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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

חג הסוכות

בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכּוֹת. לְמַעַן יָדְעוּ דִּרְתִּיכֶם כִּי בַּסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם. (ויקרא כג, מב-מג)

You shall dwell in Sukkos for seven days; every native in Klal Yisroel shall dwell in Sukkos. So that your generations will know that I caused the Bnei Yisroel to dwell in Sukkos when I took them from the land of Mitzrayim. (Vayikra 23:42-43)

In the *midbar*, Hashem enveloped and sheltered Klal Yisroel in His הַכְּבוֹד, עֲנַנֵי הַכְּבוֹד, *Clouds of Glory*. For this reason, the *possuk* teaches us that we are commanded to dwell in Sukkos. This helps us remember and commemorate the great miraculous gift that Hashem provided for us when we left Mitzrayim and travelled through the wilderness.

The Ramchal (*Derech Hashem* 4:8) offers a profound and inspiring insight into the *mitzvah* of Sukkah. He teaches that this *mitzvah* is not merely a commemoration of a historic event, but rather something relevant to each of us at all times. He writes that, in addition to providing physical shelter and protection, the Ananei HaKavod offered significant spiritual benefits as well. Just as these Clouds caused Klal Yisroel to stand apart and be elevated physically, they also facilitated the transmission of a unique הַקְדוּשָׁה אִשָּׁה exclusive to the nation. As a result of this, Klal Yisroel was differentiated from all other peoples and literally elevated and removed beyond the physical world, positioning Klal Yisroel as the highest of all nations of the world. (The Clouds granted Klal Yisroel a unique and elevated spiritual perspective on life, causing them to be distinguished from the nations of the world.)

The Ramchal continues: Just as the Clouds enabled Klal Yisroel to reach the lofty level intended for them in the Midbar, this Illumination remains relevant for every Yid in all generations. This is the Light of Kedushah, transmitted by Hashem, which surrounds every *tzaddik*, distinguishing him from others and elevating him above all. This is the concept that is renewed each Sukkos through the Sukkah.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that the Ramchal's lesson is relevant to everyone. Although throughout the rest of the year, this Spiritual Light is accessible only to the *tzaddikim*, during Sukkos, however, this Light of Kedushah is available to all. The Sukkah functions like the Ananei HaKavod, elevating every Yid from the surrounding world and uplifting them spiritually.

This function of the Ananei HaKavod, which elevates Klal Yisroel above the physical world, can be understood through an insight from R' Yerucham Levovitz *zatzal*. We conclude the *yehi ratzon* after Shemoneh Esrei with the *possuk* (*Malachi* 3:4): וְעָרְבָה לָהּ מִנַּחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכַשְׁנִים: *Then the offering of Yehudah and Yerushalayim will be pleasing to Hashem, as in days of old and in former years*. This prayer expresses our request for the return of the *korbanos* with the coming of Moshiach, which we desire to be "like the days of old and in former years". The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni*) explains this phrase as referring to the days of Hevel and Noach, when there was no idolatry in the world. R' Yerucham derived a significant lesson from this: one person's actions can impact the

entire world. When idolatry exists anywhere, even far away, it creates a deficiency in any *korbanos* being offered. Therefore, we daven for the days to come when the *avodah* of *korbanos* will be complete and untainted.

This understanding helps clarify the need for Klal Yisroel to have been completely removed from this world through the Ananei HaKavod. Although they were in the *midbar*, far from any civilisation and impure influences, a world defiled by sin still influences all its inhabitants. For Klal Yisroel to attain their elevated status, they required the profound effect that the Clouds provided: total detachment from the physical world.

The importance of one's surroundings for spiritual growth is emphasised in the Chinuch (*Mitzvah* 408) in relation to the Arei Miklat. He explains that one reason the unintentional killers were specifically exiled to the city of Levi'im was due to the elevated *madreigah* of the Levi'im. Because the Levi'im were not given a portion of the land, they did not spend time working the fields and were completely dedicated to spiritual matters and to serving Hashem. This exceptional status allowed the ground they inhabited to be infused with *kedushah*. Therefore, their territory was chosen as a means of providing possible atonement for accidental murderers.

Conversely, in Parshas Noach (6:12), we learn about the devastating impact of a corrupt environment. The *possuk* states: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁחָתָה, כִּי הִשָּׁחִית כָּל בָּשָׂר אֶת דְּרָכָו עַל הָאָרֶץ, *And Hashem saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupted, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth*. Rashi, drawing from the Midrash, explains that כָּל בָּשָׂר, *all flesh*, refers to both humans and animals, which had become corrupted through interbreeding across species. The immoral behaviour of the world's inhabitants polluted the air and defiled the land to such an extent that even animals, who are incapable of sin, became tainted. As a result, the Midrash also teaches that during the *mabul*, the top three *tefachim* of soil needed to be removed and swept away to cleanse the earth of its spiritual pollution.

The Shulchan Aruch (639:4), based on the Gemara (*Sukkah* 28b), states regarding the laws of Sukkah: וְכִשְׁמַבִּין וּמְדַקְדָּק בָּמָה שִׁיקְרָא וְיִלְמַד, יָכוֹל לִלְמַד חוּץ לַסֵּכָה כְּדִי שֶׁתֵּהָא דַּעְתּוֹ מִיִּשְׁבֵּת עָלָיו, *When one is focusing to understand deeply what they are learning, they can study outside of the Sukkah, to provide clarity of mind*. The Sefer Akeidah (*Emor* 67) presents a phenomenal insight: a person who engages in in-depth Torah study experiences the same spiritual elevation as one who sits in the Sukkah. The elevation derived from dwelling in the Sukkah, which, as explained, spiritually uplifts a person from earthly lowliness, is also attained by someone learning Torah *b'iyun* with toil and focus. Engaging in Torah study has the power to elevate a person into a different realm, allowing them to transcend their surroundings and exist in a higher domain.

We understand from the above how essential pure surroundings are and the far-reaching impact our environment has on us. May we merit the *segulah* of the Sukkah, which can uplift us from our lowly surroundings, and inspire us to achieve new spiritual heights this Yom Tov.

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