

סוכות

Rabbi Mansour 2010
Succot

It is written that Avraham Avinu fulfilled the Misvah of Succah. This is known from the Pasuk; "ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברכ את אברהם בכל" - "and Avraham was old, well advanced in age; and Hashem had blessed Avraham in all things".

The word בכל is comprised of the first letters of the Pesukim that discuss the Misvah of Succah:

בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים
כל אזרח ישראל תשבו בסוכות
למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל

There is a special connection between Avraham Avinu and the Misvah of Succah. The holiday of Succot is the culmination of the high holidays, the process of Teshuvah and returning to Hashem that we began with Selihot in the beginning of Elul, and went through Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with the fear of judgment and begging Hashem to forgive us for our sins. We then enter the holiday of Succot hoping to connect to Hashem on a different level.

There are several levels in Teshuvah and repenting for our sins. The "lowest" level is called "fear of punishment for sin" where a person fears the punishment that awaits him as a result of his sins. Although it is admirable that he is repenting for his sins, this is considered a lower level of Teshuvah (many of us wish to merit even this level!).

The level above this is when the person "fears the damage that he has done through his sin". That is, he is not worried about his punishment as much as he is the damage that he wreaked. (Meaning, even if he was told that he would not be punished and he has nothing to fear, he would still be upset about the damage done from his sin

[much destruction occurs both in the heavens and in this world as a result of a person's sins!])

The level above this is when a person contemplates the awesomeness of Hashem. Hashem is so great and powerful how dare he have sinned against him!! Even if he was told that he would not be punished and the damage that was caused by his sin was repaired, even so, the person is frightened because he realizes that he had the audacity to go against the will of the king of kings!

The level above this is Teshuvah Meahavah. When the person is not motivated by fear, only it is his love of Hashem for all that he does for him that motivates him to return to Hashem. If we stopped to think for a moment of the countless good that Hashem is continuously bestowing upon us it is overwhelming! A person realizes this and is filled with a tremendous love for Hashem, and *this* is what motivates him to repent. (It is a positive Misvah from the Torah to love Hashem, as we say in Shema every day "...ואהבת את ה'-"you should love Hashem". This is a Misvah that we can fulfill over and over again throughout the day, by thinking about how good Hashem is to us and what a wonderful world he created etc. This is a Misvah that people may overlook, but it is a basic obligation and Misvah that we must take advantage of. This Misvah also breeds in us a continuous love of Hashem and fortifies us to stay on the "right path" as well as an ability to persevere through any i'n difficulty we may experience).

This level of Teshuvah Meahavah is not dependent on how "smoothly" things go for a person; it is only that he is filled with a deep love of Hashem that is not dependant on anything physical.

We begin our Teshuvah process with the Selihot in Elul and we continue through Yom Kippur, where we beg Hashem to forgive us. We realize it is the time that we are being judged for the upcoming year, and we are frightened and nervous about how our judgment will turn out. When Yom Kippur is over we are confident that we have

properly confessed our sins and ב"ה have been blessed with a good year. We then celebrate Succot.

Succot is when we return to Hashem on an entirely different level. We are no longer afraid of our sins and of being punished. We have already cried and said the confessions of Yom Kippur. We now want to return to Hashem simply because we love him. We reach the level of Teshuvah Meahavah and are filled with a tremendous genuine love of Hashem. We repent again, only this time with an entirely different approach. We love Hashem! How could we have sinned against him?! It's not because we are afraid of being punished - this time we want to repent out of love.

There is a very big difference between תשובה מאהבה and תשובה מיראה. When a person repents out of fear the Aveirot that he committed they are considered as if they were done "by accident", therefore he is no longer responsible for them. However when a person repents out of love his Aveirot actually turn into *Misvot*. It is as if instead of a transgression the act turns into a *Misvah*, and he is rewarded for it!

This is illustrated in a story about the Liover Rebbe. The Liover Rebbe was a בעל תשובה. When the Rebbe was on his death bed it seemed to some of his students that he was depressed or fearful, "don't worry" his students told him "it is as though they never happened" (referring to the period of his life that the Rebbe was non observant of which they assumed the Aveirot he committed was causing him distress). The Rebbe replied; on the contrary! I am not relinquishing any of them! I do not let *any one* of them go! The Rebbe returned to Hashem with such love that he knew that his former Aveirot were now Misvot so on the contrary, he now *valued* every single Aveirah he committed because they are now Misvot! The Aveirot he committed ended up causing an increased love for Hashem, they now fueled feelings of wonder at how could he ever have done these acts against Hashem that he loves so much! In the final analysis they cause him to think of how good Hashem is, and how much he loves him!

This explains a Pasuk in Tehilim "חטאת נעורי ופשעי אל תזכור כחעדך זכר לי אתה"-
"remembers not the sins of my youth nor my transgression; according to your kindness remember me".

Why would we first ask Hashem *not* to remember, than ask him to remember?

It is because at first we repented out of fear, so our Averot were turned into "accidental" Averot of which we did *not* want Hashem to remember. Later when we return to Hashem out of love, we *want* Hashem to remember the sins because they are now Misvot!!

We also see this concept at one of the procedures of Yom Kippur. In the times of the Beit Hamikdash, the Jews would throw the שעיר המשתלח (the goat chosen to be sent out) off a cliff. There was a red cloth that represented the sins of the Jews. By the time the goat was only part of the way down the mountain, the red string turned white, indicating that the sins of the Jews had been forgiven. White is the color of purity and Misvot. The red turned to white showing that not only had they been forgiven, but that the Averot were now Misvot! As the Pasuk says; "אם יהיו חטאים כשלג ילבינו"-
"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow".

This concept is hinted in the Pasuk: "לא תתעב אדמי כי אחיך הוא"-
"do not hate an Adumite, for he is your brother"

This can be explained; "don't hate אדמי" - *what is red* (אדמי, literally means red) meaning; don't hate your sins (as mentioned above, the red string represents sins). Why not? "כי אחיך הוא", the word אחיך stands for the Pasuk אם יהיו חטאים כשלג—they will turn *white like snow*, and be considered Misvot! Don't hate them; only value them because now they are Misvot!

With this concept we understand a statement of the Rabbis that refer to Succot as "ראשון לחשבון עונות"-
"the beginning of the count of sins".

Why would Succot be referred to as the beginning of sins?! Were we not involved in purchasing Lulav and Etrog, building a Succah, preparing for the holiday! We have

not even “had the time” to sin! We now understand that this statement is speaking of our *former* sins, and it is now that we *want* our past sins brought up because, as explained they are now to our benefit, since they will be reckoned as Misvot!

We now understand a statement that the holiday of Succot is related to the name of Hashem of א-ל.

What is the connection between Succot and Hashem's name of א-ל? The name of א-ל is used in two of Hashem's attributes, the attribute of רחום as well as his attribute of דין. The Pasuk says "חסד א-ל כל היום" - which speaks of Hashem's kindness. A different Pasuk says "א-ל זועם בכל יום" -referring to Hashem's attribute of Judgment- דין. This “dual usage” of the name א-ל is connected to Succot, because on Succot our עונות, which were previously causing us evil, now causes us good, because they are now Misvot! Succot thereby creates a situation of “dual usage” through the “dual effect” of our עונות!

In addition, there is a Pasuk "מי א-ל כמוך" - that list the 13 attributes of Hashem. One of them is נשא עון -“forgiving iniquity” and one of them is יכבש עונותינו -“suppress our iniquities”. At first when we repent Hashem is נשא עון which literally means “bears” our sins, as if Hashem places our sins on his shoulders and carries them. However, after we repent out of love Hashem is: יכבש עונותינו, the word יכבש connotes “pushing with pressure”. It is as if Hashem pushes our sins back down in order that we turn them into Misvot!

This is why it says that we sleep and eat in the סוכה, in order to be protected from the Satan who attacks us at this time. We do battle with him and we sleep in the Succah just as a soldier sleeps in the field. We shake a Lulav which is reminiscent of a sword just as a soldier uses a sword as a weapon in battle. The Succah is the אור המקיף -the “protective light” that surrounds us and protects us.

But why would the Satan be attacking us now? Why do we need the special protection from his attacks? Aren't we in the process of תשובה מאהבה?! We are repenting out of love why would we be attacked?

The reason is because Hashem is יכבש עונותינו; he pushes our sins back down so that we can turn them into Misvot. When the Satan and his "vultures" smell the scent of sin that returns back down in order to be rectified, they attack and try to recapture these sins. It is for this reason that we need Hashem's special protection and we fight off this Satan that attacks in order to take back the sins.

This also explains the Pasuk that says: "ונקה לא ינקה"-which literally means: he is acquitted- he is not acquitted. How do we understand this Pasuk? Which one is it, נקה-acquitted, or לא ינקה-not acquitted?

The explanation is that at first we want Hashem to "forget" our sins, but after we repent out of love we do *not* want him to forget them. The Pasuk is understood as follows: "ונקה" - At first we want Hashem to acquit and erase our sins, but after תשובה מאהבה, then "לא ינקה"- do *not* erase them, bring them back so that they can be turned into Misvot!

This idea is represented by Avraham Avinu (we began with Avraham Avinu's unique connection to Succot). The Pasuk says about Avraham Avinu "לך טל ילדותך"- "your youth is like the dew". It is explained to mean "מה טל פורח אף השנים פורח"-just as the dew "flies away" so too the years "fly away". The Pasuk is speaking of the first three years of Avraham Avinu's life, when he did not yet recognize Hashem. In effect, Avraham Avinu was a Baal Teshuvah having only discovered Hashem at three years old. The Pasuk is telling Avraham: "just like the dew flies away, so too your youth (the years he did not yet know Hashem) will "fly away". We now understand the Pasuk to be teaching us a different point. The word פורח also means to *blossom*. The Pasuk is saying that just as dew causes vegetation to blossom, so too your years that you did

not recognize Hashem will blossom. They are all years *full* of Misvot from the תשובה מאהבה that Avraham Avinu had for them! This is an explanation of the original Pasuk given "ואברהם זקן בא בימים" – "Avraham came with his days", he accounted for *all* of his days even those days that comprised the years that he did not know of Hashem, which were now considered years full of Misvot. Avraham Avinu represents תשובה מאהבה, just like the holiday of Succot!

This is alluded to in the two letters 'ה's in Hashem's name of י-ה-ו-ה which stand for the two types of Teshuvah. (As mentioned in previous classes, Teshuvah is represented by the letter ה of Hashem's name. The word תשובה is comprised to spell תשוב-ה)

This letter of Teshuvah – the letter 'ה, was the letter added to אברהם's name showing that he had mastered the highest level of Teshuvah. In addition, the shape of a סוכה forms the letter 'ה. The minimum requirements of a Succah is 2 ½ walls, which appear as a letter 'ה when assembled.

We see the amazing connection between the holiday of Succot, Avraham Avinu, Teshuvah Meahavah, the letter 'ה, the name of א-ל, and the Pesukim and statements explained with the concept of reviving and giving positive life to all the Averot committed. We must realize what an opportunity we have on this holiday to return to Hashem and reconnect to him. We can infuse goodness and life to our past misdeeds and we can start fresh with not just a clean slate, but a positive slate full of Misvot! We should merit to take full advantage of this opportunity, and feel Hashem's love for us thereby creating in us an increased love for him , Amen!