

A NEW HOUSE

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Emor

A New House

A large portion of this week's parashah is devoted to the holy days: Shabbat, Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Ha'kippurim and Sukkot. Regarding the latter, our parashah says (23:40), "You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree [i.e., an etrog], the branches of date palms [a lulav], twig of a plaited tree [hadassim], and brook willows [aravot]; and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your Elokim, for a seven-day period." From this verse, our Sages derived that taking a lulav and etrog is a mitzvah from the Torah only on the first day of Sukkot, except "before Hashem"--i.e., in the Bet Hamikdash--where it is a mitzvah for all seven days of Sukkot. (However, our Sages ordained that it should be taken every day of Sukkot, except Shabbat, even outside of the Bet Hamikdash.)

Why should the mitzvah be different (on a Torah level) in the Temple and outside of it? R' Avraham Shapira z"l (1914-2007; rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Ha'rav and Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel) explains: The message of Sukkot is that a person needs to build a "new house." Unlike Pesach, which represents sudden dramatic change, the holidays of Tishrei represent painstaking, step-by-step growth. There is Rosh Hashanah, then Yom Kippur, and then Sukkot, which builds up to the crescendo of Simchat Torah. Sukkot, when we build new homes (i.e., our sukkot), teaches us about the possibility of building, of creating. The Bet Hamikdash, likewise, is our "second home," where we build ourselves spiritually. In order to highlight the importance of building "new homes" for ourselves, the Torah gave different laws to our "regular" homes and the Bet Hamikdash. (Imrei Shefer)

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying, 'In the seventh month, on the first of the month, there shall be a rest day for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts, a holy convocation'." (23:24)

R' Moshe Avigdor Amiel z"l (1883-1946; rabbi in Lithuania and Chief Rabbi of Antwerp and Tel Aviv; early Mizrahi leader) writes: Using one shofar, we make two types of sounds--the joyous,

triumphant sound of the tekiah and the wailing cry of the shevarim-teruah. There is only one tool (the shofar), but it can make two, very different, impressions depending on whether the sound that comes out is continuous or interrupted.

This, too, writes R' Amiel, is the difference between those who see the joy of life--the glory, the power, and the happiness within Creation--and those who see only the pain in their lives and in nature. They see the same events, but their perspectives differ. If one sees the Creator and Creation as a unified whole, one sees happiness. (This is alluded to, writes R' Amiel, by our Sages' teaching that "Shalom" / "Harmony" is a Name of G-d.) But, if one sees the world as a series of isolated events, one sees destruction and ruin. (Ezer El Ami: Moadim p.131)

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The midrash Yalkut Shimoni connects our verse with a verse in Tehilim (102:19), "The newborn people will praise Hashem." Says the midrash: In the future, Hashem will enter into a new covenant with the Jewish People. What will be our obligation? To take a lulav and etrog with which to praise Him. [Until here from the midrash]

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) explains: Our Sages ask why Hallel is not recited on Rosh Hashanah as on other festivals, and they answer: "The Books of Life and Death are open; could we say Hallel?!" However, writes R' Kluger, once Sukkot arrives and we feel confident that Hashem, in His mercy, has entered into a new covenant with us and has inscribed us in the Book of Life, we may say Hallel--indeed, we are obligated to say Hallel to praise Hashem for His mercy.

But, there is a problem. On Sukkot, we must say Hallel for a different reason, i.e., because it is a festival. How then will it be known that we are praising Hashem for His mercy also? Therefore, explains R' Kluger, we take a lulav and etrog with which to praise Him. (Kohelet Yaakov: Elul, drush 4)

Pirkei Avot

"Rabbi Yehoshua says, 'An ayin ha'ra / evil eye, the yetzer ha'ra / evil inclination, and hatred of other people remove a person from the world.'" (Ch.2)

R' Shimon bar Tzemach Duran z"l (Rashbatz; 1361-1444) writes: Rambam z"l explains "ayin ha'ra" as "stinginess," the same as the term "ayin ra'ah" that appears earlier in the chapter. Rashbatz continues:

I disagree, and maintain that ayin ha'ra refers to looking at another person's belongings with a "jealous eye." It is well known, writes Rashbatz, that a person can cause harm with his eyes, and there are halachot that are based on this phenomenon (see, for example, Bava Batra 2b and Bava Metzia 30a). Our mishnah says that a person who has an ayin ha'ra will leave this world prematurely because the same power that consumes the belongings of the victims of his evil eye will consume his own bones, as we read in Mishlei (14:30), "Envy brings rotting of the bones." (Magen Avot)

R' Yitzchak Yaakov Reines z"l (1839-1915; rosh yeshiva in Lida, Belarus; founder of the Mizrachi movement) writes: Our mishnah appears to parallel another mishnah in the fourth chapter of Pirkei Avot: "Rabbi Elazar Ha'kappar says, 'Jealousy, lust, and glory remove a person from the world'." Both mishnayot are teaching the same thing, but our mishnah is describing the causes and the later mishnah is describing the effects. For example, hating other people leads to pursuing glory, because a person only can think that other people owe him honor if he can't see their good qualities. A person who loves all people, on the other hand, doesn't elevate himself over them. (Ohr Shivat Ha'yamim, p.xi)

"Rabbi Shimon says, 'Be careful regarding Kri'at Shema . . .'" (Ch.2)

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes: Each person's "perfection" is measured against his own level. However, the perfection of the Jewish People, that which makes them a unique nation in the world, comes about through the combination of the powers of all of them, young and old alike. Only thus can Hashem be sanctified, i.e., through the unity of Klal Yisrael. The perfection achieved by the individual is of no importance compared to what he contributes to the nation's perfection.

R' Kook continues: The way an individual attains his personal perfection is through Torah study. In contrast, the central point that unites the Jewish People is the timely recitation of Kri'at Shema, when the entire nation, almost in unison, declares G-d's Oneness. This is why the Gemara (Berachot 10b) states: "Reciting Kri'at Shema in its proper time is greater than Torah study." (Ain Ayah)

Memoirs

R' Yom Tov Lipman Heller z"l (1578-1654) is best known as the author of the Mishnah commentary Tosafot Yom Tov. In 1629, while serving as rabbi of Prague, he was imprisoned on a false charge. That experience is the subject of his memoir "Megillat Eivah"--literally, "The Scroll of Hatred." In last week's issue, we presented the author's description of the events that

led to divisions in the Jewish community, which he tried unsuccessfully to repair. That, in turn, led some Jews to conspire against him. This week, we read of his arrest.

On Monday, the fourth day of the fourth month, in the year [5]389 [1629], a Jew told me that the police chief was inquiring whether I was at home. That Jew told the police chief, "I don't know. He may be in the bet midrash or the yeshiva, as is his custom. Anyway, why should you go to the rabbi? I will tell the rabbi that you wish to speak to him, and he will come to your house." But the police chief said, "No, I will go to him," the man told me. When I heard these words, I was alarmed. I went to shul and I brought home with me the heads of the community.

Eventually, the police chief arrived in a covered wagon. He remained near my neighbor's house for an hour after dark; then he came to my house. He asked permission, and we said, "Enter!" He shook each and every person's hand pleasantly. I had prepared two chairs, and he sat me to his right. At first we made small talk; then he said, "Sir, I must speak to you in private." I took him to my study. I had already received letters from the holy community in Vienna that day telling me that the Emperor had ordered that I be arrested and brought to Vienna in iron chains. Thus, when the police chief asked to speak to me privately, I sensed that it was about that. I asked him to please deliver his message at the home of Yaakov Bashbi, also known as Yaakov Smilus z"l [a leading member of the community]. The police chief asked me to ride in his wagon to that nobleman's house, but I said, "I will walk, for otherwise I will appear to be your equal." In reality, I was afraid that I might suffer the fate of Rabbi Yehoshua [Bechorot 8b] or the prophet Yirmiyah [Yirmiyah 29:26, i.e., that I would be kidnapped and thrown in a dungeon or taken to the Emperor]. He answered, "I, too, will walk in your honor." . . .

When we came there, he took R' Yaakov aside, and he said, "It pains me greatly, and I am not able to tell the rabbi [i.e., the author] the bad news, for he is a good man in my eyes. You tell him in a way that will not alarm him." -- To be continued --

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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