

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 180

**Chol Hamoed Sukkot -**  
**V'zot Haberachah** | The Uniqueness of Hoshanah Rabbah



# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

שבת חול המועד ושמחת תורה | אנגלית

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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# **Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah**

## **The Month of Tishrei - A Marriage Process**

**Rabbi** Avraham Tzvi Kluger writes as follows ('Otcha Avakesh', page 16):

The holidays of the month of Tishrei form one long sequence during which we draw closer to and cling to G-d step after step.

The process the Jewish people traverse in the month of Tishrei can be compared to a marriage between G-d, so to speak, and the Jewish people.

Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, is the matchmaking stage, where the groom (G-d) examines and confirms whether the bride (the people of Israel) is truly worthy.

During the blowing of the shofar, the bride, the Jewish people, present their virtues before the groom.

The shofar recalls the merit of our forefathers, the noteworthy lineage of the bride.

It also recalls the bride's own glorious past; she received the Torah

at Mount Sinai and now crowns G-d, accepting upon herself to be a woman of valor, devoted to her husband's will.

G-d indeed details the initial marriage commitment, inscribing the people of Israel in the Book of the Righteous.

The Jewish people, the bride, commit to accepting G-d's sovereignty and authority over them, and in return, G-d commits to providing them a good life and meeting all their needs.

The seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are like the seven days of ritual preparation, during which the Jewish people examine their actions and cleanse themselves of any impurity.

The eve of Yom Kippur is the time of the final preparation for purification, and Yom Kippur itself is the day of purification.

The sukkah that shelters us is the chuppah (wedding canopy) between G-d

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and the Jewish people. The rejoicing that follows at Simchat Beit HaSho'eva corresponds to the wedding festivities.

The festival of Sukkot lasts for seven days, corresponding to the seven wedding blessings recited under the chuppah.

On Hoshana Rabbah, one's judgment is finalized, similar to the writing of the ketubah (marriage contract).

On Shemini Atzeret, the "mitzvah dance", traditionally held after the wedding event, is

performed, and it is also the day of unity, the day when our connection with G-d is completed.

The seven days of Sukkot are joyful wedding-like days, and the parents and ancestors of all of the Jewish people, the holy Ushpizin, come to participate in the joy.

The Ushpizin are the seven righteous founders, leaders, and shepherds of all of the Jewish people:

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, and David.

### The Ushpizin - Seven Shepherds

**We** quote from Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz ('Or Pnei Melech', page 111):

The seven Ushpizin (guests) that we invite to join us during the seven days of the festival of Sukkot are the seven shepherds mentioned in the book of Micah (5:4).

But who are these shepherds, and what is their connection to the festival of Sukkot?

The 'seven shepherds' are well-known figures from Jewish history.

What distinguishes the 'seven shepherds' from other Jewish leaders throughout history is that they are not only an integral part of history, but in an inner sense, they continue to be the leaders of the Jewish people in every generation, including our time.

We invite them to manifest because we see them as present.

Not as memories from the past, but as those who directly relate to and have influence upon the soul of each one of us.

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The shepherds are the fathers of all of us, of all Jewish souls, whether they are our biological fathers of us all, like the three patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - or our spiritual fathers and guides, like Joseph and David.

In either case, we carry a part of their essence within ourselves; they are not external figures but components of our inner being.

We invite the seven shepherds to be our guests during the festival of Sukkot, when under the shade of the sukkah, 'the shadow of the Al-mighty'.

To extend this invitation, we need to go out to a place that is outside of the ordinary, outside the usual order of life.

There we build a temporary structure, covering it with organic shade, which serves as G-d's protective hand, as it is written: "And I have covered you in the shadow of My hand" (Isaiah 51:16).

It is specifically there that we meet ourselves, not as we are throughout the year, but our true selves, as we exist within the spiritual entity of our

forefathers, the ultimate essence of what we truly are.

The festival of Sukkot is called the festival of gathering, because in it we gather together all the parts of reality.

It is a festival of reconciliation, in which all things are placed in their proper place, and reality reconnects as a whole.

In this festival, all the Ushpizin come together, and to receive them, we must gather within ourselves all these various parts of our existence.

We open the door and invite them into the sukkah, one by one, to come and join us at the source and place that includes all of us, and give us all that they have to give.

The seven shepherds sustain the Jewish people with the powers of the soul, and are responsible for the seven holy emotions, through which the souls of Israel connect to their Father in Heaven.

Abraham our forefather is responsible for the attribute of love in the soul – love of G-d, the Torah, and the Jewish people.

Isaac is responsible for the attribute of fear.

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Jacob is responsible for the attribute of mercy.

Moses is responsible for the attribute of victory, which as the verse states: "The Glory of Israel does not lie or change His mind" (1 Samuel 15:29), gives inner strength to a Jew to stand firm against all that prevents him from serving his Creator.

Aaron is responsible for the attribute of simplicity and thanksgiving.

Joseph is responsible for the attribute of connection and truth.

Finally, David is responsible for the attribute of humility.

The seven Ushpizin manifest during the seven days of the festival of Sukkot, and help the Jewish people to connect to G-d on a higher level.

We will continue to elaborate on a unique manner in which the great power of the Ushpizin can be manifest.

### **The Work of Charity on Sukkot**

**In** a sermon delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram Abergel, he said as follows ('Imrei Noam, Moadim - Sukkot', article 2):

It is well known that it is a great obligation for every person to increase in giving to charity before each festival and ensure that the table of the poor and needy is as full and abundant as his own.

The Midrash (Tanchuma, Re'eh 18) teaches that a person has four household members: his son, daughter, servant, and maidservant.

Correspondingly, G-d has four 'household' members: the Levite (in

our days, these are the Torah scholars), the convert, the orphan, and the widow.

G-d says to every person: If you make My four household members happy during the festivals by giving them a generous and respectable portion of your wealth so that they can buy the needs of the festival generously, I will also make your four household members happy during the festival, ensuring that you have health, joy, and peace at home.

But if you only care for yourself, filling your storehouses with fine meats, fruits, and delicacies for the festival, while ignoring the poor and

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needy, I will also remove My blessing from your home, G-d forbid.

This applies to every festival, however, on Sukkot, the obligation to give to the needy is even greater.

On every festival, G-d demands that a person give to the poor, but on Sukkot, in addition to G-d, the Ushpizin also demand it.

The Zohar (Emor 104a) states that during the festival of Sukkot, the Ushpizin come to visit the sukkot of the Jewish people, and when they arrive and see that the host has given nothing to the poor, they are shocked and leave the sukkah.

In contrast, one who merits giving a respectable portion of his meal to the poor during the festival of Sukkot, brings joy to G-d and the Ushpizin, who then join him in his sukkah.

Therefore, every person must strive to bring joy to the poor during the festival of Sukkot, and each day of the seven days of Sukkot, one should prepare a generous portion for the poor and say, "This portion is in honor of today's Ushpizin."

If a person is concerned that he might not encounter poor people during the festival, he can follow the advice of the Rabbi Eliezer Papo, who wrote in "Pele Yoetz":

"One should take a significant sum of money before the festival, divide it into seven parts, and for each part should say, "This is for Abraham, the holy Ushpizin," and so on for the portions of Isaac, Jacob, and the other Ushpizin.

He should then give all of it to charity before the onset of the festival.

In this context, the story is told about Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, whose generous charity giving was renowned.

Even when his household came by with great frugality and hardship, he would generously distribute charity with a joyous heart to the many poor and needy who came to his door by the hundreds and thousands.

On the eve of Sukkot especially, he would exert himself in acts of charity, since according to the writings of the Arizal, one must give charity especially on this day. He would distribute all the cash he had to charity, down to the last penny, and

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additionally, would make efforts to obtain loans, sometimes even pawning his own possessions for this purpose.

Everything he could obtain in any way, he would distribute to the poor.

Once, on the eve of Sukkot, his son approached him and said, "Father, I have not seen in the holy books that there is a mitzvah to distribute charity even after all one's money has run out."

His father reproached him, saying, "I am amazed at how a son can be so

'callous' towards his father. Don't you see that your father has a great lack in the areas of Torah and barely has a trace of fear of Heaven, and the one small positive point of charity that he has, you want to prevent from him?"

On the night of the festival, when Rabbi Chaim of Sanz had settled in his sukkah, he joyously declared, "People usually beautify their sukkahs with all kinds of decorations and splendor, but for me, the charity that I do on the eve of the festival is the beauty, splendor, and decoration of my sukkah."

### **The Importance of Charity on Sukkot**

**My** father continued:

Since the time when we were exiled from our land and distanced from our soil, in our many sins, the holy Shechinah went into exile.

There are two mitzvot that support and uphold the Shechinah during its exile: the mitzvah of charity and the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah.

These two mitzvot have one intention and aim - 'to raise up the fallen sukkah of David.'

Meaning:

The Shechinah, the Divine revelation of G-d, called 'the sukkah of David (Amos 9:11),' is cast down into the garbage heaps and its honor is lowered to the dust during the exile, due to our many sins. It is then called "the fallen sukkah of David".

Our task is to increase our study of Torah properly, perform mitzvot with joy, and increase good deeds, so that we may merit to bring the complete redemption and the building of the third Temple, the



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time when the Shechinah will rise up from the dust and return to her royal glory.

The mitzvah of charity has the special power to achieve this, as the Arizal explained:

"Therefore, one should give charity while standing, because the purpose (of giving charity) is to strengthen the poor, which essentially refers to the Shechinah and the spiritual attribute of 'Malchut'.

The kingdom has fallen mightily due to our many sins, and therefore one should give charity while standing to raise and stand it up."

The mitzvah of the sukkah similarly, has the special power to achieve this, since the Shechinah is compared to a sukkah, as mentioned above.

When a person builds a beautiful and decorated sukkah and sits in it in the fulfillment of the commandment, with joy and good will, he raises that Divine sukkah, the Shechinah, from its fall in exile.

Since the mitzvah of the sukkah and the mitzvah of charity share the same intention - to raise the

Shechinah from the dust - there is a special significance in increasing charity during the festival of Sukkot, even more than at other times.

Through increasing the giving of charity during Sukkot, we shall merit the fulfillment of the prophecy in Amos: "On that day I will raise up the fallen sukkah of David, and close up its breaches, and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it up as in the days of old" (Amos 9:11).

This can be connected to what the Tur (Orach Chaim, Siman 490) wrote in the name of Rabbeinu Hai Gaon:

"I heard from the sages that the resurrection of the dead is destined to be in Nissan, and the victory of the war of Gog and Magog in Tishrei, and therefore in Nissan we read the haftarah of "the dry bones" and in Tishrei "on the day of the coming of Gog."

This means that according to our tradition the war of Gog and Magog will be during the festival of Sukkot.

Anyone who is particularly careful with the mitzvah of the

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sukkah, making it beautiful and rejoicing in sitting in it, will merit to be saved from this war.

This is hinted at in the verse: "For He will hide me in His sukkah in the day of evil; He will conceal me in the secret of His tent" (Psalms 27:5), meaning that

through the sukkah, G-d will hide and protect a person from the enemies that will come on that 'day of evil' during the war of Gog and Magog.

The final day of Sukkot is 'Hoshana Rabbah', which we will discuss below at length.

**The Significance of Hoshana Rabbah Night**

**We** quote from "Imrei Noam" (Festivals, Sukkot - Discourse 7) by Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel, of blessed memory:

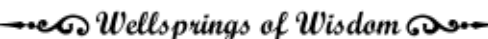
The seventh day of the Sukkot holiday is called by our sages: 'Hoshana Rabbah'.

The plain reason for this is because on this day we have the custom to circle the Bimah after the morning prayer seven times (unlike the other days of the holiday when we circle only once each day).

In each such circuit, we recite the word 'Hoshana' several times, and therefore it is called 'Hoshana Rabbah' meaning many 'Hoshana's (Kaf HaChaim 664:1).

However, on a deeper level, the Ben Ish Chai explains<sup>1</sup> that this day marks the final day of the fifty-one days of favor that the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave the people of Israel in His great kindness to repent, and have their 'Teshuva' accepted.

These days are: the thirty days of the month of Elul, and the twenty-one days of the month of Tishrei until the day of Hoshana Rabbah, which is the fifty-first day. It is therefore called Hoshana Rabbah - or 'A Salvation on the great fifty-first day.' It is indeed a great and lofty day, being that 'everything follows the conclusion'.



1. First year, Parshat V'Zot HaBracha, 1.

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To elaborate on this in more depth:

Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Ariza"l) wrote the following (Pri Etz Chaim, Sha'ar HaLulav - Chapter 4):

"There are three times when people are judged, namely: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Hoshana Rabbah.

On Rosh Hashanah, the ruling for a person's entire year is written.

On Yom Kippur, this ruling is sealed with what is called the 'inner seal'.

On the night of Hoshana Rabbah at midnight, this ruling is sealed with an additional seal called the 'outer seal' (a 'seal within a seal') and is then handed over to the angels to execute."<sup>2</sup>

The Ariza"l continues:

"Know that even if, G-d forbid, a bad decree has been issued against a

person, through doing Teshuva on Hoshana Rabbah, he will merit to have that decree torn up and will instead merit a good and blessed year."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, it is the Jewish custom to stay awake on the night of Hoshana Rabbah and engage in Torah study, and prayers and supplications to sweeten all judgments and to merit to receive a good and blessed year.

It is most recommended for one to come to the synagogue to learn and pray together with the congregation with much joy and enthusiasm.

The most proper way to conduct the order of study on this night was established by the holy Ariza"l.

At the start of the night one should read the entire book of Deuteronomy (also called the 'Mishneh Torah').

It is through this reading that the main spiritual rectification of this day is achieved.

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**2. The** holy Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, of blessed memory writes (Bnei Yissaschar, 'Maamarei Tishrei - 12:2):

**"There** are three times of decrees of the heavenly court: on Rosh Hashanah one's

judgment is written, on Yom Kippur it is sealed and on Hoshana Rabbah is the final sealing together with the delivery of the verdicts, as mentioned in the Zohar (Tzav

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Then, a little before midnight, one recites the 'prayers of the Shema before retiring at night'.

After that, one reads a collection of Midrashim of our sages, followed by the 'Idra Zuta', and

concludes with the reading of the entire book of Psalms, divided into seven parts.

After each part, one says Selichot and mentions the various merits that stand for us to merit us all with a good and blessed judgment.

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**3. Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin**, of blessed memory, relates the tale ('Sippurei Chassidim, Moadim', p. 190):

"**The** disciples of the Baal Shem Tov were praying on Rosh Hashanah and one of them had dropped his snuffbox and bent down to pick it up.

**Another** disciple saw this and was distressed and upset by this, thinking to himself that this was an unjustified interruption of the prayers.

**The** Baal Shem Tov, with his Divine spirit, saw that the distress of this righteous disciple had caused a severe decree of capital punishment in Heaven upon his friend with the snuffbox.

**In** his soul's ascension, the Baal Shem Tov argued fervently in Heaven for his friend, but all to no avail.

**A** few weeks had passed and on the night of Hoshana Rabbah, the Baal Shem Tov was notified, that if the accusing disciple would only find a merit for his fellow disciple who had caused him distress, his evil verdict would be torn up and he would be sentenced for a good life.

**The** clock moved rapidly, and the night was turning toward sunrise.

**The** Baal Shem Tov entered the study hall and found the disciple who had been angered, engaged in the study of Hoshana Rabbah night.

**The** Baal Shem Tov performed certain actions, and suddenly a dreadful spiritual darkness enveloped this disciple.

**The** disciple summoned all his inner strength and used all his might, but in vain! The words merely flickered before his eyes, and his heart was filled with reluctance.

**He** rose and began to pace the study hall, pondering:

**Why** was the tobacco plant revealed in this last generation for sniffing and smoking?

**He** then surmised that surely there were some great souls whose rectification in this world is through delicate and subtle substances like pleasant scents. When sniffed for the sake of Heaven, such as in prayer, this causes an elevation to these lofty souls, as the incense in the temple, which was 'a fire offering, a pleasing aroma to the L-rd.'

## The Terrifying Cities of Canaan

**Tomer** entered the synagogue sukkah, and as per the custom, opened a Chumash Devarim, and began to read.

It was the night of Hoshana Rabbah.

He had read but a few verses and reached the verse:

"Where do we go? Our brethren

have made our hearts melt, saying, 'The people are greater and taller than we are; the cities are great and fortified up to the heavens, and we have also seen the sons of the giants there'" (Deuteronomy 1:28).

Tomer stopped and pondered the meaning of the verse:

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**He** then reflected and regretted his distress and anger over his friend's snuffing during prayer, and instead wondered which soul or spiritual effect his friend might have elevated.

**On** Hoshana Rabbah day, the Baal Shem Tov would answer questions from his disciples about hidden and sublime matters, about heavenly decrees and matters of the world, being able to see from one end of the world to the other.

**Each** disciple prepared a question, whether in Torah or other matters, and he would answer them all. The above disciple raised his voice, and asked: 'Master and Rabbi, why was the tobacco plant revealed in this last generation?'

**The** Baal Shem Tov replied: 'Please, you tell me.'

**The** disciple shared some of his thoughts on the matter.

**The** Baal Shem Tov said: 'Tell us the entire matter from the beginning.'

**He** then shared the whole story, how he had initially felt upset with his friend and then regretted it and found a merit for him.

**The** Baal Shem Tov then said: 'Know that there was a great accusation in Heaven against your friend because of your distress and anger, and now the accusation has been nullified.'

**From** now on, I urge you to always judge your friends favorably and not awaken judgments against them.'

**Rabbi** Isaac of Komarno, when recounting this story, said:

**'This** is what the Torah says: "You shall not bear a sin unto him" (Leviticus 19:17), meaning do not judge your friend unfavorably and incite evil decrees against your friend.'

**Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - What Did They Fear ?**

It occurred at the beginning of the second year of the Israelites' sojourn in the wilderness.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of the month of Sivan Moses had sent spies to explore the land of Canaan.

The spies reached the land of Canaan and roamed it for 40 days. They took mental images of all the important places, checked the various weak spots, and took samples of its bounty.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of Av, the spies returned to the Israelite camp.

All of the people of Israel gathered around them, excited and eager to hear words of encouragement and optimism. However, instead, the spies instilled fear and spread terror in their hearts.

"You all must know that 'great and tall people' live there, inside 'great and fortified cities up to the heavens'. Between the green fields walk giant creatures, extremely tall people, and the

city walls rise up high up to the heavens.

So please listen to our recommendation, and abandon this failed idea.

We have no chance of dealing with them, none at all."

Night soon fell, stars illuminated the sky, and the Israelites sat on the ground, each family by their tent entrance, and began to weep and lament their fate, 'How did we get entangled with the land of Israel ?'

The punishment was not long in coming: "G-d heard the sound of your words and was angry and swore, saying, 'Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land which I swore to give to your fathers'"  
(Deuteronomy 1:34-35).

The immense fear and trepidation of entering the land that was aroused in the hearts of the people of Israel caused them to be punished and spend the rest of their lives in the yellow sands of the wilderness of the Sinai desert.

**What Did They Fear ?**

**Tomer** had many questions about the verses he had just read.

However, he knew that if he wanted to finish the book of

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Devarim before midnight, he had to continue reciting the following verses and chapters.

But his eyes kept glancing at the verses detailing the story of the spies and tried to find an explanation that would satisfy the mystery gnawing at his mind:

'What were they so afraid of; Why were they so petrified?'

Only a year beforehand, in the month of Sivan, the Israelites had arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, and received the Torah, together with the first and second tablets, all given to them directly from G-d.

Six months after receiving the second tablets, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nissan, the Mishkan was erected, a holy edifice for the permanent dwelling of the Divine presence that would dwell within the Jewish encampment.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, more than a month later, they departed Mount

Sinai and continued on their way to the land of Israel.

Seven clouds of glory had surrounded them - six clouds on their six sides, and one cloud went before them clearing the way - lowering the high and mighty mountains, and turning them into fine dust, a pile of loose sand.

Throughout this entire period, the Israelites saw the power and glory of the Creator most palpably - "For You, L-rd, are in the midst of this people, who have seen You, eye to eye, L-rd, and Your cloud constantly stands over them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night" (Numbers 14:14).

Having witnessed such great and lofty revelations and the great Divine might, how could there still be any room for fear of mere mortals of flesh and blood who dwelled in Canaan? What were they so afraid of?'

**Various Spellings of 'Fortifications'**

**Tomer** went over to the shelf of the Torah commentaries in search of an explanation.

The book, "Heichal HaBracha," written by Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Komarno, caught his eye.

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He opened it and began to read the following:<sup>4</sup>

When the spies returned from their mission, they gathered all of Israel and told them with sad and solemn faces: "Know that the cities there are very high and fortified, using the word 'בְּצוּרוֹת' - 'Betzurot' - 'fortified'.

The Torah, which is a Torah of truth, in which every word is precise and exact, uses this term on three separate occasions:

The first time, in Parshat Shelach:

"The people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large, and we saw the descendants of the giants there" (Numbers 13:28).

The second time, in Parshat Devarim:

"Where do we go? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, 'The people are greater and taller than we are; the cities are great and fortified up to the heavens, and we

have also seen the sons of the giants there'" (Deuteronomy 1:28).

The third time is in Parshat Ekev:

"Hear, people of Israel: You are crossing the Jordan today to go in and dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified up to the heavens" (Deuteronomy 9:1).

In the Tanach, the word 'בְּצוּרוֹת' appears in all four spelling variations:

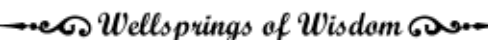
In the book of Ezekiel, it is written with two Vavs: "בְּצוּרוֹת" (Ezekiel 36:35).

In the words of the spies (the first example brought above), it is written 'בְּצוּרוֹת', without a first Vav.

In the words of Moses (the second example above), it is written 'בְּצוּרוֹת', without a second Vav.

And in Parshat Ekev (third example above), 'בְּצוּרוֹת' is written without either Vav.

Timer had a hunch that in this description of the walled cities, lies the reason for the fear the Jewish people had of the Holy land.



4. Deuteronomy 1:28.



## Three Levels in Divine Vitality

**As** an introduction, we will meditate upon the Divine will in the creation of the world.

In the morning prayers, we recite:<sup>5</sup>

"You were before the world was created, and You are after the world was created."

Meaning: Just as before creation, the only reality that existed was the Creator, so too after creation, the only true reality is that of the Creator.

This is because even after creating the world, He continues to animate and sustain all of creation at every moment, and if He were to stop, even for a moment, G-d forbid, all of creation would cease to exist entirely. Therefore, even today, the sole true reality is that of the Creator.

The Divine vitality that animates all of creation, is divided into three levels:

1. The innermost Divine will - the vitality bestowed upon the people of Israel.

2. The outer Divine will - the vitality bestowed upon most of the creations of the world.

3. The 'begrudging' Divine will - the vitality bestowed upon the forces of impurity.

To explain:

The source of the spiritual vitality that sustains all of existence is the infinite power of the Creator.

However, if this power were to be revealed in the world as it is, the world would not exist, and all the creations within it would be completely nullified due to their inability to contain such a lofty light.

How, then, do limited creations receive their vitality from the infinite light of the Creator?

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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5. The following is excerpted from 'Be'er HaChasidut', Volume 1 - page 176. It summarizes what the 'Tzemach Tzedek'

of blessed memory (Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch) wrote in 'Derech Mitzvotecha' - 'Mitzvas Vidui u'Teshuvah'.

## Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - Three Levels in Divine Vitality

The teachings of Kabbalah explain at great length how vitality flows from the 'Ein Sof' (infinite) to the limited and finite creation, all according to the 'Kav HaMiddah' (limit and measurement).

'Kav HaMiddah' is a spiritual force by which the Creator measures and evaluates the quantity and quality of vitality that will flow from the 'Ein Sof' to each stage and level in creation, each in accordance to its nature and form, both physical or spiritual.

The people of Israel involve the innermost desire of the Creator.

As our Sages declare: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, desired to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds" (Midrash Tanchuma, Naso, 16) - G-d created the world so that the people of Israel, through their good deeds and Divine service, make the world worthy of the revelation of His light.

Hence, the people of Israel, draw their spiritual vitality from G-d's innermost will, in an aspect of 'Panim' (face), as it's called in Kabbalistic terminology.

Most of the world's creations, however, receive their vitality from the outer Divine will.

This is because they are not the main purpose of creation, but exist so that there be a world in which the people of Israel carry out their mission.

The world itself does not derive its life force from the innermost Divine will, since it alone is not the ultimate purpose of creation. The world is merely the means through which the ultimate purpose of creation is realized.

Then there are the impure powers.

The forces of impurity in the world unmistakably receive their vitality from the Creator too, and are given a measured and most limited amount of vitality so that they exist.

But the vitality they receive is given 'begudging', and the Divine energy that they are given is in an aspect of 'backwardness', meaning given to them compulsorily, without desire.

On the one hand, these impure powers need to receive their vitality from G-d in order to exist, but on the other hand, He gives them their vitality 'unwillingly', for He does not

Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - Three Levels in Divine Vitality

truly desire to give life to the 'klipot' - the impure powers, being that their entire existence is diametrically opposed to holiness.

G-d truly despises them, yet despite this, He 'must' - so to speak - provide them with vitality so that there be 'free choice' in the world.

Our Sages additionally teach that when a person sins, the forces of impurity powers receive an increased spiritual vitality – more than what was originally allocated to them, causing great pain to the Divine Presence.

A Jew's soul, which he carries within him, 'is a part of G-d', and is always connected to the Holy One, Blessed be He – even at the time of sin.

But when a Jew sins, the great powers of holiness that are bestowed to him get diverted to the impure powers that are opposed to G-d.

The Ba'al HaTanya illustrates what happens to a person's soul at the time of sin (Likutei Amarim – Chapter 24):

"It is as if one grabs the king's head, brings it down, and buries his face in a toilet full of excrement – for the impure powers and the 'sitra achra' (i.e. the other side) are called 'vomit and filth', as is known - there is no greater insult than this, even if it is done only momentarily."

When a person commits a transgression, G-d forbid, not only do they fail to achieve their purpose and deviate from the reason for which they were created, but they also draw down additional Divine vitality directly to the impure powers, strengthening their existence, and sustaining them with additional power, more than what it was allocated through the 'Kav HaMiddah'.<sup>6</sup>

...*Wellsprings of Wisdom*...

**6. In** those days, many Jews made a living by running inns and taverns.

**In** almost every town in Russia and the neighboring countries, there was a Jew who owned such a business and earned a livelihood from it.

**One** day, the cruel Russian czar decided to expel Jews from the townlets and villages and move them by force to live in the larger cities.

**Due** to this decree, tens of thousands of Jews were left without a livelihood, and in utter poverty.

## Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - Three Levels in Divine Vitality

**Rabbi** Shneur Zalman of Liadi, author of the Tanya, set out at once on a journey across the country to collect money to help the destitute families and to bribe the officials to mitigate and not carry out the dreadful decree.

**During** his travels, he reached the Volhynia region near the city of Toltshin.

**Toltshin** was the residence of the holy Rabbi Baruch, the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, and Rabbi Shneur Zalman visited the city to meet Rabbi Baruch.

**Rabbi** Baruch received him with great respect and, among other things, asked him: 'Why have you come into my territory?'

**Rabbi** Shneur Zalman replied: 'Firstly, because "the earth and everything in it belongs to the L-rd" (Psalms 24:1).

**Secondly**, I could not bear the suffering of the poor who are expelled from their homes, and I am collecting money to use as bribes to alleviate the decree.'

**Rabbi** Baruch said to him, 'But can we not mitigate evil decrees by passing a hand over the forehead, in great spiritual devotion, as my grandfather the Baal Shem Tov would do? Why do we need money?'

**Rabbi** Shneur Zalman responded, 'Our forefather Jacob certainly could mitigate the decrees spiritually, but he still said: "This is a gift sent to my master Esau... I will appease him" (Genesis 32:19-21), and did not rely on the mitigation of the decrees by merely passing a hand over his forehead.'

**Rabbi** Baruch replied, 'But could you not teach them the Unity of G-d, in its highest form, as taught and promulgated by my grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, and then the decrees would be naturally mitigated?'

**Rabbi** Shneur Zalman was silent for a moment and then said:

'**On** the contrary, it was precisely because of this "Unity of the Divine" of your grandfather that the decree was issued.'

**He** then told the following story:

**After** the expulsion of Jews from Spain, none of the countries or kingdoms wanted to accept them.

**The** inner reason for this was that the spiritual ministers of these nations (the angels in charge of the nations) did not want them, saying that when the Jews settle in a country, they build study houses and synagogues, learn and pray, and declare the oneness of G-d, thereby nullifying the existence of these spiritual ministers like the nullification of darkness before the light of holiness. For this reason no kingdoms wanted to accept the Jews.

**However**, the minister of Poland felt differently and said: 'I am not afraid of them; on the contrary, I will derive spiritual power from the Jews if I accept them. They will trade and commit fraud; surely, they will also establish yeshivas and learn Torah, but not for its true sake. They will build synagogues, pray, and recite the Shema and declare "G-d is one," but without proper intention. So, on the contrary, I will derive great spiritual energy from them,' and he at once agreed to accept them.

## The Greatness of Prayer

**This** understanding of how the impure powers derive their vitality, explains what is famously brought in the Talmud (Berachot 32b):

"Our rabbis taught; The early pious ones would wait an hour (before prayers), pray for an hour, and again linger for an hour (after prayers)."

The question is well-known:

The hour-long preparation before prayer can be understood since

prayers require one to focus and utilize all their powers and need great preparation.

The hour-long prayer is also understandable – for with prayer, they achieved an exaltedness and great spiritual heights, which presumably, take much time.<sup>7</sup>

But why did they linger an entire hour after prayer, what purpose did this serve?

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**In** accordance with his spiritual minister above, the King of Poland agreed to accept the Jews.

**He** demanded a large bribe, requiring a pile of silver coins as tall as a Cossack with a raised spear on a horse. They gave it to him, and were allowed to settle in the country.

**Thus**, the Jews came to Poland, built synagogues and study houses, learned and prayed, and recited the Shema, but all of this was not performed properly, and the minister of Poland was satisfied because his plan was fulfilled.

**Then** your grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, came and taught the Jewish people the deeper meaning of the "Oneness of G-d".

**Suddenly**, the heavenly minister of Poland claimed that he had been deceived and did not want to keep them

any longer. It is for this reason that the ministers below began to expel the Jews.

**Thus**, on the contrary, the "Unity of G-d" as taught by your grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, caused the decree of expulsion to be reissued upon the Jews. Hence, a bribe is once again needed to cancel the decree. ('Shmuot V'Sippurim', Part 2 - p. 38, by Rabbi Raphael Nachman Cohen)."

**7. To** quote the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, 98:1):

**"One** who prays must focus his heart on the meaning of the words he utters with his lips and imagine as if the Divine Presence is before him.

**He** should remove all distracting thoughts until his intention and thoughts are pure in his prayer.

**Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - The Greatness of Prayer**

Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Komarno explained it in this manner:<sup>8</sup>

The Holy One, Blessed be He, sealed and closed the upper Divine springs of vitality that bestow life upon the world (with the spiritual configuration that is signified with the letter vav), to prevent the descent of spiritual influence to undesirable places.

However, man is given the key to open these springs, and this is through the prayer of Amidah.

However, to use this key, three stages are necessary:

1. The first stage is to learn Torah with love and awe of the Al-mighty before prayer, in order to have proper mindfulness during prayer.

Through inner devotion to the Infinite Light within the letters of the Torah, one merits the joy of cleaving to the inner light of the Divine, and

merits that spiritual flames of fire surround him, as written in the Zohar (Lech Lecha 94b):

"Rabbi Abba's face would be aflame from the joy of the Torah study, and his friends saw the face of the Shechinah, and were themselves surrounded by fire."

2. The second stage is the prayer itself.

When one reaches the Amidah prayer, he stands face to face before the Divine presence, purified and nullified, without any thought of self, and merits a true union, face to face, with the Holy One, Blessed be He.

3. The third stage is the hour-long delay following prayer:

Following the divine service of prayer, the forces of impurity detect the great divine lights that have been drawn down, and gather around the

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**He** should consider that if he were speaking before a king of flesh and blood, he would arrange his words and focus on them properly to avoid stumbling, all the more so before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who examines all thoughts.

**The** pious and exalted men would isolate themselves and focus on their prayers until they reached a state of detachment from physicality and an overwhelming intellectual force, approaching the level of prophecy."

**8.** See also 'Netiv Mitzvotcha' (Netiv Eemunah, 1:8).

Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - The Greatness of Prayer

person, seeking an opportunity to leech them from him.

The Baal Shem Tov revealed to us that following devoted and sublime prayers, the evil powers try to make the person fall with feelings of pride or anger, and if they succeed, they then draw from him all these influences.<sup>9</sup>

The early pious ones felt with every prayer the ensuing difficult and bitter battle – against pride or anger, and that G-d's assistance is

required to help them succeed in this battle.

They would therefore wait an hour after prayer and engage in Torah study, for it was revealed from Heaven, that the power to close and seal the opening of the upper divine influences from the lowly impure powers is the letters of the Torah. This causes all foreign and unwanted characteristics of pride, anger, and ugly desires, to not take control of a person.

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**9. When** one causes distress to another Jew, even for the sake of Heaven, the sin is severe no less! Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, of blessed memory, once spoke about this ('Sichot Mussar' 74):

"**The** severity of offenses between a person and his fellow Jew are truly great, and good intentions do not lessen this transgression.

**Even** if this is done intentionally for the sake of Heaven, as we find with Penina, of whom the sages said she intended for the sake of Heaven (Baba Batra 16a); she was nonetheless punished severely and all of her children died, as it is written: 'She who had many children suffers' (I Samuel 2:5).

**This** is the case even though Penina was a righteous person, and it must have been very difficult for her to cause distress

to Chana, and her sole intention was to cause Chana to pray, as it is said: 'And her rival [Penina] also provoked her sorely, to make her distressed' (I Samuel 1:6), which Rashi interprets (Baba Batra 16a): 'To make her complain about her barrenness and pray.'

**This** was indeed a great self-sacrifice on Penina's part, yet her punishment was still so severe.

**Why?** Because one who harms his fellow, regardless of his intentions, it is like putting his hand into a fire; good intentions do not change anything.

**The** punishment for offenses between a person and his fellow is a natural phenomenon and reality, just as much as fire naturally does burn."

**Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - The Greatness of Torah Study**

Similarly, every Jew must after prayers utter words of the Torah, like Mishnah or Halacha, and

through this, be protected from the forces of impurity, so that they do not bring him down.

### The Greatness of Torah Study

**The** second influences, or wellsprings from below, are the most wondrous creations that G-d created and formed - undoubtedly the Torah.

The Torah contains within it all wisdoms, treasures and secrets, and encompasses all three dimensions – time, space, and body.

After creating the Torah, He created the people of Israel and gave them the ability to learn the Torah.

It was G-d's will that the people of Israel receive the wisdom of the Torah from the 'lower spring'.

When a Jew merits to connect to this spring, an inner flow of Torah

innovations with sharpness and novelties is revealed within him, and he merits to feel sweetness, pleasantness, and peace, as the verse states: "Your Torah is better for me than thousands of gold and silver pieces" (Psalms 119:72).

However, to prevent the forces of impurity from drawing from the Torah, G-d sealed this spring with the second letter Vav, as mentioned earlier.

To open this spring, one's heart must be broken into fragments, to the point where he becomes humble and nullified before every soul of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

And now, we return to the words of the spies.

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**10.** In a discourse delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel of blessed memory, he said ('Imrei Noam', Vayera - Essay 9):

**"When** a person performs a commandment, studies Torah, prays, etc., it is as if he offered a sacrifice to G-d.

**The** initial act of offering a sacrifice is slaughtering it.

**Just** as with the act of slaughtering, if there is any flaw in the knife, the animal slaughtered becomes unfit and forbidden to eat and be offered on the



## Everything is Sealed and Closed

**Now** we can understand better the deep fear and trepidation that took over the Jewish people upon hearing the report of the spies.

The spies had returned to the Jewish encampment in the wilderness and surveyed the people of Israel crowded around them.

Then, with tearful voices, they began to speak, as all waited with bated breaths:

“G-d in His mercy, redeemed us from Egypt and brought us into this wilderness. In His great kindness,

He rested His holy Shechinah upon us and gave us His wondrous and sweet Torah.

In our current circumstances, we enjoy every moment under the wings of our compassionate and loving Father who takes such great care of us and fulfills all our spiritual and physical needs.

Both the upper springs of spiritual enlightenment and the lower springs of personal Divine service are open to us, and all the spiritual and material influences are unceasingly flowing upon us.

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altar, likewise, in the service of G-d - if a person harbors any hatred, however slight, to another, his spiritual service is unfit and unworthy, and is cast away from G-d's presence.

**Unfortunately**, there are many who are scholars, righteous, and pious, yet their Torah and commandments are considered unfit and forbidden, because they lack love for their fellow Jew.

**If** they then teach Torah in public, they are feeding people of Israel unfit and forbidden things.

**Therefore**, when the righteous perform any commandment, they first take upon

themselves the commandment of 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18).

**Just** as a slaughterer, before slaughtering an animal or bird, must first check that the knife in his hand is not flawed, similarly, checking one's knife spiritually means to verify that one is complete in his love for the people of Israel.

**The** same is true all the more so, when coming to pray, and one must first check that there is love in their heart for every individual Jew, for only then will his prayer be like a sacrifice that will ascend on high and bear fruit."

**Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - Everything is Sealed and Closed**

But now, when suddenly, in the midst of all this wonderful delight, Moses came and announced:

"Prepare yourselves, for in a few days, we are entering the land of Israel."

You all gathered around, were not at ease with this and sent us to scout out and see what is the conditions in the land of Israel.

We arrived there, and to our horror, we discovered that the land of Israel is dark and gloomy, spiritually speaking.

There, in the land of Israel, both the upper and the lower spiritual springs – are sealed and closed off. Thus, they worried greatly about their spiritual future, for both spiritual inspiration and assistance in their personal Divine service would be greatly lacking.

This is represented by the two letters of Vav that are missing in the word - 'בצורות' - 'fortified' in the two verses we quoted above that recount the tale of the spies:

The upper spring being sealed off is signified by the missing first

Vav, and the lower spring sealed off is represented by the missing second Vav.

When the people of Israel heard the words of the spies, their hearts filled with apprehension, 'How can we live without spiritual influence and vitality?'

In the words of Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Komarno:

"This was the argument of the people of Israel regarding the hard spiritual work that awaited them, the cities being 'fortified up to the Heavens', meaning the heavenly abundance is fortified and closed up, to prevent the many impure powers from leaching from these powers. This in the manner that we found above with the pious ones who lingered following their prayers. This upper spring being sealed off is the missing first Vav of 'בצורות' - 'fortified'.

However, the spies additionally said to them that evilness and sadness overcame them in their Divine service there in the holy land, all out of their fear of the impure forces grabbing hold.

**Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - Everything is Sealed and Closed**

This fear closed up their abilities to be involved in Torah and the performance of Mitzvot. Thus 'בְּצוּרֹת' - 'fortified cities', missing the second vav, which signifies that their actions in Torah and mitzvot was greatly impaired.

Indeed, one who falls into smallmindedness and darkness of spirit, thinks and believes that they will never rise, and that these wellsprings of vitality would remain 'fortified up to the heavens', 'and fortified cities', that would remain sealed and never open."

The people of Israel accepted the disheartening words of the spies, and their hearts filled with terrible apprehension.

Moses, feeling what was in their hearts, stood up at once and said to them: "Know that what the spies have said is not true, for in any situation a Jew may be in, it is possible to open both the upper and lower springs, and I will teach you how to do it."

There is no such thing as the springs being closed, and therefore in moses' words in the Torah portion of Ekev, 'בְּצוּרֹת' - 'fortified' is spelled missing two Vavs, to indicate, that

even if these are both missing, in the land of Israel it is possible for a person to reopen both of these wellsprings.

The people of Israel believed the words of the spies and fell prey to heresy.

For one who has complete faith and believes that there is no reality except for G-d and that the Master of the world is truly present in every movement, accepts everything that comes upon him with love.

As a result, G-d will truly 'appear', all the gates of mercy will open, and a bright spiritual light will shine upon him."

Tomer's eyes welled with emotion.

What a wonderful interpretation. The fear of the people of Israel was not a trivial one, solely concerning their military might and chances of survival.

Their fear was of the withdrawal of the Divine vitality and light.

He kissed the "Heichal HaBracha" and returned it to the library.

Then he remembered, "Oh no. It's late. I need to finish reading the book of Devarim before midnight".

## **'Hoshana' - Heed Our Call and Save Us**

**What** Tomer managed to read during the holy night of Hoshana Rabbah, we do not know.

But thanks to him, we have come to grasp some part of the holiness of this awesome night.

We conclude with the words of Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, Zt"l:<sup>11</sup>

"For an important item, a seal within a seal is required (Avodah Zarah 31a).

There is indeed nothing of more 'importance' in the world than the people of Israel, and therefore, even though they were sealed for life, salvation, and mercy on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, they still need another seal (within a seal) on Hoshana Rabbah. (see there at length).

Rabbi Bezalel Simcha Menachem Rabinowitz, Shlita, the Biala Rebbe explained this in the following manner:<sup>12</sup>

On Hoshana Rabbah, we plead and beseech G-d: 'Hoshana' 'Heed our call and save us.'

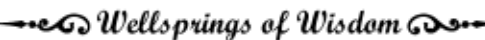
It is a day of judgment and the final sealing.

Although the days of judgment have already passed; Rosh Hashanah, when the judgment was written, and Yom Kippur, when the judgment was sealed, nonetheless, on Hoshana Rabbah, we ask and cry out for salvation.

The reason for this is that sometimes, a person does not merit, and even if he was found to be pure and righteous on Yom Kippur and only good was decreed for him, still, the impure powers can gain have control and tamper with this influence, drawing and seizing the strength from it.

It is for this reason that special salvation is needed so that the impure powers do not have control or touch the influences from holiness.

This is precisely the role of Hoshana Rabbah, where we ask and plead to G-d to save us so that the impure powers do not have control over the good influences decreed on the people of Israel on the days of judgment of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.



**11.** 'Bnei Yissaschar - Maamarei Tishrei' (Discourse 12, essay 1).

**12.** 'Mevaser Tov - Yerach Haeitanim' (5770 - page 249).

Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - 'Hoshana' - Heed Our Call and Save Us

This is indeed a general rule, that one must be very careful that the impure powers do not seize our deeds and our efforts, and that they are not sustained from our deeds.

The verse states: 'Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns' (Jeremiah 4:3) – and our sages have interpreted this to hints that even when a person engages in Torah and mitzvot, it is still possible, G-d forbid, that the impure powers will take control and sustenance from his Torah.

The sages of Israel therefore cautioned that one should reflect

upon matters of repentance before studying Torah, and through this reflection, he will merit that his heart be 'broken', and he thus creates around him 'a high wall of doors and bars' (Deuteronomy 3:5), closing the spiritual shafts and openings from the negative forces of impurity so they do not draw upon his Torah.<sup>13</sup>

Following Torah study as well, one needs to reflect upon repentance to prevent the impure powers from grasping and leaching from his Torah.

This is in similar fashion to what our sages say (Berachot 30b): 'The

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**13. To** quote from Maor VaShemesh (Parshat Devarim):

"**We** have found in the holy books, and so I have heard from my teachers, that one of the fundamental aspects of Divine service is to contemplate upon repentance before studying Torah or performing a commandment.

**The** 'Seer from Lublin' of blessed memory, said, if a person does not engage in repentance before studying the Torah, it is said about him: 'But to the wicked, G-d says: What right have you to recite My decrees or raise My covenant upon your lips?' (Psalms 50:16).

**However**, if he contemplates repentance before studying, he is then called

righteous, and may study the holy Torah.

**As** our sages say in Kiddushin (49b): 'One who betrothes a woman on the condition that he is righteous, even though he is a complete wicked person, she is betrothed, for perhaps he contemplated upon repentance.' Therefore, he is afterward."

**In** this connection with the words of 'the Seer' of Lublin, we find the following story ('Meorot Bishmei Hayadut', page 206):

"**Rabbi** Israel HaLevi was a disciple of the Seer of Lublin, and for his livelihood, he dealt in precious stones and pearls.

**Rabbi** Israel was handsome and highly intelligent, and found favor in the eyes of all who saw him.

## Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - 'Hoshana' - Heed Our Call and Save Us

early pious ones would wait an hour before prayer and an hour after prayer,' as explained above at length.

The basis of this idea is that the existence of the forces of impurity is solely from the power of holiness, and their entire vitality and existence is from what they draw from the holiness of the people of Israel, G-d forbid, and through which, they can be strengthened greatly and even destroy, much of the side of holiness.

Therefore, even though the days of judgment have passed (including Yom Kippur, when the satan has no power to

accuse), and have completed, it is possible that the impure powers will seize and draw the many spiritual influences to themselves.

Therefore, we cry out and pray on Hoshana Rabbah, 'Save us, and save us all, our G-d of salvation', with the prayer that G-d protect all the good influences and all the holiness of Torah and mitzvot of the Jewish people.

Then, not only will the impure powers have no control, and all of the spiritual bounty will remain on the side of holiness, but on the

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### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**A** gentile woman, one of his clients, set her eyes on him, and in an attempt to entice him, she ordered a set of expensive jewelry, which would bring him a very large profit.

**Rabbi** Israel invested all his money in this deal, and on the appointed day, brought the jewelry to her house.

**After** showing her the merchandise, the gentile woman began her seduction to tempt him to sin, and threatened him that if he did not comply, she would not pay him for the expensive jewelry that he had brought.

**Rabbi** Israel withstood the test, leaving all of his property with her, and fleeing for his life.

**When** Rabbi Israel later came to his rabbi, the 'Seer of Lublin,' the Seer greeted him

with a radiant and smiling face and told him that he saw a great light upon him.

**Rabbi** Israel recounted all that had happened to him, and the Seer kissed him on the head and promised him that he would be blessed with a son who would shine in Torah and good deeds.

**The** blessing of the righteous was fulfilled, and that year he had his long awaited first-born son, who he named Shmuel.

**From** his early childhood, it was evident that Shmuel HaLevi was destined for greatness.

**He** studied with tremendous diligence like his father, and was taken under the wing of the Seer of Lublin, who held him in great esteem and affection.

Sukkot - V'zot Haberachah - 'Hoshana' - Heed Our Call and Save Us

contrary, this will increase the power of holiness, and cause all the

impure powers to fall and their power to be broken.<sup>14</sup>

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**14. We** conclude with an important quote from the introduction to the prayer book "Kol Rinah veYeshuah" for Hoshana Rabbah:

"**One** must prepare himself for the sanctity of this great night, and dedicate his entire being to the study of Torah, with complete repentance, and to accept upon himself the yoke of Heaven and the holy Torah.

**Our** sages write that it is proper for a G-d-fearing person to immerse in a mikvah on this night.

**This** immersion should be performed before beginning to study, so that the study itself is conducted in purity, sanctity, and fear of Heaven.

**Unlike** the night of Shavuot, when the primary rectification is through immersion before dawn, on this night, the main rectification is through Torah study and prayers conducted in great purity and sanctity.

**It** is therefore correct that the immersion in a mikvah be done before starting the study and not early in the morning as on Shavuot night (Mishnah Berurah, Siman 664:8).

**This** immersion is not obligatory upon everyone, but one who delves into the writings of our rabbis and the great Kabbalists, will understand that immersion at these times is indeed quite necessary for the rectification of a person's soul, and for his attainment in Torah and closeness to G-d in particular, as explained in 'Chelev Ha'aretz'

(Part 5, Chapter 11).

**Rabbi** Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld of blessed memory, the Rabbi of Jerusalem, was once asked about the significance of daily immersion in a mikvah.

He replied:

"**If** the mikvah has the power to transform a complete gentile into a Jew (when converting according to halacha), how much more so can it work spiritual wonders for the soul and spirit of a Jew, both inside and out.

**To** merit the crown of Torah and sanctity, and likewise to be a source for the constant inspiration of the Divine Presence upon a person, all depend on the purity of a person's soul.

**There** is nothing that distances the evil inclination and the harmful forces from one's soul more than the mikvah.

**It** also elevates him to the side of merit, purity, and sanctity, and transforms him into a worthy and desirable vessel before G-d.

**One** who is G-d-fearing should be careful to not let a day pass without immersion in a mikvah.

**At** the very least on holy and awesome days such as the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the eve of Yom Kippur, and the night of Hoshana Rabbah, days when a person is judged, it is surely most fitting to appear before G-d in purity and sanctity with the faculties of soul and spirit pure and not defiled by the stain of sin.

## Summary and Practical Conclusions

**1.** The seventh day of Sukkot is called by our sages 'Hoshana Rabbah'.

The reason is that on this day, we have the custom to circle the Bimah after the morning prayer seven times (unlike the other days of Sukkot when we circle only once). In each circuit, we say the word 'Hoshana' many times, and it is therefore called 'Hoshana Rabbah', meaning many Hoshanas.

According to an inner dimension, this day is the conclusion of the fifty-one days of Divine favor and repentance that G-d gave the people of Israel in His great kindness.

These days are the thirty days of the month of Elul and the twenty-one days of the month of Tishrei until Hoshana Rabbah, which is the fifty-first day.

Therefore, this day is called Hoshana Rabbah, meaning we beseech G-d to give a great salvation on this final fifty-first day, and everything follows the conclusion.

**2.** The holy Jewish custom is to stay awake on Hoshana Rabbah night and engage in Torah study, prayers, and supplications to sweeten all severe judgments and to merit to receive a good and blessed judgment.

It is most recommended for one to come to the synagogue to learn and pray together with the congregation with much joy and enthusiasm.

The most proper way to conduct the order of study on this night was established by the holy Ariza"l.

At the start of the night one should read the entire book of Deuteronomy (also called the 'Mishneh Torah').

It is through this reading that the main spiritual rectification of this day is achieved.

Then, a little before midnight, one recites the prayers of the Shema before retiring at night.

After that, one reads a collection of Midrashim of our sages, followed



by the 'Idra Zuta', and concludes with the reading of the entire book of Psalms, dividing it into seven parts.

After each part, one says Selichot and mentions the various merits that stand for us to merit us all with a good and blessed judgment.

**3.** We must bear in mind the great importance of this day. Even one who was vindicated in judgment on Yom Kippur and was decreed good things, nonetheless the impure powers may control, seize, and interfere with this influence.

On Hoshana Rabbah, we ask and plead G-d to save us so that the impure powers do not have control over the good we were decreed, and create a 'seal within a seal', to close and seal off any possibility of the forces of impurity drawing from the holy powers.

**4.** It is always ideal to reflect upon Teshuva before Torah study, but it is especially appropriate to do so before the Torah study of this awesome night.

The reflections of teshuva, causes one's heart to be broken into fragments, and creates around one a 'high wall' that blocks the forces of impurity from drawing energy from his Torah.

After this study as well, one should reflect and meditate thoughts of Teshuva to prevent the impure powers from 'grasping' his Torah.

The very basis of the existence of the forces of impurity is from the power of holiness.

Their entire vitality and existence is drawn and robbed from the holiness bestowed upon the people of Israel. Through this, they sometimes are strengthened greatly and can even cause destruction, G-d forbid, on the side of holiness.

**5.** It is proper to immerse in a mikvah before the study on the night of Hoshana Rabbah, so that the study be in purity, holiness, and fear of Heaven. This immersion is not obligatory, but is most effective at this time for the rectification of a person's soul,

for attainment in Torah and matters of holiness, and to foster a closeness to G-d.

**6.** Not only on Hoshana Rabbah, but every day, the forces of impurity try to draw strength from the spiritual influence a person receives, especially from the influence that descends upon a person during prayer.

To prevent this, a person should be careful to learn a fixed lesson after prayer.

By uttering words of the Torah one creates protection from the forces of impurity.

May G-d grant us a good final judgment together with all the people of Israel.

**Shabbat Shalom!**





B sd



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City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	5:52 pm	6:50 pm	7:21 pm
Miami	6:32 pm	7:23 pm	8:01 pm
Los Angeles	5:57 pm	6:51 pm	7:26 pm
Montreal	5:45 pm	6:45 pm	7:13 pm
Toronto	6:10 pm	7:10 pm	7:39 pm
London	5:42 pm	6:48 pm	7:10 pm
Jerusalem	5:48 pm	6:37 pm	7:15 pm
Tel Aviv	5:44 pm	6:34 pm	7:12 pm
Haifa	5:43 pm	6:36 pm	7:13 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:45 pm	6:37 pm	7:15 pm

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*Every chapter of Tanach is incredible, for in it we study the wisdom of the prophets, and how they dealt with the difficulties of their time.*

*For example we read how Elijah the prophet stood against the 400 wicked worshipers of Baal, and proved to everyone that G-d is Supreme.*

*The Ba'al Hatanya says that a person who doesn't learn Tanach, cannot reach spiritual intellectual attainment, for the channels that draw down the divine light are specifically the chapters of the Tanach.*



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**SIMCHAT TORAH EVE**

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Miami	7:19 PM	7:57 pm
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Montreal	6:37 PM	7:05 pm
Toronto	7:02 PM	7:31 pm
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