

ויקהל

THE JOY WITHIN *SUKKOS*

ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל

And Moshe gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel (*Shemos* 35:1).

This is one of the rare instances where Moshe *Rabbeinu* was required to assemble all members of *Klal Yisrael* for instruction in a particular *mitzvah*. The *mitzvah* of *hakamas hamishkan*—setting up the *Mishkan*—was certainly an auspicious occasion, for it represented the unity of the Creator with His creation. Hashem would now reside among His beloved nation. This rare assembly was necessary in order to underline the importance of *hakamas hamishkan* as the final step of creation (*Megillah* 10:).

At the conclusion of each day of creation, except for the second day, Hashem proclaimed: “*Ki tov*” — “It was good” (*Bereishis* 1:4). This indicated Hashem’s satisfaction with the day’s accomplishments. Rashi (*ibid.* 1:7) explains the omission of “*Ki tov*” on the second day as being due to the fact that the “water-work” was not actually completed on the second day. The work was only concluded on the third day. Hence, the phrase “it was good” occurs twice in the Torah section of the third day: to indicate praise for the work of the third day and also to acknowledge the “water-work” of the second day. Hashem is intimating to us that of all the work of creation, there is something particularly significant about the “water-work” which mandated delayed praise. The key to understanding the actual reason for the absence of “*Ki tov*” on the second day involves the deeper meaning of the “water-work” (see pages 31-36).

The *Mishnah* (*Sukkos* 51•) proclaims:

מי שלא ראה שמחת בית השואבה לא ראה שמחה מימיו

He who has not witnessed the joy of the water drawing has not ever seen real joy in his life.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Lulav* 8:12) comments:

אע"פ שכל המועדות מצוה לשמוח בהן, בחג הסוכות היתה במקדש יום שמחה יתירה

Although it is essential to rejoice on all festivals, the [water-drawing] festival of *Sukkos* in the Temple engendered particular joy.

The *Gemara* (*Sukkos* 51•) states that:

חסידים ואנשי מעשה היו מרקדין בפניהם באבוקות של אור שבידיהן

The pious and meritorious danced and juggled [as an expression of joy].

The dancers and acrobats were chosen exclusively from among the greatest of sages (Rambam, *Hilchos Lulav* 8:14); the masses were spectators. Great orchestras entertained in the temple-court, while huge conflagrations illuminated the countryside (*Sukkos* 51•). The spectacle of joy was so

immense and pervasive that it was possible to attain *Ruach Hakodesh* — Divine inspiration — by participating in the festivities, as did the prophet Yonah ben Amitai (*Tosafos, Sukkos 50:*).

It is important to contrast the above with the *Gemara (Ta'anis 30:*):

לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כחמשה עשר באב וכיוה"כ

There were no great days of festivities for *Klal Yisrael* as the Fifteenth of *Av* and *Yom Kippur*.

The Fifteenth of *Av* inaugurated the period in which the various *Shevatim* were permitted to intermarry with each other; and *Yom Kippur* is the great day of forgiveness, a special gift from Hashem. All days of festivity are celebrated with festive meat meals and wine (*Pesachim 109•*). These two great holidays, as all other holidays, are celebrated with the customary festive means: the fifteenth of *Av* on the day proper, and *Yom Kippur* on its eve. Why should the *Sukkos* water-drawing ceremony involve the additional rejoicing of dancing in addition to the festive meal?

The *Gemara (Sukkah 50:*) describes *Sukkos* in a two-fold fashion. First there is the aspect of joy:

ושאבתם מים בששון

Draw the water in joy (*Yeshayah 12:3*).

Secondly, the gravity of the *mitzvah* is underlined, because “it is derived from the six days of creation.” The water conduit connecting the *Mizbei'ach* — the Temple Altar — with the underground water pool was created during the six days of creation. Hence, this ceremony is of major importance.

The *Gemara (Ta'anis 2:*) points out that the key element of this ceremony, מים, *mayim* (water), is alluded to in the Torah (*Bamidbar 29:12-39*) by the apparently superfluous letter in each of the three operative words associated with the festival:

ונסכיהם ונסכיה כמשפטם

. . . and their drawing . . . it's drawing . . . as its laws.

The *mem*, *yud* and *mem* comprise the word “*mayim*” (מים). Water is described by the *Gemara* as one of the most basic elements of life: every living thing is primarily composed of water, and water causes vegetation to grow, thrive and flourish. The water-drawing ceremony, however, alludes to much more.

The Vilna *Ga'on (Divrei Elyahu, Emor)* questions the auspiciousness of moving the celebration of *Sukkos* to the month of *Tishrei*. Whether the purpose of the holiday of *Sukkos* is to commemorate the Jews leaving *Mitzraim* — Egypt — in actual booths (as their housing), or to commemorate the protection afforded the Jews by the Clouds of Glory, it nevertheless took place in the month of *Nissan*. Why, then, is *Sukkos* not celebrated in conjunction with *Pesach* in its correct time?

The Vilna *Ga'on* offers a very profound solution. The Clouds of Glory (composed of water which was created on the second day) served as a protective barrier to *Klal Yisrael* from the time they left *Mitzraim* (see page 192). This protection was removed from them as punishment for worshipping the Golden Calf. Moshe *Rabbeinu* returned from Mt. Sinai on the tenth of *Tishrei*. On the eleventh of that month, Moshe commanded *Klal Yisrael* to construct the *Mishkan*. On the

twelfth and thirteenth of the month, the Jews were busy collecting the building materials for the *Mishkan*. On the fourteenth day Moshe determined that there were sufficient supplies, so he ordered a cessation of the collection process. On the fifteenth of *Tishrei* the building of the *Mishkan* (the housing for the *luchos* — the tablets of the Law (Rashi, *Bamidbar* 9:15)) commenced, coinciding with a return of the Clouds of Glory.

The *Gemara* (*Bava Kama* 55•) teaches that the first *luchos* did not contain the word “*tov*” (compare the text of the Fifth Commandment in *Shemot* 20:12 and *Devarim* 5:16) because the tablets were destined to be broken (see *Eruvin* 54•, see Rashi, *Shemos* 34:3). The second *luchos*, which do contain the word “*tov*” are invested with permanence, and were housed in the *Mishkan*. The “*tov*” of the second *luchos* guarantees endurance, protection and an everlasting bond with Hashem. The fifteenth day of *Tishrei* marks the return of the Clouds of Glory to the *B'nei Yisrael* coinciding with the construction of the *Mishkan*; hence the holiday of *Sukkos* in *Tishrei*.

The omission of the word “*tov*” in the Torah at the conclusion of the second day of creation was a harbinger of a future and more auspicious use of the word. The actual “*tov*” of the second day of creation is aligned with the “*tov*” of the second *luchos*, which is inextricably bound with the holiday of *Sukkos*, which, therefore, is celebrated with the intensified joy of the water-drawing (symbolizing the Clouds of Glory). This denotes the completion of the work of the second day of Creation. The first *luchos* were incomplete, hence susceptible to breakage; they were replaced by the second *luchos* which contained the word “*tov*.” Similarly, the water-works of the second day of Creation were incomplete, waiting to be amended by the reappearance of the Clouds of Glory on the fifteenth day of *Tishrei*.

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