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# ❧ SUKKOT II ❧

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## The Joy of Sukkot, Hoshana Rabbah, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

This second Morasha shiur on Sukkot addresses the special mitzvah of being joyful that is unique to Sukkot, the day of Hoshana Rabbah, and the festival of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. This class will also explore the unique relationship between the Sukkot festival and the nations of the world as well as its connection to the Messianic Era.

This class will address the following questions:

- ~ What is the secret of the joy unique to the Sukkot festival?
- ~ What is the Festival of the Water Pouring (*Simchat Beit HaShoevah*)? What does it symbolize?
- ~ What is the connection between the Sukkah and the Messianic Era?
- ~ Why are offerings brought during the Sukkot festival for the nations of the world?
- ~ Why is the *aravah* (willow branch) beaten on the last day of Sukkot?
- ~ What is the significance of Shemini Atzeret, an “extra festival” juxtaposed to Sukkot?

### Class Outline:

#### Section I: The Joy of Sukkot

Part A. How Can We be Commanded to be Happy?

Part B. Joy on Sukkot from the Harvest

Part C. Happiness from Forging a Connection to Spirituality and God

Part D. Bringing Joy to Others

#### Section II: The Sukkot Celebration – The Simchat Beit HaShoevah

Part A. The Ceremony of Pouring Water

Part B. The Deeper Meaning of the Simchat Beit HaShoevah.

#### Section III. Sukkot and the Messianic Era

#### Section IV. Sukkot and the Nations of the World

#### Section V. Hoshana Rabbah – The Final Judgment

#### Section VI. Shemini Atzeret – Israel Alone

#### Section VII. Simchat Torah – The Joy of Torah

## SECTION I. THE JOY OF SUKKOT

Although all festivals are a time of joy, Sukkot is the only festival of the year on which there is an explicit mitzvah to be joyful.

### PART A. HOW CAN WE BE COMMANDED TO BE HAPPY?

How can we be commanded to achieve an emotional state of happiness during Sukkot?

#### 1. Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz, The Jerusalem Kollel – A proper appreciation of the mitzvot surrounding the festival of Sukkot naturally inspires a person to rejoice.

How can we have a mitzvah, i.e., be commanded, to be happy? It's one thing to have a mitzvah for an "action" like eating matzah or giving *tzedakah*, but how can we be commanded to reach an emotional state of joy? The answer is that by engaging in, and understanding the wonderful mitzvot surrounding the Sukkot festival – dwelling in the Sukkah, waving the Four Species, eating the festival meals – a person is naturally brought to a state of happiness!

### PART B. JOY ON SUKKOT FROM THE HARVEST

The mitzvah of rejoicing during Sukkot following the gathering of the harvest is written three times in the Torah.

#### 1. Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:39-40 and Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:13-15

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the harvest of the land you shall celebrate God's festival for a seven-day period. The first day is a rest day and the eighth day is a rest day ... **you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven-day period.**

You shall make the Festival of Sukkot for a seven-day period, when you gather in your harvest and your wine. **You shall rejoice on your festival** ... A seven-day period shall you celebrate for the Lord your God, in the place that God will choose because the Lord your God has blessed you in all your crop and in all your endeavors **and you will be completely happy.**

אך בחמשה עשר יום לחדש השביעי באספכם את תבואת הארץ תחגו את חג ה' שבעת ימים ביום הראשון שבתון וביום השמיני שבתון: ... ושמחתם לפני ה' א-להיכם שבעת ימים:

חג הסוכת תעשה לך שבעת ימים באספך מוגרנד ומיקבך: ושמחת בחגך... שבעת ימים תחג לה' א-להיך במקום אשר יבחר ה' כי יברכך ה' א-להיך בכל תבואתך ובכל מעשה ידיך והיית אך שמח:

#### 2. Tosefot, Devarim 16:15 – Since the harvest is completed at Sukkot, the Torah tells us three times to rejoice.

The Torah speaks of happiness three times regarding the holiday of Sukkot ... Regarding Shavuot it only states once that: "You shall rejoice before the Lord your God." Rejoicing is not mentioned at all regarding Pesach, since the grains and fruit have not yet been harvested or

אתה מוצא כתיב שלש שמחות בחג הסוכות... וגבי שבועות לא כתיב אלא חדא ושמחת לפני ה' אלקיך, וגבי פסח לא כתיב שמחה כלל לפי שבפסח עדיין לא נלקטו תבואות ולא פירות האילן ... אבל בחג הסוכות שלקטו התבואות ופירות האילן וגם הכל נאסף לתוך

picked at that time of year ... But on the holiday of Sukkot, when the wheat crops and fruit of the trees have already been gathered into the house, one's joy is complete; this is why the Torah mentions rejoicing three times.

הבית אז השמחה היא שלימה לכך כתיב ביה שלש שמחות.

There is a deeper reason why the joy of gathering the harvest is associated with Sukkot:

3. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 145-6 – The Torah wants us to celebrate and be happy, and to channel that joy towards our relationship with the Creator and with other human beings.**

Sukkot is also known in the Torah as *Chag HaAsif*, the Festival of Gathering, because it is celebrated at the time of year when the harvested produce is brought from the fields into storehouses and homes. When a person gathers in the bounty of his land, he is naturally filled with tremendous joy and happiness.

This happiness could easily turn into self-aggrandizement: it could make a person full of himself and his accomplishments, distancing him from God (as described in Devarim 8:12-18).

We might think that the appropriate antidote would be a period of fasting and repentance. However, Judaism does not deny or suppress human nature and instinct; rather, it seeks to utilize them in positive ways. The Torah wants us to celebrate and be happy, but to channel that joy towards our relationship with the Creator and with other human beings (Gur Aryeh, Bereishit/Genesis 45:29). We should use this opportunity to appreciate God's benevolence as well as to share our good fortune with others ... Thus we neither deny the physical nor wallow in it; rather we elevate it to a higher purpose (R' Hirsch, Horeb 2:31:223).

## PART C. HAPPINESS FROM FORGING A CONNECTION TO SPIRITUALITY AND GOD

Gathering in the harvest also takes on a spiritual dimension. The Jewish people have just been through an intense period of introspection, *teshuvah* (return to God) and prayer during the month of Elul, followed by Rosh HaShanah (the Day of Judgment) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). During this time we labor in the fields of spiritual growth. On Sukkot, we harvest the inspiration, the joy and the closeness to God that is produced by the period of teshuvah:

1. **Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, Vol. II, p. 451 – Joy on Sukkot comes from the atonement of Yom Kippur.**

The extra joy of Sukkot comes on the heels of the days of judgment and forgiveness of sins ... The greatest joy is to become purified from transgression!

השמחה היתירה של סוכות באה בעקבות ימי הדין ומחילת העוונות... הרי עיקר השמחה היא להטהר מחטא!

2. **Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Sifsei Chaim, Vol. I, Page 208 – The process of teshuvah removes the barriers separate us from God. This is the real source of joy on Sukkot.**

Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret are "the time of our joy" [as described in the festival prayers].

סוכות ושמיני עצרת הם זמן שמחתנו, שמחה הנובעת מתוך קירבה אל השי"ת לאחר ימי הדין והכפרה, "כי

This is a joy which comes forth from closeness to God after the days of judgment and atonement, as it says, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God” (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 59:2). Sins separate us from God, and through atonement this barrier is removed and we attain closeness to God. It is because of this newfound closeness that we rejoice.

אם עוונותיכם היו מבדילים ביניכם לבין אלוקיכם” (ישעי' נט, ב). העוונות הם מחיצה בין הקב"ה לישראל, וע"י כפרת העוונות מתבטלת מחיצה זו ומתקרבים אל הקב"ה, קרבה זו מביאה ליזמן שמחתנו.

The closeness to God achieved through teshuvah on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur enables us to move into God's home, so to speak, symbolized by the Sukkah:

3. **Rabbi Shimshon Pinkus, Sichot Rav Shimshon Pinkus: Sukkot, p. 32 – The closeness and intimacy with God is such that we can dwell with Him in the Sukkah.**

The nature of a person depends to a large degree on his neighbors ... as the Rambam has written (Hilchot De'ot 6:1), that a person is influenced by the people surrounding him. ... When the festival of Sukkot arrives, God brings us, as it were, into His home. This is a state of life in the shadow of God ... and gives us an inkling of living a true life with the Creator. This is the purpose of the festival of Sukkot.

כידוע צורת החיים של האדם תלויה בסביבה שלו, בשכנים שלו ... כמו"כ הרמב"ם (הל' דעות פ"ו ה"א) שאדם נמשך אחרי אנשי סביבתו. ... כשמוגיע חג הסוכות הקב"ה מכניס אותנו כביכול לביתו לסוכה, צורת חיים כזו בצלו של הקב"ה ... בונה בתוכנו מצב של חיים אמיתיים עם בורא העולם. זוהי עיקר המטרה של חג הסוכות.

The spiritual work to be done in the Sukkah is to be in state of joy (*simchah*). This joy can only be achieved when we are aware that the only atmosphere fitting for us is that of the Sukkah [in the Presence of God]. This is the company that we desire, and that suits us. There is no happiness comparable to life with God.

העבודה המוטלת עלינו בהיותנו בתוך הסוכה היא השמחה. אל השמחה ניתן להגיע אך ורק מתוך הכרה פנימית שרק אורה זו שבתוך הסוכה היא האורה הנעימה לנו, זו החברה המתאימה לנו והמוצאת חן בעינינו עבורנו. חיים עם קודשא בריך הוא מהווים אושר שאין כמוהו.

Ultimately, it is dwelling in the Sukkah itself that enables us to focus on the true priorities in life, which brings us happiness:

4. **Rabbi Yaakov Neiman, Darchei Mussar, pp. 283-4 – Happiness is recognizing that this world is ultimately temporary, but that a relationship with God is eternal.**

The Talmud states that on Sukkot one must leave his permanent dwelling and settle in a temporary dwelling. This ruling seems to be inconsistent with the theme of the holiday, as Sukkot is distinguished as the time of our rejoicing ... If in fact Sukkot is a time to rejoice, how can the Torah command us to depart from our homes and live in booths which at first glance would seem to disturb our happiness?

סוכה, צא מדירת קבע ושב בדירת עראי, לכאורה לפי השקפה ראשונה קשה להבין הלא חג הסוכות הוא זמן שמחתנו ... ואם מצוה להרבות בשמחה זו מדוע צותה התורה לצאת מדירת קבע ולשבת בדירת עראי הלא זה מפריע לשמחה?

However, if we will reflect, we can conclude that one truly rejoices when he comes to the

אמנם אם נתבונן בזה נראה כי שמחה אמיתית לא יכולים להשיג אלא כשבאים לידי הכרה כי העולם הזה

recognition that this world is temporary. One who believes that man's ultimate purpose is in this world and thus makes this world his "permanent dwelling" will never be able to achieve inner happiness. For, generally speaking, one who is sunk in the vanities of this world is lacking joy, for joy is a spiritual matter and is only achieved when one comes close to God.

הוא רק ישיבת עראי, כי מי שחושב כי תכלית האדם הוא בעולם הזה ועושה כאן ישיבת קבע א"א לו להגיע לידי שמחה פנימית. כי בדרך כלל מי שהוא משוקע בהבלי העולם הזה חסר לו שמחה כי שמחה הוא דבר רוחני ומגיעים לשמחה רק אלו שמתקרבים אל ה' ית"ש.

## PART D. BRINGING JOY TO OTHERS

Although it is a prerequisite to rejoice by connecting with God, Judaism also teaches the importance of going beyond oneself to share one's happiness with others, beginning with one's immediate family, and then extending to the community at large – especially the needy.

### 1. **Rambam (Maimonides), Hilchot Yom Tov (The Laws of Festivals) 6:17-18 – Giving joy first to one's immediate family members by giving them things they enjoy.**

A person is obligated to be in a state of happiness (*simchah*) and good spirits [during Sukkot]. This includes one's children, one's wife, and anyone who lives in one's house. The source is the verse: "You shall rejoice on your festival – you, your son, your daughter ..." (Devarim 16:14) ...

How does one do this? One should buy nuts, almonds and treats for one's children. For one's wife one should buy clothes and jewelry, according to his means. Men eat meat and drink wine, for there is no rejoicing without meat and wine.

וחייב אדם להיות בהן שמח וטוב לב, הוא ובניו ואשתו ובני ביתו וכל הנלווים עליו, שנאמר "ושמחת, בחגך" (דברים טז, יד).

כיצד, הקטנים נותן להם קליות ואגוזים ומגדנות, והנשים קונה להן בגדים ותכשיטין נאים כפי ממונו, והאנשים אוכלין בשר ושותין יין שאין שמחה אלא בבשר ואין שמחה אלא בייין.

### 2. **Ibid. 6:18 – One must also give food (or its monetary equivalent) to the vulnerable and downtrodden members of society.**

When one eats and drinks, one is obligated to give food to the convert, orphan, and widow and poor people (Devarim 16:14). Whoever locks his home to eat privately with his family and does not provide food and drink for the poor and impoverished is not celebrating the joy of a mitzvah, but rather the joy of his stomach [i.e. it is insensitive self-indulgence].

וכשהוא אוכל ושותה חייב להאכיל לגר ליתום ולאלמנה עם שאר העניים האמללים, (דברים ט"ז:יא) אבל מי שנועל דלתות חצרו ואוכל ושותה הוא ובניו ואשתו ואינו מאכיל ומשקה לעניים ולמרי נפש אין זו שמחת מצוה אלא שמחת כריסו.

## SECTION II: THE SUKKOT CELEBRATION – THE SIMCHAT BEIT HASHOEVAH

### PART A. THE CEREMONY OF POURING WATER

A celebration took place in Jerusalem's Holy Temple on Sukkot called the *Simchat Beit HaShoevah*, "The joy of the house of (water) drawing" (Mishnah Sukkah 5:1). "Water drawing" refers to the water that the Kohanim would pour on the Altar during the Sukkot service that beseeches God for rain during the upcoming winter:

#### 1. **Mishnah, Rosh HaShanah 1:2 – On Sukkot the world is judged regarding rainfall for the coming year.**

Four times during the year the world is judged. On Passover for the crops, on Shavuot for the fruits, and on Rosh HaShanah all individuals pass before Him like sheep, as it says (Tehillim/Psalms 33), "He fashions their hearts all together He comprehends all their deeds," And on Sukkot we are judged regarding water [rainfall].

בארבעה פרקים העולם נידון בפסח על התבואה  
בעצרת על פירות האילן בראש השנה כל באי העולם  
עוברין לפניו כבני מרון שנאמר (תהילים ל"ג) היוצר  
יחד לבם המבין אל כל מעשיהם ובחג נידונין על המים.

#### 2. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Rosh HaShanah 16a – Pouring the water on the Altar for a favorable blessing of rainfall.**

Why does the Torah tell us to do the "water pouring" on Sukkot? The Holy One, Blessed be he, said: "Pour water before me on Sukkot so that your year's rainfall shall be blessed."

ומפני מה אמרה תורה נסכו מים בחג - אמר הקדוש  
ברוך הוא נסכו לפני מים בחג כדי שיתברכו לכם גשמי  
שנה.

On the evenings of the intermediate days of the festival, people would gather at the Temple. Torches were lit, music played, and the great Sages, the elders, would dance and sing, while thousands joyously watched (Mishnah, Sukkah 5:4).

The water that gives its name to these festivities refers to rain, but it is primarily understood as a metaphor for the outpouring of Divine inspiration that can only be achieved when one is in a state of happiness (Shabbat 30b; Bereishit Rabbah 70:8):

#### 3. **Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud), Sukkah 5:1 – The joyous atmosphere was to enable those present to receive Divine inspiration.**

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, "Why are they [the nightly celebrations at the Temple during Sukkot] called 'the house of drawing'?"

"Because [people] would draw the Holy Spirit [*ruach hakodesh* into themselves] in accordance with the verse, 'And you will draw water in joy from the springs of salvation'" (Yeshayahu 12:3).

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי למה נקרא שמה בית שואבה  
שמשם שואבים רוח הקודש על שם ושאתם מים  
בששון מומעיני הישועה (ישעיה יב:ג).

#### 4. **Mishnah, Sukkah 5:1 – No joy parallels that of the Simchat Beit HaShoevah.**

One who has not seen the joy of the Simchat Beit HaShoevah has not seen joy in his life.

כל מי שלא ראה שמחת בית השואבה לא ראה שמחה מימיו.

Today, synagogues and yeshivot around the world, and especially in Israel, celebrate their own “Simchat Beit HaShoevah,” with music, dancing, food and discussion of Torah insights.

### **PART B. THE DEEPER MEANING OF THE SIMCHAT BEIT HASHOEVAH.**

A deeper understanding of the joy of the Simchat Beit HaShoevah is based in the Creation of the universe, when God separated between the upper waters and the lower waters:

#### 1. **Bereishit 1:6-7 – The separation of the upper waters from the lower waters (on the second day of Creation).**

God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate between water and water.” So God made the firmament, and separated between the waters that were beneath the firmament and the waters that were above the firmament. And it was so.

ויאמר א-להים יהי רקיע בתוך המים ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים:  
ויעש א-להים את הרקיע ויבדל בין המים אשר מתחת לרקיע ובין המים אשר מעל לרקיע ויהי כן:

The separation mentioned in this verse is between the wholly spiritual, non-physical aspects of Creation and the tangible, physical world that is in the province of man (Ramban). The Midrash records that the earthly waters protested that they too wanted to be close to God. To comfort them, God made a covenant that water would be placed on the Altar every Sukkot (Rabbeinu Bachya, Vayikra 2:13).

Based on this Midrash, the pouring of the water is viewed as a metaphor for the Jewish people who may have become distanced from God during the year, and now have the opportunity to reconnect with their Source:

#### 2. **Rabbi Eliyahu Shlezinger, Eleh Hem Moadai, p. 445 – The pouring of the water on the Altar is a joyous reunification of the creation with its Creator, and the symbolism is felt by all those who wish to return to the King.**

We can thus have some idea of the great rejoicing associated with the pouring of the water on Sukkot. For on Sukkot there is a great rectification for the “lower waters,” which cry at having been distanced from God, by their being poured on the Altar and brought close to God. On Sukkot the crying of the “lower waters” thus turns into joy and delight.

Therefore, even we, the people of Israel, join the joy of the lower waters, in order to learn their intense lesson of desiring closeness with God, to cry bitter tears over our sinning and having distanced ourselves from Him. Just like the waters, we will cry out to God from the depths of our heart: “We wish to be before the King!”

מעתה יש לנו כבר קצת מושג על גודל הפלגת השמחה על ניסוך המים בחג, כי היות שבחג הסוכות יש תיקון גדול למים התחתונים הבוכים על שנתרחקו מאת ה', וזה ע"י כך שמנסכים אותם על המזבח והם מתקרבים לה'. נמצא שבחג הסוכות הופכת הבכיה של המים התחתונים לששון ולשמחה.

ולכן גם אנו בני ישראל מצטרפים לאותה שמחה של מים התחתונים, כדי שנקח מהם מוסר השכל לשאוף ולהשתוקק להתקרב לה', ולבכות בדמעות שליש מאין הפוגות על שמפני חטאינו נתרחקנו מה', וכמו המים נצעק מעומק הלב אל הקב"ה: "אנן בעיין למהוי קדם מלכא".

This is the reason for which our Sages bring a proof to the water libations from the verse, “You will draw water in joy, from the wellsprings of salvation” (Yeshayahu 12:3). This instructs us to join the elation and joy of the lower waters, which merited closeness to God – in order that we, too, should feel distress when distanced from God, and feel joy at closeness to Him.

זהו הענין שחכמינו ז"ל מביאים ראיה לשמחת בית השואבה מפסוק "ושאבתם מים ממשון ממעיני הישועה", כלומר, שתצטרפו לששון ולשמחה של המים התחתונים על שזכו להתקרב לפני ה', כדי שמוזה תלמדו גם אתם להצטער על הריחוק מה' ולהיות בשמחה על ההתקרבות לפני ה'.

### 3. **Ritva, Sukkah 53b – Since the greatest sages of the generation most appreciated the gift of God's Presence, they would dance in the Temple courtyard.**

The extravagant celebrations [of the *Shoevah*] were directed at giving praise and thanks to God for the goodness that He did for them by enshrining His Presence among them and giving them a place in the World to Come. Therefore, it was performed only by the great and pious members of the nation [who have a deeper appreciation of God's Presence among them.]

כל השמחה היתירה היתה בהלל להודות להשם על הטובה שעשה לישראל להשרות שכינתו בתוכם, וגם כנגד עולם הבא הניתן לצדיקים, לפיכך לא היה אלא על ידי גדולים וחסידים.

Another understanding of the joy of the Simchat Beit HaShoevah is that water represents God's loving-kindness:

### 4. **Rabbi Shimshon Pinkus, Sichot Rav Shimshon Pinkus: Sukkot, p. 51 – The pouring of the water is a reference to the abundant water at Creation, which symbolizes God's abundant loving kindness for his creatures.**

How was the mitzvah of the pouring of the water fulfilled? There were two "*shittin*," holes that reached to the depths of earth, at the sides of the Altar and water would be poured into them. These *shittin* were created during the six days of Creation, which is hinted at in the first word of the Torah: "*Bereishit – bara shitt* [– God created the holes]." This explains to us the significance of the *shittin* ...

On the first day of Creation everything was filled with water, as it says, "And the Spirit of God hovered over the waters" (Bereishit 1:2). And what is water? The most basic necessity for life. The abundance of water thus represents God's never-ending kindness. God created the original water during the six days of Creation, in which the potential for all life lay hidden. And all of creation was filled with water, which hints to God's all-pervasive kindness.

כיצד היו מקיימים את מצות ניסוך המים? בצדי המזבח היו שני "שיתין", נקבים עמוקים עד התהום והיו מנסכים את המים לתוך הנקב. שיתין אלו נבראו בששת ימי בראשית, וזה מרומז במלה הראשונה בתורה בראשית "ברא-שית", מכאן אנו מבינים את גודל חשיבותם של השיתין. ...

ביום הראשון של הבריאה, היה כל היקום מלא במים כלשון הכתוב (בראשית א,ב): "ורוח אלקים מרחפת על פני המים". מה הם מים? חיים! המים מרמזים על חסדיו האין סופיים של הקב"ה. בששת ימי בראשית ברא ה' את המים הראשונים ששם היו טמונים כל החיים. כל הבריאה היתה מלאה מים, שהם מרמזים על חסדיו של השם יתברך.

In addition to the symbolism of water relating to Creation, the Simchat Beit HaShoevah also represents an additional central idea in Judaism – one that can engender the greatest expression of joy relating to our mission in life.

5. **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Drash Moshe, Essay 23 – Each person has the potential to achieve their mission in life independent of financial limitations.**

The commandment of the pouring of the water shows that everyone, even the most impoverished [who can certainly still find water], has the ability to request and receive from God a good, blessed, and bountiful year, even though he is unable to buy many offerings or donate much charity. For the principle is: whether one does a lot or a little, what matters is that whatever he does is done for the sake of Heaven (Berachot 5b).

A person can learn from this mitzvah that any action done for God's sake will help actualize his potential as a human being, whose actions are pleasing to God and for whose sake the world was created ... This is the reason why the joy of observing the pouring of the water is greater than the joy derived from any other mitzvah in the Torah. It strengthens a person and teaches him that he can achieve [spiritual] completion with the attributes and talents that God has granted him, independent of his financial means.

שענין מצות ניסוך המים הוא גם להראות שכל אחד אף עני שבעניים יכול לזכות ולבקש מהקב"ה גשמי שנה, פי' שיתן לו שנה טובה וברכה מרובה, אף שאינו יכול להרבות בקרבנות ולא בצדקה, משום שאחד המרבה ואחד הממעט ורחמנא ליבא בעי שכל מעשי האדם יהי' לשם שמים.

... וילמד מזה האדם שבכל דבר ודבר אם יעשה לש"ש הוא אדם השלם שמעשיו רצויין ובשבילו נברא העולם... וזהו טעם השמחה בניסוך המים יותר מכל מצות שבתורה, שזה מחזק כל אדם ומלמדו שיכול להשיג השלימות במה שזיכהו השי"ת שהן בכל מעשיו אף בלא חסרון כ"ס.

## SECTION III. SUKKOT AND THE MESSIANIC ERA

As the spiritual climax of the year, Sukkot is laden with deep allusions concerning the Messianic Era – the spiritual climax of world history. One such allusion is found in the Haftarah (additional Torah reading) for Sukkot which describes the prophecy of the War of Gog and Magog:

1. **Zechariah 14 (selected verses) – The prophecy of the War of Gog and Magog describe the cataclysmic battles that will result in the final Redemption and Messianic Era.**

1-3: Behold, God's awaited day is coming, and your spoils will be divided in your presence. I shall gather all the nations to Jerusalem to wage war; the city will be conquered ... Then God will go out and wage war with those nations, as on the day He waged war, the day of battle.

9: God will be King over the entire world – on that day God will be One and His Name will be One.

11: They will dwell within her and destruction shall be no more; Jerusalem shall dwell secure.

16: And it will happen that all who will be left from among all the nations that come upon

הנה יום בא לה' וחרלק שללך בקרבך. ואספת את כל הגוים אל ירושלים למלחמה ... ויצא ה' ונגלחם בגוים ההם כיום הלחמו ביום קרב.

והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד.

וישבו בה וחרם לא יהיה עוד וישבה ירושלים לבטח.

והיה כל הנותר מכל הגוים הבאים על ירושלים ועלו מדי

Jerusalem; they will ascend every year to prostrate themselves before the King, God, Master of Legions, and to celebrate the festival of Sukkot.

שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְמֶלֶךְ ה' צְבָקוֹת וְלַחֹג אֶת חֹג הַסֻּכּוֹת.

2. **Rabbi Nosson Scherman, Stone Chumash, p. 1241-2 – The Sukkah represents the cheerful confidence of trusting in God’s protection; the roof represents the illusion of placing security in human strength. This is the deeper meaning of the battle of Gog and Magog.**

R’ Hirsch (Bamidbar/Numbers 29:13) discusses the inner connection between the war of Gog and Magog and Sukkot:

In the name גֹּג, Gog, one recognizes the word גַּג, roof, and thereby at once sees the contrast to sukkah, the weak, unstable covering of foliage. Actually, the whole history of mankind consists of this contrast. Just as people have the power to make themselves safe and secure against their earthly contemporaries by sturdy walls, so they delude themselves into thinking that they can make themselves safe and secure against that which comes from above – against God and His power to direct matters. They think they can find security in the protection of their own might, take their fate in their own hands, and crown the building of human greatness with gabled roofs, rendering them independent of God.

The war of Gog and Magog is the battle of גַּג, roof, against סֻכָּה, sukkah, the fight of the roof-illusion of human greatness which never allows rest, against the sukkah-truth of cheerful confidence and serenity which comes of placing one’s trust in God’s protection.

R’ Hirsch’s explanation of the Gog-Magog relationship bases itself on the Hebrew grammatical rule that the prefix מ, mem, expresses the idea of projecting something. For example, אֹר is light; מְאֹר, luminary is a heavenly body which projects light. So, too, גַּג, means roof – in R’ Hirsch’s view, it represents the philosophy that man can insulate himself against the heavenly power of God – מְגֹג is the attempt to project this philosophy on earth.

In contrast to the other festivals, Sukkot symbolizes the future redemption:

3. **Franz Rosenzweig, The Star of Redemption (adapted) – The three festivals: Creation, Revelation, and Redemption.**

The cycle of the *Shalosh Regalim* (the three pilgrimage festivals) thematically recalls:

1. Creation, 2. Revelation and 3. Redemption:

1. Pesach reminds us of Creation (through its sub-theme of springtime rebirth) and the historical redemption from Egypt (its main theme).
2. Shavuot, fifty days after Pesach, commemorates the revelation of God at Sinai. We celebrate with all-night study to prepare for the giving of the Torah.
3. Sukkot looks ahead toward the final redemption. In processional *hoshanot* (encircling the *bimah* in shul) we call upon God to “please save” (*hoshana*). The sukkah is a miniature model of Gan Eden, the once and future paradise. We invite our esteemed ancestors to dine with us in the Sukkah (*ushpizin*), as we will dine with them in the World to Come. We gather the four species of the lulav and wave them together – a symbol of the whole people of Israel joined together, acting in concert.

## SECTION IV. SUKKOT AND THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD

Unlike all other festivals, the offerings in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem have a special place for the nations of the world:

### 1. **Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 55b, and Rashi ibid. s.v. *shivim parim* – Seventy offerings are brought to provide merit for the seventy nations of the world.**

Rabbi Elazar said: “Why are seventy offerings brought on Sukkot? For the [merit of the] seventy primary nations of the world.”

Rashi: the seventy offerings are to provide atonement for the seventy nations, so that rain will fall all over the world, since the world is judged regarding rainfall on Sukkot.

אמר רבי אלעזר הני שבעים פרים כנגד מי כנגד שבעים אומות.

רש"י: שבעים פרים: לכפר עליהם שירדו גשמים בכל העולם לפי שנידונין בחג על המים.

The Midrash declares that if the seventy primary nations (listed in Bereishit 10) had realized how much they benefited from these offerings, they would have sent legions to surround Jerusalem and guard it from attack.

### 2. **Rabbi Shimshon Pinkus, Sichot Rav Shimshon Pinkus: Sukkot, p. 107 – On Sukkot the nations of the world will seek out God’s Presence at the Temple in Jerusalem.**

After Yom Kippur comes Sukkot. Sukkot represents the ultimate conclusion of destiny, and it is known that Sukkot hints at the Messianic Age. On Sukkot the prophecy of “Foreigners will stand and shepherd their flock” (Yeshayahu 61:5) will be fulfilled, meaning that even the nations of the world will enter under the canopy of God’s Presence (*Shechinah*). They will be rectified, to the degree that is possible, by the offerings of Sukkot. And the climax is Shemini Atzeret, which represents the World to Come itself.

אחרי יום כיפור מגיע סוכות, הוי אומר סוכות הוא התכלית, וכידוע סוכות מרמז על ימות המשיח. בסוכות יתקיים “ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנכם” (ישעיה סא ה), דהיינו שגם את האומות מכניסים תחת כנפי השכינה, ומתקנים אותם עד כמה שאפשר על ידי פרי החג. והשיא זה שמיני עצרת, שהוא עוה“ב ממש.

### 3. **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Wellsprings of Salvation p. 312 – Bringing the nations of the world to fulfill their purpose**

On the festival of Sukkot seventy bulls were sacrificed on the Altar; we do so similarly today by means of our prayers: “Our lips replace the bulls” (Hoshea/Hosea 14:3). These [bulls] correspond to the seventy nations of the world, by which we enact a role of protection over the nations ... which aids them to fulfill their purpose as sons of Noah with the mitzvot that they are commanded – including and in particular assisting the Jewish people that they should be able to fulfill the Torah and the mitzvot.

בחג הסוכות הקריבו ע"ג המזבח שבעים פרים, ועד"ז בזמן הזה ע"י התפלה, “ונשלמה פרים שפתינו”, כנגד שבעים אומות העולם, אשר ע"ז נפעל ענין של הגנה על אוה"ע ... אשר ע"ז יתוסף אצלם במילוי תפקידם בקיום המצוות שנצטוו בני נח, כולל ובמיוחד העזר והסיוע לבני"י שיוכלו לקיים תומ"צ.

## SECTION V. HOSHANA RABBAH – THE FINAL JUDGMENT

In these last sections, we will focus on the final festive days of Sukkot.

1. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 153 – Hoshana Rabbah, the seventh day of Sukkot, is a day of great holiness and prayer.**

The last day of the *Chol Hamoed* (middle days) of Sukkot is called *Hoshana Rabbah*, which means “the great salvation.” This is a reference to prayers that are recited every day of Sukkot, as the congregation walks around the *bimah* holding their *lulavim*. The constant refrain of these prayers is *Hoshana*, literally meaning, “Please save.” We plead with God to save us from the sufferings and tribulations of exile from the Holy Land.

On the last day of *Chol Hamoed*, the congregation goes around the *bimah* seven times, while additional *Hoshana* prayers are recited, as a sign of the great holiness of this day (Mishnah Brurah 664:11). In the times of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the people held willow branches, *aravot*, as they walked around the Altar (Sukkah 45a).

The great significance of the day is indicated in the following selection of Zohar:

2. **Zohar, Parshas Tzav, 31b – God passes judgment regarding the rainfall on Hoshana Rabbah, and dispatches the judgments that were sealed on Yom Kippur. An unfavorable decree can still be torn up through sincere teshuvah.**

On the seventh day of Sukkot, the judgment of the world [which began on Rosh HaShanah] is completed, and the edicts are dispatched from the King’s palace. The judgments are concluded, and the brook-willows [symbolizing rainfall for the coming year] depend on this day.

ביום שביעאה דחג, הוא סיומא דדינא דעלמא,  
ופתקין נפקין מבי מלכא, וגבורן מתערי, ומסתיימן  
בהאי יומא, וערבי נחל (תליין) בהו.

After encircling the *bimah* and completing the prayers for a favorable decree, we take five *aravah* branches and, in accordance with a custom that dates back to the prophets (Mishnah Brurah 664:12), we strike them on the floor five times:

3. **Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 664:2, 4 with Rema; Mishnah Brurah, 664:19 – Beating the aravah branches on the floor.**

Shulchan Aruch: One must take the *aravah* [willow branch] on this day, apart from the *aravah* that is bound together with the *Lulav* ... and one must beat it on the ground or on something else twice or three times.

Rema: Some say that one must wave the *aravah*, and the custom is to do both: to wave it, and to beat it.

Mishnah Brurah: The Arizal ruled that it should be beaten on the ground five times. It is proper to beat it five times on the ground, and then to beat it on something else [such as a bench] in order to remove some of the leaves. There is no need to cause all the leaves to fall.

ונוטלים ערבה ביום זה מלבד ערבה שבלולב ... וחובט  
בה על הקרקע או על הכלי פעמיים או שלש: הגה וי"א  
שצריך לנענע בה, ונהגו לעשות שתיהן מנענעין בה  
ואח"כ חובטין אותה:

משנה ברורה: ובשם האר"י ז"ל כתבו דדוקא על  
הקרקע יחבוט ה' חבטות וטוב לחבוט תחלה על  
הקרקע ה' חבטות ואח"כ על הכלים להסיר העלין וא"צ  
להסיר כל העלין:

The symbolism of the beating of the willow branches is discussed in the next source:

4. **Adapted from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Horeb, Edoth II, para. 225 – The beating of the willow branches symbolizes our rejection of a completely materialistic lifestyle and self-seeking pride.**

The four species represent different things found in nature to be used for man's benefit:

1. Things in nature that do not require any finishing touches by man – sunlight, air, beautiful scents etc. – are represented by the myrtle, since the sense of smell is the most prominent characteristic.
2. Things in nature inherently of benefit to man, but man must extract the benefit from them – sustenance, food – are represented by the (date) palm branch.

The etrog falls under both categories #1 and #2.

3. Things in nature which depend entirely on man for their perfection – “upon which man exercises his power as their master and from which he extracts all the usefulness that is in them by his skill.” Nature supplies the raw materials only and then man refines them for his own use e.g. his dwelling, clothing, utensils, etc. This category is represented by wood, and therefore by the aravah, which has no scent (#1) or taste/sustenance (#2) and is basically just wood. Thus, the aravah symbolizes man using his own powers and skills; it represents man's conquest of the material world.

The Jewish nation's ideals can be compromised by over-emphasizing their material wealth and relying on their efforts alone. Therefore, the prophets instituted the beating of the aravot on Hoshana Rabbah following seven circuits around the Altar or the Torah. This symbolizes the rejection of self-seeking pride and the glorification of man's strength. The willow reminds us of those realms in which the mastery of man's spirit over things material manifests itself most, those things which nourish pride.

## SECTION VI. SHEMINI ATZERET – ISRAEL ALONE

Technically the festival of Sukkot ends after seven days, as indicated in the verses below. However it is immediately followed by the festival of Shemini Atzeret, which is considered the eighth day of Sukkot (outside of Israel it is the eighth and ninth days). The Hebrew words *Shemini Atzeret* mean the Eighth [day] of Assembly.

1. **Vayikra 23:34-36 – Sukkot ends and is followed immediately by Shemini Atzeret.**

On the fifteenth day of this seventh month [Tishrei] is the Festival of Sukkot, a seven-day period for God ... **The eighth day is a sacred holiday for you ... it is a time of assembly** when you may do no laborious work.

בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת  
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לַה' ... בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ יְהִיָּה לָכֶם  
... עֲצֵרֶת הוּא כָּל מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ.

The climax of the Sukkot festival – and, indeed, of the entire year – is the day of Shemini Atzeret. This day symbolizes the peak of God's love of the Jewish people:

2. **Rashi, Vayikra 23:36 – After the inspiration and closeness to God forged during Sukkot, He asks that we should stay with Him for just one more day.**

It is called *atzeret* [holding back] since God says to us: “I have held you back [from leaving after Sukkot] to be with Me.”

This is similar to a king who invited his children to a feast for a certain amount of days. When the time came for the children to depart, the king said, “My children! I beg of you, stay with me for one more day, for it is difficult to see you depart.”

עצרת היא - עצרתי אתכם אצלי כמלך שזימן את בניו  
לסעודה לכך וכך ימים כיון שהגיע זמנו להפטר אמר  
בני בבקשה מכם עכבו עמי עוד יום אחד קשה עלי  
פרידתכם:

Whereas the nations of the world have a share in the Sukkot festival, the day of Shemini Atzeret is reserved for the Jewish people alone:

3. **Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 55b – God’s chosen people spend an extra day with Him after the pomp and circumstance of Sukkot.**

Rabbi Elazar said: “To what do those seventy bulls [that were offered during the seven days of the Festival] correspond? To the seventy primary nations of the world. To what does the single bull [of the eighth day of Shemini Atzeret] correspond? To the unique nation – the Jewish people.

This may be compared to a mortal king who said to his servants, the citizens of the country, ‘Prepare for me a great feast.’ On the last day of feasting he said to his beloved friend, ‘Prepare a simple more intimate meal for me and you, that I may enjoy being with you.’”

אמר רבי אלעזר הני שבעים פרים כנגד מי כנגד שבעים  
אומות פר יחידי למה כנגד אומה יחידה

משל למלך בשר ודם שאמר לעבדיו עשו לי סעודה  
גדולה ליום אחרון אמר לאוהבו עשה לי סעודה קטנה  
כדי שאהנה ממך:

The mitzvah of dwelling in a Sukkah does not apply on Shemini Atzeret, because it is an independent festival from Sukkot (Rosh HaShanah 4b). The next source gives a deeper explanation:

4. **Sfas Emes, Devarim (Sukkot), year 5632 – Shemini Atzeret does not require a Sukkah which provides physical protection, since the day has an aspect of the Next World where physical protection will not be necessary.**

The eight days of the festival are the life-giving force of the entire year. The extension of life from Rosh HaShanah takes place on Sukkot, as embodied in the pouring of the water [which symbolizes life]. The seven days of Sukkot represent life in this world, and therefore have a connection to the other nations of the world, which is why seventy bulls are brought as sacrifices. Shemini Atzeret, however, represents life in the Next World, which is a life that is unique to the Jews, as the Torah is our life.

ח' ימי החג נותנים חיים לכל ימי השנה. כי התפשטות  
החיות מר"ה הוא בחג וזה ניסוך המים. וז' ימי סוכות  
הם חיי עולם הזה ולכך יש אחיזה גם לאומות וזהו ע'  
פרים. אבל שמיני עצרת הוא חיי עולם הבא. והוא  
החיים המיוחד לישׂראל שהתורה עיקר חיינו. ...

Life in this world is external, and we therefore need protection and a Sukkah, which provides testimony that God affirms that the main focus in our lives is Torah and life in the Next World ... But Shemini Atzeret – which is like life in the Next World itself – does not require the protection and shelter of the Sukkah. It is a Sukkah itself!

חיי עוה"ז רק חיצוניות ולכך צריך הגנה וסוכה, שהיא העדות שהקב"ה מעיד עלינו כי עיקר חיינו התורה וחיי עוה"ב. ... אבל שמי"ע שהוא ממש חיי עוה"ב כנ"ל לא צריך הגנה וצל הסוכה רק הוא בחי' סוכה ממש.

## SECTION VII. SIMCHAT TORAH – THE JOY OF TORAH

Jews throughout the world publicly read the entire Five Books of Moses (the complete Torah scroll) in the course of every year. The reading of the Torah is both completed and begun again on Shemini Atzeret (in Israel on the eighth day of Sukkot, and in the Diaspora on the ninth day). This occasion is known as Simchat Torah, "Joy of the Torah":

1. **Rema, Orach Chaim 669:1 – The start and finish of the yearly Torah reading cycle is marked with singing and dancing both in the evening and in the day.**

This last day is referred to as Simchat Torah, because we rejoice and make a celebratory feast on that day to celebrate the completion of the Torah ... We also have the custom in these lands ... to remove all of the Torah scrolls in the ark and recite songs and praises. ... We also have the custom to encircle the *bimah* with the scrolls ... all [of these customs are] out of joy. We also have the custom to call up many people to the Torah ... we also call up all of the children.

וקורין יום טוב האחרון שמחת תורה לפי ששמחין ועושין בו סעודת משתה לגמרה של תורה ... ועוד נהגו במדינות אלו להוציא בשמחת תורה ערבית ושחרית כל ספרי תורה שבהיכל ואומרים זמירות ותשבחות וכל מקום לפי מנהגו ועוד נהגו להקיף עם ספרי התורות הבימה שבבית הכנסת ... והכל משום שמחה ונהגו עוד להרבות הקרואים לספר תורה ... עוד נהגו לקרות כל הנערים לספר תורה...

2. **Mishnah Brurah, 669:11 – The greatest Sages in history danced and sang songs to thank God for the precious gift of the Torah.**

A person should exert himself to dance and to sing for the glory of the Torah, as it is written concerning King David that he would leap and dance with all his strength before God (II Samuel 6:16). This is also stated in the name of the Arizal. Furthermore, the Arizal is said to have achieved his highest spiritual levels at the time that he exerted himself with all his might for the joy of a mitzvah. Even concerning the Vilna Gaon it has been written that he would dance before the Torah scrolls with all his strength.

יש להתאמץ בזה לרקד ולזמר לכבוד התורה כמו שכתוב גבי דהע"ה "מפזז ומכרכר בכל עוז לפני ד'" וכ"כ משם האר"י ז"ל והעידו על האר"י ז"ל שאמר שהמעלה העליונה שהשיג באה לו ע"י שהיה משמח בכל עוז בשמחה של מצוה וגם על הגר"א ז"ל כתבו שהיה מרקד לפני הס"ת בכל כחו:

The dancing proceeds in *hakafot* (circuits) around the *bimah* where honorees hold all the Torah scrolls. In the morning, the *hakafot* are repeated, and the last section of the Torah is read. Every man in the shul is

called to the Torah (unlike a regular Shabbat where only a few men are called).

3. **Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz, Jewish Philosophy (audio series) – Our dancing is an expression of our love for God’s word and wisdom.**

“This great nation [the Jewish people] is wise and understanding” (Devarim 4:6). We love God’s wisdom! We’re crazy for it – there is no other nation, that I know of, that gets up and sings and dances with their books as we do on Simchat Torah. Did you ever see a professor sing and dance with his books?

4. **Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, Sefer HaToda’ah (Book of our Heritage), Ch. 8 – Following the destruction of the Temple, the Torah is the exclusive place of joy where the Divine Presence can reside.**

This joy is greater than any other, for this joy is a constant, and will never be nullified or lessened. Even after the destruction of the Temple, and the ruin of Jerusalem, and the exile of Israel among the nations, the joy of the Torah has never departed from them nor been diminished.

As the Sages have stated: “From the day that the Temple was destroyed, God has nothing in His world other than the four cubits of halachah” (Berachot 8a). How could this be, for who took away God’s world from Him? Rather, the correct understanding of this statement is that the Divine Presence only rests in a place where there is joy, and no sadness. After the destruction, the entire world was sunk into desolation and diminished, and all things were affected, even mitzvot [Mishnah, Sotah 9:12-13].

The Torah and the four cubits of halachah, however, remain untouched, and the joy of the Torah remains complete, as it was before the Destruction. Therefore, the Divine Presence continues to dwell there, and is joyous with Israel on the day of Simchat Torah.

וגדולה שמחה זו מכל שאר שמחה, שהיא תדירה ואינה בטלה לעולם וגם אינה מתמעטת כלל. אפילו חרב בית המקדש וחרבה ירושלים וישראל נשתעבדו בין האומות, שמחה זו של התורה לא פסקה מהם ולא נתמעטה.

וכך אמרו החכמים: 'מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא אלא ד' אמות של הלכה בלבד' וכי מין נטל מהקב"ה את עולמו? אלא שאין השכינה שורה אלא במקום שהשמחה שורה שם, ואין שם לא עצב, ולא חורבן; ומיום שחרב בית המקדש - כל העולם נעשה חרב ושום, שהחורבן נגע בכל ואפילו תקפן ועיזוון של המצוות, אינם כמו שהיו לפני החורבן,

ואילו בתורה ובד' אמות של ההלכה - שם לא נגע החורבן כלל, ושם השמחה שלמה ותמה כמו שהיתה לפני החורבן, ולפיכך גם השכינה שורה שם ושמחה עם ישראל בשמחת תורה: