

## Kabbalistic-Chassidic Dimensions of Succot

Points from a discourse by Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, Succot 1966<sup>1</sup>

ושאבתם מים בששון ממעיני הישועה.

#1) 'And you shall draw water with joy, from the fountains of liberation' (Is.12:3). The Sages relate this verse to the Joy of the Water Drawing which would take place in the Temple during the nights of the Succor Festival, when crowds of people would gather in the Temple. A balcony was constructed for the women to stand, above the men. The greatest sages of the generation would dance, watched by the crowd. There was beautiful singing. The Talmud says 'one who has not witnessed this joy of the Water Drawing, has never experienced joy in his life'.

What makes this joy on Succot so great?

# 2) The verse 'Sound the Shofar when [the moon] is hidden, [and this will be revealed] on the day of our Festival [Succot] (Psalms 81:4) means that all those spiritual aspects which were concealed on Rosh Hashana, are revealed on Succot. Similarly regarding Yom Kippur: its spiritual aspects are revealed on Succot.

For the Succah represents the Clouds of Glory. This is how the verse 'for I made the Israelites dwell in Succot, when I took them out of Egypt' (Lev.23:43) is interpreted. The Succot mean the Clouds of Divine Glory. Hence we are commanded to make Succot, and the Schach of the Succah, representing the Clouds, is drawn from the Cloud of Incense on Yom Kippur.

From the revelation of aspects of Yom Kippur on Succot, comes the theme of Joy, as we say 'the time of our joy'. Because *joy is revelation*. A further level of joy is expressed in the Joy of the Water drawing: this too is a revelation of Yom Kippur.

So let us understand more about Yom Kippur, in order to understand the joy of Succot.

---

<sup>1</sup> From Ush'avtem Mayim beSason 5727 (1966). Printed in Dvar Malchut for Succot 5774 (2013).

As regards Repentance, in order to 'Repent one day before one dies, all one's days must be spent in Repentance. Nonetheless, there is a special atmosphere at the time of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Let us try to understand what this is.

#3) The MahaRaSh (R. Shmuel, d.1882) explains (p.7) that the Sefirah Malchut is called Throne (Kise) because its theme is concealment (Kese), it conceals the inner dimension (*mohin*). That is the meaning of 'the hand is on the Throne of Y-H' (Ex.17:16) for Malchut, the Throne, receives from Wisdom (the Father establishes the Daughter) which is hinted at by Y-H. (till I.7)

I.15 But this flow from Wisdom to Malchut is in a concealed way, like Wisdom flowing to Speech. For although Speech reveals Wisdom a person cannot reveal to another all the ideas which are within his mind.

This can be compared to a teacher communicating with his student. The student receives only from the speech of the teacher, and therefore his understanding is limited. Even after 40 years when the Sages say 'a student understands his teacher', he still does not grasp the essence...

So it is with Wisdom and Malkhut, and hence Malkhut reveals (creates) in a way of multiplicity, which is an expression of the Gevurah (Severity) and concealment. Hence Malchut is called Heshbon, calculation, as in the verse 'pools in Heshbon'.

In the service of the individual: during the year, his/her Teshuvah is only through Malchut, Heshbon, limited. So although Teshuvah is above all Mitzvot, and hence it can put right all the flaws of one's observance of the Mitzvot, but it is limited.

Hence it has limited power: it can only heal the transgressions termed Heshbon, which emerge from combinations of letters of Thought, Speech and Action, which have not harmed the Yehidah of the Soul. (While serious transgressions, which call for a death penalty by the Beth Din, do affect that level).

However the Teshuvah of Yom Kippur reaches that deeper level as well.

In Teshuvah there are two levels: Teshuvah from Awe, through which deliberate sins become like accidental transgressions, and Teshuvah from Love, in which deliberate sins become like merits.

Deliberate sins and accidental ones are not opposites. It is less difficult to transform one into the other. This is the lower level of Repentance, of the entire year. But sins and merits are opposites. To transform sins into merits an exalted level of Teshuvah is required. This is the Teshuvah of Love, and this is what happens on Yom Kippur.

#4) To understand the Repentance of Yom Kippur: there is a verse 'great is G-d, His understanding is beyond number' (Psalms 147:5). What has 'number' got to do with 'understanding'?

In numbers there are different levels: units, tens, hundreds, thousands, myriads. Even a myriad, while it is a high number, is limited.

This expresses the downchaining of the worlds. Each Sefirah of the Ten Sefirot is a 'unit', and the realm of the Ten Sefirot is a 'hundred', and they are a 'tenth' of the realm of Wisdom and Understanding, which are called 'thousand' (elef - אלף), relating also to the verse 'I will teach you wisdom, I will teach you understanding' – אאלפך – and the external aspect of Keter is called Myriad, ten thousand.

But the inward aspect of Keter, called Ancient of Days, עתיק יומין – is beyond number. For the highest level of the downchaining of worlds is as nothing compared with this exalted level.

And of the Essence of the Infinite it says (in Tikkunei Zohar) 'You are One without Heshbon, without Number'.

(p.12) In the service of the individual, there are units, tens, hundreds, and thousands, which means Torah study, as it says 'the Torah preceded the world by two thousand years' (Tanhuma Vayeshev 4, Zohar II 49a).

And in order that there should be free will, there is also the corresponding opposite, from the impure realm. Hence there is sin on the level of thought, speech and action; there is sin because one is sunk in negative passion; or negative ideas in one's mind, or even a deeply negative Will... But the essence of the Soul is free.

Yet sometimes one even drags the essence of one's Soul into negativity, through serious transgressions which are themselves above number (Heshbon). The latter cannot be healed by the Teshuvah of the whole year, which has the quality of a Myriad.

For this there comes the Teshuvah of Yom Kippur, which comes from the essence of the day, which does not depend on the service of the individual. For on Yom Kippur, Malchut rises to Binah (Understanding), which draws from the inwardness of Keter. At this level 'His Understanding is beyond Number'. Hence from this level there is Teshuvah which can heal those aspects of sin which are themselves beyond number.

#5) Hence at Neilah of Yom Kippur one of the prayers is 'You give Your hand to receive those who repent'. The 'hand' (figuratively) means the Divine power to reach a person who is on the lowest level, deep in the pit, beyond Heshbon...'

This is possible because on Yom Kippur the radiance of the inwardness of Keter is revealed, which can heal even those negative levels which are themselves 'beyond number'.

#6) Through this we can understand the great joy of Succot. The joy comes from the fullness of the atonement on Yom Kippur. It is the closeness which comes after being distant. Like the joy of a wedding: for the groom and bride in their origin were one, but then they were torn apart from each other and were born in different families, and were remote from each other. Then at last in their marriage they are rejoined together.

Even more so is the joy of the soul which on Succot is rejoined with the Infinite. The negative actions which separated it are turned into merits, because they are transformed into a radiance which spurs the person to positive action.

This is why the Schach of the Succah, like the Clouds of Glory, comes from the cloud of incense in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. The eleven ingredients of the incense have the power to transform the eleven impure aspects of Kelippah to something positive. This takes place inwardly on Yom Kippur and is revealed openly on Succot.

#7) However the flow from the Schach on Succot is still a surrounding radiance, *makif*.

This has to be drawn into an inwardness within the person<sup>2</sup>. This is the effect of the Four Kinds of plant: the Lulav, Etrog, Hadassim (Myrtle) and Willow.

The Four Kinds represent disparate kinds of people, as is explained in the Midrash. The Etrog has taste and fragrance, signifying Torah wisdom ('taste') and Mitzvot. The Zohar compares Mitzvot to fragrance. The Lulav (date palm branch) has only taste – dates, signifying Torah study but less attention to Mitzvot. The Myrtle has fragrance, just Mitzvot. The Willow has neither quality. So these four disparate plants represent difference, yet they are drawn together in unity.

This helps achieve the drawing of the infinite radiance of the Inwardness of Keter into the Jewish people as a whole, and each person in particular: through *ahdut*, unity.

Further, each of the four species of plant represent unity. The Etrog continues to grow on the tree through differing seasons. The Lulav has disparate leaves (which will become a palm frond) which are bound together in the Lulav. The Myrtle has groups of three leaves growing closely together. The Willow of the brook grows in large numbers together, described by the Talmud as 'growing in brotherliness'.

Through unity, the exalted radiance of the inwardness of Keter can be drawn into one's being and become effective in one's life, bringing blessings for the coming year.

#7 continued) A further level of drawing this exalted 'surrounding' radiance into the inwardness of the Jewish people and the individual is through the Water libations on the days of Succot. The drawing of water took place with great joy. The Talmud says 'he who did not see the joy of the water drawing never saw joy in his life'.

The power of water to relate to the radiance which is without number, from the level beyond Heshbon, is because water too is beyond qualities. Water in itself has no colour; it assumes the colour of the vessel

---

<sup>2</sup> This section is drawn from other discourses and is also included in the previous discourse given for Succot in 1966.

in which it flows.. This aspect of water links it with 'beyond number' and 'beyond Heshbon'.

The water, spiritually emerging from an exalted realm, flows into the world, and is poured on the Altar. The great joy in the Temple was expressed by the leading figures of the generation dancing publicly, watched by huge crowds of men and women.

But our custom of joyful dancing with the Torah Scrolls on Simchat Torah in a sense surpasses the Joy of the Water drawing. For in our synagogues, not only the leading Rabbis dance. Everyone can dance.

This expresses a higher level of unity, drawing the infinite radiance released on Yom Kippur, atoning for even the worst sins, into the minds and hearts and lives of every individual for a year of joy and of goodness, of unity, expressed in every aspect of life.

The ultimate expression of this healing atonement, unity and joy will be with the coming of the Messiah. Then the most exalted levels of Divine radiance will be revealed in our world, bringing Redemption to the Jewish people and peace to all humanity. May this be swiftly, in our days.

oooooooooooooooooooo