעפר דל* - He raises the poor man up from the dirt. The poor man was sitting on the dirt; he had nothing. And now he is raised up, he became wealthy. *מאשפות ירים אביון*. - "He raises the poor man from the dung heaps." A poor man was finally evicted from his cottage because he couldn't pay the rent. So he went and sat on the dung heaps. It's a pile of manure and it's not a very pleasant place to sit. But at least he's sitting there. He has someplace to sit. So he's waiting, and finally what happens?

עם - "Hashem seats him with the nobility, *להשיבי עם נדיבים* - "With the nobility of the land." So he thinks, "How did I get here?" Something happened in between. He got busy, he invested, he bought a little business, he got rich, he bought a bigger business, and finally he's sitting in the palace, with all the wealthy people of the country, *עם נדיבי עמו*.

So what is he thinking? He's thinking, "Look, I worked hard. It pays to work hard. I got up early, I saved my money instead of wasting it. I invested." No, he's not saying that! He's saying, *מקימי מעפר דל* - "It's You Hashem, You're the One who did this." That's what happened to this rich man. A rich man is sitting in his palace and he remembers that he was sitting on the dirt once. He was a poor boy once, sitting on the dung heaps, with nothing in his pockets. And he was thinking, "Where will I get my next meal from?" And today he is a millionaire! So his job is to remember that always, and to say Hallel to Hakodosh Boruch Hu *מעתה ועד עולם*.

And it's not only the millionaire. It's all of you as well. Everything you have is only from Hashem.

WHERE DID MY FAMILY COME FROM?

A woman that is childless, מוֹשִׁיבֵי עֵקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת - "A woman with no children in the home." So Hakodosh Boruch Hu made her אִם הַבָּנִים, a mother of a lot of children. What does that mean? It doesn't mean a woman is barren and suddenly she has six or seven children at once. No, it didn't happen that way. She was a barren girl when she was fourteen years old. She was barren; she didn't have any children. She got married, let's say, at sixteen, and she got busy having babies, one after the other. Now she has a big family. Baruch Hashem, Baruch Hashem! And her sons and daughters are married, and she has granddaughters, grandsons, and great-grandchildren. And she sits at the weddings of her grandchildren and she looks around. Huge family pictures are being taken. She and her husband are in the middle, her daughters and sons are here, and sons-in-law and daughters-in-law next to them, the granddaughters and grandsons next to them, and the great-grandchildren are next to them. It's a tribe! Where did this tribe come from? And she says, "Well, I was interested in having a big family" No! That's not what she says. She says, "You Hashem! It was You! מוֹשִׁיבֵי עֵקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת - You took a barren woman and you made her אִם הַבָּנִים שְׂמֵחָהּ. And therefore, I am going to praise You forever and ever."

That's how we have to live! if you're an eved Hashem, then you must attribute everything to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. That's what that first mizmor of Hallel is saying. So therefore, הִלְלוּ means not only to thank Hashem, but thank only Hashem, and remember always that whatever you have, Hashem gave you.

That's what it says: *Hashem pokeach ivrim, Hashem malbish arumim, Hashem matir asurim.* Hashem, Hashem, Hashem. Without Hashem, a man would be lying paralyzed in bed. There are so many people lying in bed, they can't even move. They have to be turned over in order to diaper them in bed. But you're not that way. So you must remember that really, you ought to be that way. It's only that Hakodosh Boruch Hu changed the situation and gave you the ability to walk and to take care of yourself!

And therefore, "*Hashem zokef kifufim*" doesn't mean that you were once bent over, you were a cripple, a hunchback, and then by a miracle He straightened you out. No! You always were straight, but you were straight only because Hashem straightened you. So as you walk in the street, with a straight and erect stature, and you see somebody walking like this in the street [*the Rav bent himself over*], you should think, "If not for the *chesed Hashem*, that would be me."

START YOUR NEW CAREER THIS YOM TOV

And therefore, you have to praise Hashem, all your life, for everything. That's our big job. Don't think that you'll do it once in a while, and then you've fulfilled your obligation. You have to remind yourself all the time about this career of yours. הַשְׁמַר לְךָ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ - Be on guard always, lest you forget Hashem your G-d. And that's what Sukkos comes along to tell us. Remember what you once didn't have. You dwelled in sukkos and now Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave you בְּתִימִים וְיָפִים, beautiful and spacious palatial homes. He gave you an אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְיָדֵבֶשׁ.

So forever and ever, in this blessed land, your function is to do one big thing, and that is to say Hallel always to Hashem. Hallelu Avdei Hashem!! You, the servants of Hashem, forever and ever that's your job, to say Hallel to Hashem.

But if you neglect that, if you aren't avdei Hashem in this sense that I explained to you now; let's say you keep the Torah, but you forget to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for all that He gave you. So then it says, תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב יָרִיב כָּל, *Ay-yai-yai!* תַּחַת, instead, אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת הַשֵּׁם - You weren't *avdei Hashem*, בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב וּמִרֵב כָּל - then you went into galus, where you didn't have anything. And now you look back, and you're reminded of what you were remiss in doing when you had everything.

And so, when people are still young and still healthy, and you still have *parnassah*, and more or less things are going well, it's your job to use the lesson of Sukkos, to be constantly aware that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is showering you with numberless gifts. And therefore we have to say hallel all the time! Not only during the set times of tefillah - we must say hallel all day long!

טוב להודות להשם להגיד בבקר חסדך ואמונתך בלילות. From the morning till the evening, and all day in between, that's the job of the avdei Hashem. And this is one of the functions of sitting in the sukkah. So for a little while we retire from our palatial homes, and we sit in the דירת ארעי, to remind ourselves, that soon we'll go back to our rugs from wall to wall, to our telephone, and to our air conditioner, and to every kind of convenience that we have. But we should remind ourselves now, while sitting in the sukkah where we don't have all these things, and soon we are going to go back and have them again, that it's הללו עבדי השם.

And these ideas we spoke about tonight are the two big functions of the sukkah. One is to learn to be נכנע at all times because we are aware of the Presence of Hashem. And that we must keep our mouths shut as much as possible and produce as much silence as we are capable of producing because of this Awareness of Hashem. And the second is to produce bitachon and to be aware that Hashem alone is the One that is giving us everything. And therefore we are going to thank Him and be His servants always. And that's called avodah, the gratitude that you express to Hashem all your life, and all day long.

And the person who uses the *sukkah* remind himself of these two great principles is making use of the yom tov in the way Hakodosh Boruch Hu planned. And that's the person who Hashem loves, the one who will be *zoicheh* to stand before Him when he finally leaves this דירת ארעי of Olam Hazeah, and say, "Hashem, I learned the lesson of the sukkah and I used the world to become aware of You and to sing to You, just as You intended."

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שאל אביך ויגדך זקינד ויאמרו לך

Q&A

With
Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l



Q:

What should we be thinking about when we're shaking the lulav and esrog, when we do the *na'anuim*?

A:

When you make the *na'anuim*, you should say to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, "I'm thanking You Hashem that You gave me a good heart." You know, many people have sick hearts. They wish they could have your heart! The esrog is like the heart, the *medrash* says. So as you hold up the esrog you think, "Thank You Hashem for giving me a good solid healthy heart." And You gave me good eyes. Many people have trouble with their eyes. And that's what the hadassim are telling us. The hadassim are eyes. You gave me a good backbone. Many people, *nisht eingedacht, lo aleichem*, are bent over. They have hunchbacks. Their spines are bent. And you have a straight back. Now, that's something to think about when you pick up the lulav.

Listen to me; What does *na'anuim* mean? Back and forth, back and forth. What does it mean back and forth, back and forth? It means our thanks are to You because it came from You to us. Our thanks are to You because of what's always coming from You to us. That's what we're saying when we shake it back and forth. We shake in all directions because we say, no matter from where the good comes from, it's only coming from You all the time. And therefore you take the lulav, that's your backbone, your *shidrah*, and you take your heart, that's the esrog. And you take the hadassim that's your eyes, and you take the aravos, that's your lips, your mouth, and you say "I dedicate them to You Hashem for what You did for me." Back and forth, back and forth, that's what you think about by the *na'anuim*. It's all coming from You to me, Hashem.

You think it's silly! It's not silly at all. That's why we make *na'anuim*. That's what it means. I'm thanking You for what You've given to me. And that's how you should think when you make the *na'anuim*. It shouldn't just be a mechanical thing.

TAPE # 757 (September 1989)

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בהלל והודאה להשם שגמלני כל טוב. י.ז.ג.