

FOUR TYPES OF JEWS

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Today's Learning:

Pesachim 10:7-8

Orach Chaim 296:1-3

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Ketubot 44

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Nazir 40

Chazal say that the Arba'ah Minim/Four Species which we hold in our hands on Sukkot, and which are mentioned in this week's parashah, represent four types of Jews: The etrog, which has taste and smell, represents the Jew who both studies Torah and performs good deeds. The lulav, which has taste (it comes from the date tree) but no smell, represents the Jew who studies Torah but does not do good deeds. The hadas, which has a smell but no taste, represents the Jew who does good deeds but does not study Torah. Finally, the aravah, which has no taste or smell, represents the Jew who has neither quality. All of these species are held together on Sukkot, thus symbolizing the unity of the Jewish people.

R' Avraham Atlas shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Chasidei Gur in Haifa), notes that even though the aravah represents the Jew who has neither Torah nor good deeds, it is nevertheless a species which

grows near water. (In the pasuk it is called "arvei nachal" / "willow of the creek.") Since Chazal often use water as a metaphor for Torah, the aravah too must represent a Jew who has some connection, however slight, to Torah. The gemara, however, identifies a species known as "tzaftzefah" which is similar to an aravah, but is not halachically acceptable for the mitzvah. The tzaftzefah does not grow near water; it has no connection to Torah. Another characteristic of the tzaftzefah is that its edge has sharp teeth like a saw. Since the leaf itself is shaped like a person's lips, the tzaftzefah can be seen as representing the biting words of one who mocks the Torah. Indeed, the word tzaftzefah shares a root with "le'tzaftzef" / "to mock." Such a plant cannot be joined to the group which represents all Jews. (Quoted in Coalition, Shevat 5753)

"Hashem's appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations - these are My appointed festivals. For six days work may be done, and the seventh day is the day of complete rest . . . ; it is Shabbat for Hashem in all your dwelling places." (23:2)

Why is Shabbat mentioned as an introduction to the festivals? Also, the midrash says, "If you will keep Shabbat, Hashem will give you three festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot." How are the three festivals related to Shabbat? R' Gedalyah Schorr z"l answers these questions as follows:

The Tur (O.C. 292) writes that each of the three prayers of Shabbat [not including mussaf, whose purpose is to recount the sacrifice of the day] alludes to a different Shabbat in history. Ma'ariv alludes to the Shabbat of the creation-week, as we say in that prayer, "You sanctified the seventh day for Your Name's sake, the conclusion of the creation of heaven and earth." Shacharit alludes to that Shabbat on which the Torah was given, as we say, "Moshe will rejoice . . . A crown of splendor You placed on his head when he stood before You on Mount Sinai." (The Torah was given on Shabbat - see Shabbat 86b.) Finally, Minchah alludes to "the day which is entirely Shabbat," i.e., to Olam Haba. This is why we say in Minchah, "You are One and Your Name is One," although this fact will not be universally recognized until the End of Days.

Each of the festivals parallels one aspect of Shabbat. On Friday night, when a person passes from the workweek to the holiness of Shabbat, he also passes from the lower state of serving Hashem as a slave serves a master to the higher state of serving G-d as a son serves a father. This is the same experience that Bnei Yisrael had at the Exodus. Also, just as Bnei Yisrael in Egypt sank into 49 levels of impurity and were uplifted on Pesach, so a Jew sinks into the relative impurity of the workweek and is uplifted on Shabbat. Finally, just as Shabbat comes of its own accord to uplift man, so Hashem took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt without any effort on their part.

Shabbat morning parallels Shavuot. As just noted, the revelation on Pesach came solely of Hashem's initiative, but it was followed by the Omer, when Bnei Yisrael readied themselves for the revelation on Shavuot. Similarly, after one has had a certain amount of holiness thrust upon him on Friday night, he adds holiness of his own accord by the time Shabbat morning comes along.

Finally, Sukkot parallels the future "Shabbat," the World-to- Come. Thus, for example, the gemara (Avodah Zarah 3a) says that, at the End of Days, the gentiles will ask for a mitzvah to keep and Hashem will give them the mitzvah of sukkah.

What does Shemini Atzeret, which is a holiday separate from Sukkot, parallel? Rashi writes that Shemini Atzeret is the farewell feast of a father who does not want to part with his children (i.e., after Sukkot). This parallels the Melaveh Malka meal after Shabbat. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Arzei Ha'levanon II, p. 68)

Pirkei Avot

"If three have eaten at one table and have not spoken words of Torah there, it is as if they have eaten offerings to the dead idols." (Chapter 3, Mishnah 4)

R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l of Dinov (the "Bnei Yissachar"; 1784- 1840) asks: Why does the mishnah refer to people who ate "at one table"? Why didn't the mishnah say simply, "If three have eaten together . . ."? He explains:

"Torah" recited at a "table" ("shulchan") brings blessing. The gematria of "Torah" plus "shulchan" equals 999, only one less than the number 1000, which represents the most complete blessing. (R' Shapira explains this kabbalistically.)

Also, we read in Shir Hashirim (6:10) that the Jewish people are praised as being "brightening like the dawn ('shachar'), beautiful as the moon ('levanah'), brilliant as the sun ('chamah'), awesome as the bannered host of kings ('nidgalot')." Note that the first letters of these four words spell "shulchan."

Commenting on the above mishnah, Rashi writes that it is customary today for people to exempt themselves by "bentching" at the table. R' Ovadiah of Bartenura (14th century) goes even further, writing that one fulfills his obligation to have Torah at the table by bentching. R' Shapira explains:

In the time of the Sages of the Mishnah, each participant in the meal had his own little table, and it was customary to remove the table from the dining room before bentching. Thus, there would be no religious content at the table, and no means to bring about the blessings alluded to above, if one did not recite words of Torah at the table. However, when the Sages saw that people were not reciting Divrei Torah at the table, they instituted a new practice of bentching at the table. (Igra D'Pirka; quoted in Lev Avot p. 52)

R' Yisrael of Shklov z"l

Little is known about the early years of R' Yisrael ben Shmuel of Shklov. He was born in approximately 1770, but his birthplace is unknown. It also is not known who his early teachers were.

R' Yisrael first came to study with the Vilna Gaon in 1797, only six months before the latter's death. During that half- year, however, R' Yisrael was a constant companion of the Gaon. As a result of this close relationship, R' Yisrael is considered to be one of the leading students of the Vilna Gaon.

After the Gaon's death, R' Yisrael took upon himself to publish his teacher's works. Among R' Yisrael's publications was Be'ur Ha'Gra on the Orach Chaim section of Shulchan Aruch.

In 1809, R' Yisrael led the third group from among the Gaon's students to make aliyah. Like its predecessors, the group settled in Tzefat, where the community of the Gaon's students, known as the "Perushim," numbered 40 families. The physical and economic conditions under which these Jews lived were horrific, and only six months after R' Yisrael arrived in Eretz Yisrael, he was prevailed upon to return to Europe as a fundraiser.

R' Yisrael remained in Europe for three years, during which time he published his own and the Gaon's commentaries on Masechet Shekalim. R' Yisrael traveled extensively in Eastern Europe. Despite the fierce ideological dispute raging between the Gaon's students and the Chassidic movement, R' Yisrael was able to reach an understanding with Chassidic leaders regarding the division of charity funds sent to Eretz Yisrael from Europe. (They agreed that all money would be distributed on a per capita basis regardless of the money's origin.)

The period after R' Yisrael returned to Tzefat was one of great personal tragedy. In 1814, Tzefat was struck first by a plague and then by physical disasters, and, in a matter of a few months, R' Yisrael lost his wife, children and parents. He later remarried and began a second family, but the community of Tzefat continued to suffer at the hands of the Arabs and the Druze. The community was further decimated by an earthquake on January 1, 1837 which killed thousands of Jews throughout Eretz Yisrael.

In 1830, R' Yisrael and his colleagues began an effort to locate the "Ten Lost Tribes." A messenger, R' Baruch ben R' Shmuel of Pinsk, departed from Tzefat with a letter of introduction to the king of the Lost Tribes. (The Ten Tribes were believed to have an independent kingdom where they practiced true semichah/ordination of rabbis as handed down from Moshe Rabbenu until the Fourth Century C.E.) R' Baruch traveled through the Middle East for almost three years before he was murdered in Yemen on 8 Shevat 5594 (1834).

R' Yisrael himself died in Teveryah on 9 Sivan 5599 (1839). Among the works he left was Pe'at Ha'shulchan, described by R' Yisrael as a supplement to the Shulchan Aruch covering the laws (primarily agricultural) pertaining to Eretz Yisrael.

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