

Chomer Lidrush: Regel Edition!

Ideas to turn your gears, from shiurim ideas to derasha builders.

Shiurim

1. Pesach and Sukkot: A People Apart, a Light to the World

[Rav Amnon Bazak notes](#) that the Torah contains two calendars: the year beginning in Tishrei follows the natural, agricultural cycle: planting, harvesting, rain and renewal. It is fundamentally universal. The year beginning in Nissan, by contrast, is historical: “This month shall be for you the first of the months,” because this is when Am Yisrael left Egypt. Nissan does not begin the year of nature; it begins the story of the Jewish people.

That distinction is reflected in all the *moadim*. Pesach celebrates the particular covenant between Hashem and Am Yisrael. A non-Jew may not eat the korban Pesach without first entering that covenant through *bris milah*. Indeed, *bris milah* and Korban Pesach are the only two positive commandments whose neglect carries the punishment of *kares*. Sukkos, by contrast, is “*Chag HaAsif*”, rooted in the universal needs of harvest and rain. Its seventy bulls correspond to the seventy nations, and Zechariah envisions all humanity coming to Yerushalayim to celebrate Sukkot and pray for rain.

The same pattern explains why the Mishkan was dedicated in Nissan, while the Beit HaMikdash was dedicated during Sukkos. The Mishkan belonged uniquely to Am Yisrael. It accompanied us through the wilderness and served as the place from which Hashem spoke to Moshe. The Mikdash had a broader mission. Shlomo explicitly prayed that Hashem listen there not only to the prayers of Israel, but also to the foreigner who comes from a distant land. The Mishkan was built by Jews; the Mikdash was built with help from Chiram and workers from Tyre. It was intended to become “a house of prayer for all nations.”

We sometimes imagine Jewish particularism and concern for humanity as competing. Rav Bazak suggests the opposite. The portable Mishkan, representing a people still wandering and insecure, necessarily faced inward. Only once Am Yisrael was rooted in its land and secure in its identity could the Beit HaMikdash face outward. Universal influence does not require us to weaken our distinctiveness. It grows from a strong covenant, a settled identity, and a spiritual home secure enough to open its doors to the world. [This also connects to Rabbi Blech’s piece in the *derasha* section below].

2. The Story Told by the Chagim – Based on an article by Rabbanit Dena Rock in Torah to Go, 5770

[Rabbanit Dena Rock, currently at Midreshet Lindenbaum](#), suggests that the *shalosh regalim* are not three independent commemorations, but chapters in one continuous story, all rooted in the extraordinary year of Yetzias Mitzrayim. Pesach marks our liberation, Shavuot the forging of the covenant at Sinai, and Yom Kippur the restoration of that covenant through the second luchot after the disastrous rupture of the Chet HaEgel. The revelation of the Yud-Gimmel Middos on Yom Kippur introduced Hashem's *rachamim* that would allow Hashem to remain among an imperfect and sometimes sinful people. But forgiveness alone is not the conclusion. Immediately afterward, Bnei Yisrael began constructing the Mishkan, and five days later we enter the *sukkah*, itself a modest dwelling reminiscent of the Mishkan. Sukkot therefore completes the story: Pesach gave us freedom, Shavuot brought us into covenant, and Yom Kippur repaired what we had broken, but Sukkot celebrates the ultimate goal of it all, that despite our failures, Hashem once again chooses to dwell among us. Teshuvah is not merely the removal of sin; it makes renewed closeness possible.

3. From Guest to Host (This one could work as a *derasha* or a *shiur*)

Rav Yeshayahu Hadari, the first Rosh Yeshiva of *Yeshivat HaKotel*, has an article called "[Al Sefas HaSukkah](#)" tracing the Sefas Emes's treatment of the Ushpizin. One line in it is worth taking on its own. The *Sefas Emes* (Devarim, ד"ה בסוכות, תרנ"ג) reads the pasuk "*teishvu shivas yamim*" against the Zohar's own play on that same verse, "*teivu Ushpizin*," come in, guests. On its simple level, the *pasuk* commands us to sit in the *sukkah*. But the deeper reading, says the Sefas Emes, is that the word also addresses the Ushpizin themselves. We can seat them, so the Torah's "*teishvu*" doubles as our invitation to them. By keeping the mitzvah *leshem Shamayim*, *kedushah* comes to rest on the *sukkah*, and we move from being guests in it to being hosts.

That is a real shift, not just a play on words. For most of the year we come to mitzvos as people being cared for, sheltered, given simcha. The *sukkah* does something else. The same mitzvah that makes us Hashem's guests also hands us the ability to host, to bring someone else, human or heavenly, under our own roof. The highest point of *hachnasas orchim*, on this reading, isn't being welcomed well. It's the moment a guest becomes capable of welcoming someone else in turn.

The Ramchal, in *Derech Hashem*, explains, based on Chazal, why a good you did nothing to earn leaves you ashamed of it: *nahama d'kisufa*, bread you didn't work for. The deepest good is only complete when the one receiving it has some hand in acquiring it himself. That's what stays unresolved as long as we're only guests in the sukkah, however warmly Hashem hosts us. What resolves it is that the same mitzvah makes us hosts ourselves. That's what it means to imitate Hashem here, specifically as a Host, the One who invites people who have nothing and gives them a seat at His table. Being like Him doesn't mean sitting comfortably as His guest. It means becoming someone who invites. The question this Sukkos isn't only who will host you well. It's who around you still carries the quiet shame of always needing to be invited, and whether you'll give them a seat.

Derashos

1. Does God Care about Non-Jews?

Source: [Rabbi Benjamin Blech](#), *Understanding Judaism: The Basics of Deed and Creed*, from the chapter "The Seven Universal Laws" ("Does God Care About Non-Jews?"), pp. 183-186.

Each of the Shalosh Regalim carries a double identity: a historic moment and an agricultural season. Pesach is both our freedom and Chag HaAviv, the spring. Shavuot is both Matan Torah and Chag HaBikkurim, the first fruits. Sukkos is both our years in the midbar and Chag HaAsif, the full harvest. Bikkurim, by definition, aren't the crop. They're a down payment on more to come.

That "more to come" is the point. Klal Yisrael is called God's *bechor* (Shemos 4:22), which Ibn Ezra reads not as His only child but as the first to serve Him. That's why the *haftaros* of Sukkos speak of the *acharis hayamim*, the *shivim korbanos* correspond to the seventy nations, and Simchas Torah itself waits until Sukkos rather than following right after Matan Torah. The Torah given to us was never meant to stay ours alone.

Centuries of Galus made it easy, understandably, to see the non-Jew as an adversary or as simply beside the point. But the *luach* itself won't let us settle there. It closes the Regalim not with a Jewish voice but with Koresh, a non-Jewish king, proclaiming Hashem as Elokei HaShamayim (*Divrei Hayamim* II 36:23), a living echo of Bereishis and a preview of the day Hashem will be Echad in the eyes of the whole world. Sukkos asks us to hold both truths together: our chosenness as *bechor*, and our unfinished task of waiting for, and working

toward, that recognition spreading to everyone.

2. Experiencing God's Love - as a People

Our chaver, R. Kenneth Auman, [asks why the Torah commands us](#) to commemorate specifically the Ananei HaKavod. After all, the clouds were not the only miraculous gift that sustained Bnei Yisrael in the *midbar*. They also received the mann each day and drank from Miriam's well. Food and water were surely no less essential than shelter. Why, then, is there a Yom Tov built around remembering the Ananei HaKavod, while there is no corresponding mitzvah to commemorate the mann or the well?

R. Auman suggests the difference lies in how these miracles were experienced. The *mann* and the water, although provided for everyone, were ultimately received by individuals. Each person gathered his own mann and drank the water that he needed. The Ananei HaKavod, however, Klal Yisrael experienced as a single community. When one Jew was protected, everyone was protected. When the cloud remained in place, the entire nation remained; when it rose, everyone traveled together. The clouds therefore represented not only Hashem's care for each Jew, but His protection of Klal Yisrael as a collective.

Jumping off R. Auman's insight, perhaps there was another dimension to this collective experience. No Jew looking up at the cloud could feel that someone else was taking away his portion. Another family did not occupy part of his cloud or diminish the protection available to him. In truth, the same was true of the mann and the water: Hashem had enough for everyone. Yet because they gathered and consumed those gifts individually, they could still feel like limited personal possessions. The clouds made Hashem's abundance unmistakable. Beneath the Ananei HaKavod, everyone could see that another Jew's blessing did not come at his expense. When Hashem is the source of the blessing, there is room beneath the cloud for everyone.

Perhaps there is an even deeper point. The mann and the water sustained millions of individual Jews; the clouds transformed those individuals into a nation. Everyone camped together, traveled together, and was guided toward the same destination. The miracle was not merely that Hashem preserved many separate lives, but that He fashioned them into Klal Yisrael. That is what the sukkah asks us to remember. Judaism is not simply a collection of private relationships between individuals and Hashem. We live beneath a common shelter, carry a shared history, and travel toward a common destiny. The sukkah commemorates the moment when Hashem did not merely care for every Jew but gathered us all beneath one cloud and taught us to become one people.

3. The Double Joy of Sukkos

[Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein asks](#) why Sukkos, more than the other Yomim Tovim, is called *zman simchaseinu*. The Torah mentions simchah once regarding Shavuot, but three times regarding Sukkos. The agricultural cycle explains one dimension: on Pesach the harvest has barely begun; on Shavuot part of the produce has been gathered; only on Sukkos is the entire harvest safely brought home. Sukkos therefore marks completion, satisfaction and joy.

The two opinions regarding the sukkah reflect two parallel sources of this joy. According to Rabbi Akiva, the *sukkos* commemorate the actual huts in which our ancestors lived, connecting the Yom Tov to the ingathering of the harvest. According to Rabbi Eliezer, they commemorate the *ananei hakavod*, which departed after the *cheit ha'egel* and returned only after Yom Kippur, when the Mishkan began to be built. Sukkos therefore celebrates not merely forgiveness, but the complete restoration of our closeness to Hashem.

These two journeys culminate on Sukkos. The physical journey is the gathering of the year's produce; the spiritual journey is the *teshuvah* of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. *Teshuvah* means returning, and its goal is not simply to erase sin but to bring us home to Hashem. Once both forms of ingathering are complete, we can experience the full joy of *zman simchaseinu*.

Parperet

[Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein explains](#) the steadily decreasing number of *korbanos* offered during Sukkos through a striking Midrash Tanchuma: proper hospitality begins with a lavish meal, but each successive day the host serves something simpler, until the guest is eating ordinary household food. This is not because the welcome has worn thin. To the contrary, the highest level of hospitality is reached when the guest no longer feels like a guest at all, but like a member of the family who is completely at home. On Sukkos, HaKadosh Baruch Hu invites us to leave our own homes and dwell with Him in the *sukkah*.

As each day passes, the diminishing number of *korbanos* reflects our growing closeness: we require less ceremony because we increasingly feel “at home” with Hashem. This also explains why we recite the complete Hallel on every day of Sukkos, whereas on Pesach we do so only on the first days. Each day of Sukkos has a distinct number of *korbanos* and

therefore represents a new stage in our relationship with Hashem, as the formality recedes and the intimacy deepens.

Manning the Media

David Owen at *The New Yorker* [writes about Americans' "obsession"](#) with “putting our belongings in metal boxes and then never looking at them again” – in other words, he takes a close examination of our country’s massive self-storage industry.

What struck me was a contrast that gets highlighted by our *yomim tovim*: the world may, apparently, lock all their things away in a rented closet. But we, on the other hand, repeatedly reach for that old object to use it again: the dusty *machzor*, the *esrog box*, the *menorah*... a thought-provoking article on our relationship with objects. ([PDF](#))