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By the Hakham

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Ha-azinu: The Gentle Rock

הַצֹּר תָּמִיד פִּעֲלוֹ בִּי כָּל־דְּרָכָיו מִשְׁפָּט

"The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice" (Debarim, 32:4). The simple meaning of the phrase, "The Rock, His work is perfect", is that G-d is referred to as a rock, because a rock denotes strength.

Rabbenu Bahya states that just as a rock is strong and is the foundation of the earth, so too the Holy One blessed be He is the foundation of the world. Moshe Rabbenu, 'a"h, is saying that although the Master of the Universe is like a rock, nevertheless, "His work is perfect" - He deals with His creatures in a perfect way.

Razal teach us (Meghilla 31a), that wherever the Torah mentions the power of the Holy One, blessed be He, you also find His gentleness mentioned. We see from this that though He is a rock, He treats His creatures with perfection and humility, the opposite of harshly. So He is a rock in strength, but shows great humility when dealing with us.

(See Rabbenu Bahya on the Torah, Ha-azinu)

5783 פְּרַשְׁת הָאֲזִינוּ/סְבוֹת

Starting to Sin on Sukkoth

אֵךְ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי...וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם

"On the fifteenth day of the seventh month...On the first day you shall take the fruit of the majestic tree (Ethrog)" [Wayyiqra 23:39-40]. The term, "On the first day", our Rabbis of Blessed memory say in Midrash Tanhuma, refers to the first day of calculating our sins.

Yom Kippur is a day when we are completely purified of all our sins. The four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkoth we are busy with Mišwoth, prayers, and preparation for the Holiday. The 15th of Tashri (the first day of Sukkoth), is the first day when we are liable to start sinning. Since it is the first day for the accounting of all our sins, G-d wanted us to make an analogy between the 15th of Nissan (Pesah) when all our leaven has to have been burnt, (which is a hint to destroying our evil inclination) and the 15th of Tashri.

In the above-mentioned verses there is a hint that on the 15th of Tashri the evil inclination is awakened and tries to make us stumble and sin. The last letters in Hebrew of the words "פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר" "the fruit of the majestic tree (Peri 'Eš Hadar)", form the word "יֵצֵר" "Yeşer", which refers to our evil inclination. From this we learn that we have to be exceedingly careful and on guard, on Sukkoth, not to let the evil inclination make us stumble.

(See Naḥal Qedumim, Parashath Emor)



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Getting Permission to Use Someone Else's Sukkah

If someone borrows another person's Sukkah, he should first ask permission from its owner to perform the commandment of dwelling in the Sukkah. The owner should specify that he can enter into it to fulfil his obligation and do whatever he wishes in it

If one did not get permission, however, one fulfills one's obligation even if one enters one's friend's Sukkah without permission. In a similar vein, if one builds a Sukkah on another person's land, without permission, the Sukkah is valid, because land cannot be stolen. Obviously, initially one should get his permission before constructing it.

On the other hand, if someone builds a Sukkah on another person's land, and the owner of the land attacks the one who built it and steals the Sukkah for himself, he cannot fulfill his obligation with the Sukkah he stole, that someone else built on his land.

(See Shulhan 'Arukh with Rama 637:3,7. Kaf HaChayim, 637, Oth 10)

Hol HaMo'ed Is Also Yom Tob, Part II

Even though we use different terms to differentiate between Yom Tob (a Holy Day) and Hol HaMo'ed (the intermediate days of a Festival), the term "Yom Tob" could also be used to refer to Hol HaMo'ed, as well. Therefore, according to the custom mentioned by the Shulhan 'Arukh and followed by Sephardim, of not saying "Yom Tob" but only "Yom" during the 'Amidah on Hol HaMo'ed, it should have been possible to say "Yom Tob" on Hol HaMo'ed also.

However, the reason why Sephardim only say "Yom" (day and not Yom Tob), is so that there will not be any confusion. On Hol HaMo'ed certain work pertaining to avoiding a loss is permitted, but is forbidden on Yom Tob. Using the same term for both could cause confusion.

Additionally, Yom Tob is on a higher level. It would have been belittling to it if Hol HaMo'ed was called by the same name.

(See Shulhan 'Arukh with Rama, 490:3. Kaf HaChayim, ibid., 490, Oth 14)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"n

Meaningful Rejoicing on Sukkoth

The holy Zohar refers to the Sukkah as צֶלֶא דְּמַהֲמֻנָּתָא - the shade of faith. On three separate occasions the Torah commands us to rejoice on Sukkoth. Is there any connection between what a Sukkah represents and the commandment to rejoice on Sukkoth?

King Solomon in his wisdom, explains to us that Simcha (joy), is meaningful only when it is associated with our purpose in this world: attaching ourselves to Hashem, through the performance of the Mitzvot (commandments), (Qoheleth 8). We may experience temporary feelings of happiness when we buy a new outfit, or when we eat delicious dessert, etc. but the everlasting emotion of Simcha, true happiness, is possible only when we attach ourselves to our Creator, the Source of all good.

The Sukkah is the shade of our faith in the Holy One blessed be He. Without faith, our lives are dull and meaningless. Always, but especially on Sukkoth, when we are commanded to rejoice, we make a statement that having faith in the One who protects us creates a deep and most meaningful joy within us.

Rabbeinu the Arizal points out that the two walls and part of a wall which is the minimum requirement for a Sukkah to be Kasher, alludes to G-d's "arms" hugging us. We can all relate to a loving arm hugging us constantly.

How much more so the "loving arm" of our Father in Heaven! Rejoice and be happy!