



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

חג הסוכות

The Torah (*Devorim* 31:11-12) teaches about the special *mitzvah* of Hakhel. Every seven years, on the first day of Chol HaMoed Sukkos following the Shemittah year, the entire nation was commanded to gather at the Beis HaMikdash to listen to the king read from Sefer Devorim.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that the time chosen by Hashem for teaching the nation Torah was significant because it combined three key elements: 1) After Klal Yisroel observed the *mitzvah* of Shemittah, 2) When Klal Yisroel had been *oleh regel* to the Beis HaMikdash, and 3) During the Yom Tov of Sukkos. He notes that these three aspects share a common theme: they all foster and develop within Klal Yisrael the attribute of *bitachon* - trust in Hashem.

The year of Shemittah taught a profound lesson in *bitachon*, emphasising that all blessings come from Hashem and that our abundance is dependent on our faith in Him. The Meforshim highlight an apparent contradiction regarding how Klal Yisroel was assured of provisions during Shemittah: Was it through an abundant crop that would sustain them for three years, or was it that a small amount would suffice to satisfy them?

The Meforshim explain that the nature of the blessing depended on the individual's level of trust in Hashem. Those who questioned, *מה נאכל בשנה השביעית*, *What will we eat in the seventh year?* were granted the miracle of abundant crops. However, this came with a downside: receiving such a large quantity of produce – enough for three years - required extensive labour for harvesting and storage. On the other hand, those who did not voice their doubts and placed their complete trust in Hashem received the optimal blessing of *אֹכֵל קִימָעָא וּמִתְבָּרַךְ בְּמַעְיוֹ*, *one eats a little and is blessed in their innards*. Thus, Shemittah was the ultimate demonstration of *bitachon* for Klal Yisroel: our blessings come from Hashem in proportion to our trust in Him. (See Issue #83 for further discussion of this concept.)

We further recognise that the *mitzvah* of *aliyah l'regel* represents a profound manifestation of *bitachon*. All able-bodied men of the nation were instructed to leave their homes and properties to travel to the Beis HaMikdash for Yom Tov. How could the people be assured that their properties and land would not be ransacked and pillaged by nearby enemies, who surely knew about this mass travel to Yerushalayim? The answer lies in *bitachon*. As the *possuk* states, *שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָּל זָכוּרךָ ...*, *Three times a year, all your males shall appear... for I shall banish nations before you...* And no man will covet your land when you go up to appear before Hashem (*Shemos* 34:23-24). The Meforshim explain that Hashem instilled fear in the enemies of Klal Yisroel so that they would not approach the borders of Eretz Yisroel, even though it was unguarded, with all the men away. This served as a tremendous lesson for the nation about placing one's trust in Hashem.

Lastly, the *mitzvah* of Sukkah serves as a great embodiment of *bitachon*. The Torah states regarding the commandment of dwelling in the Sukkah (*Vayikra* 23:42-43):

בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, כָּל הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכּוֹת. לְמַעַן יָדְעוּ דִּרְתֵיכֶם כִּי בַּסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי
אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

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.

In the *midbar*, Klal Yisroel were not only granted the bare essentials such as food and water, but they also received an added layer of protection from all the elements – the סוּכָה, which refers to the עֲנִי הַכְּבוֹד. This teaches us to trust in Hashem to provide all that we need.

Furthermore, the message of: צֵא מִדִּירְתְּ קֹבֵעַ וְשָׁב בְּדִירְתְּ עֲרָאִי, *go out from your permanent dwelling place to dwell in a temporary dwelling place*, teaches and enables one to have *bitachon*. By recognising that our lives in this world serve only as preparation for the next, we can avoid setting overly high expectations, making it easier to cope with life's disappointments. Reflecting on the transience of this world puts everything into perspective and empowers a person to trust in and have faith in Hashem.

The Rosh Yeshiva explains the reason why this intense combination of these three specific times embodying *bitachon* was essential for Hakhel. *Bitachon* is a prerequisite for learning and acquiring Torah; without it, one cannot fully focus on Torah study. A person inevitably has many worries and concerns, and without trusting in Hashem to take care of their needs, they cannot immerse themselves in Torah. However, when a person places their trust in Hashem to manage their troubles, they can fully engage in Torah, regardless of their circumstances.¹ With the profound strengthening of *bitachon* after experiencing a year of Shemittah, participating in *aliyah l'regel*, and celebrating Sukkos, Klal Yisroel was in a perfect position to learn Torah from the king during Hakhel.

The message of *bitachon* expressed during the Yom Tov of Sukkos also explains why this Chag is particularly referred to as זְמַן שִׂמְחָתֵינוּ, the time of joy. Living with *bitachon* in Hashem leads to a joyful life. Dwelling in the Sukkah helps us gain the right perspective: it encourages us to focus on what truly matters and to trust in Hashem to take care of all our needs.

May we strive to internalise the message of Sukkos, placing our *bitachon* in Hashem. This will enable us to dedicate ourselves to serving Hashem and learning Torah without worries, granting us a Yom Tov that is truly זְמַן שִׂמְחָתֵינוּ!

גוֹט יוֹם טוֹב

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¹ It is related that R' Yechezkel Levenstein *zatzal* observed that the main difference between R' Chaim Brisker's learning and that of others is not due to exceptional innate intelligence. Instead, when R' Chaim studied Torah, he engaged with his "whole" mind, while many of us learn with only "half" our minds, as the other half is often distracted by worries and other thoughts.