

Rabbi Ziegler - Sukkot 5781, 2020

We are currently on the bridge, the bridge that connects Yom Kippur with Sukkot. Yom Kippur, the tenth day of Tish'rei ended a 10 day unit, the Aseret Yemei Teshuva, and Thursday, the fifteenth of Tish'rei, just five day later, begins an 8 day unit of Sukkot and Sh'mini Atzeret. We are in the midst of connecting the two of them.

During the entire Yom Kippur men wear a white Kittel and a tallit. Rav Soloveitchik felt that even an unmarried young man should don such attire, for on Yom Kippur we are all "Omdim Lifnei HaShem", we are all standing before the Shechina of HaShem. [Hanhagot HaRav #27] They tell the story of a young man studying to become a priest of the Catholic Church who had never been in a Jewish synagogue. One day, on Yom Kippur he decided to step in to observe what transpires within; and the synagogue he chose was the shul of the Ba'al Shem Tov. Once inside, he was spellbound at the sincere and intent atmosphere and the fact that everyone was wearing what appeared to him as the garments of the Pope. He then recalled that the Bible refers to the Jewish People as a "Kingdom of Priests" [Mamlechet Kohanim]. The next day he asked his Superior why we, the people of the Catholic Church have always persecuted the Jews, a Kingdom of Priests. His Superior merely answered, "They probably deserved it". He was taken aback and unsatisfied with the response, that he subsequently left the church, and converted to Judaism. He did not understand that on Yom Kippur we are Omdim Lifnei HaShem.

On Sukkot too, we are considered as Omdim Lifnei HaShem. The Torah tell us that on the first day of Sukkot we fulfill the Mitzvah of Etrog, Lulav, Hadassim and Aravot [VaYikra 23:40], but only on the first day. Then the pasuk ends stating-"You shall rejoice before G-d [meaning with the 4 species] for seven days". So the Midrash [Torat Kohanim] explains, In the Beit HaMikdash, you are rejoicing because you are in the presence of HaShem- then the Mitzvah is for seven days, but out of the Mikdash the Mitzvah is only for one day.

After the Churban HaBayit, Rabbon Yochanan ben Zakai decreed [Sukkah 41a] that even out of the Bet HaMikdash the Mitzvah of 4 minim [species] should be observed for seven days as a Zecher LeMikdash, a reminder of the Mikdash to come and we should feel as if the Shechina is in our midst for all seven days, and that we are Omdim Lifnei HaShem. Both Yom Kippur and Sukkot we are Omdim Lifnei HaShem, on Yom Kippur we show it by wearing Kittel and Tallit- on Sukkot by holding and waving the Dalet Minim.

Both Yom Kippur and Sukkot therefore, are designated as Ye'mei Simcha [days of joy]; after all, what greater Simcha can there be than standing in the presence of G-d's Spirit, Omdim Lifnei HaShem. Dahvid HaMelech said, What greater joy can I ask for than to "Shivti B'veit HaShem Kol Yemei Chayai" [to sit in the house of G-d all the days of my life-Tehilim 27]. Sukkot is crowned with a double Simcha. The Torah says "VeSamachta Be'chagecha" [Devarim 16:14], then again, "VeHayita Ach Samei'ach" [Devarim 16:15]. We do not find Yom Kippur being designated as a day of Simcha in the Torah, but Chazal state, "Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: Israel had no days as festive as the

fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur.”[Ta’anit 30b]. The festivity and joy of Yom Kippur is because it is a day of forgiveness and pardon in the presence of HaShem.

Both Sukkot and Yom Kippur have the status of removing personal sadness and aveilut [mourning the loss of a relative]. Feelings of happiness is expressed by reciting the Beracha of “She’heh’cheyanu, which is done on both occasions. On Sukkot we recite the Beracha on first night together with Kiddush and on Yom Kippur we recite it at night right after Kol Nidrei when and we all say aloud, “VaYomer HaShem- Salachti Kid’varecha”. What greater joy than to stand before G-d and hear HIM say, “I have forgiven [The Jewish People] as you [Moshe] had requested.

Halacha requires us to unite the two units of Yom Kippur and Sukkot. The Rama at end of Hilchot Yom HaKippurim states: “Those who are meticulous about doing Mitzvot should begin erecting their Sukkah immediately following Yom Kippur [SA 624:5] To show how important this is, the Rama repeats this in beginning of Hilchot Sukkah [625:1]. So these days that bridge the two units of Yom Kippur and Sukkot, are also semi days of Simcha and we say Do Not say Tachanun.

Let these days of joy bring us Besorot Tovot, Nachat in our family and Simcha for all of Israel.

Chag Samei’ach from Yerushalayim,
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