Aseret Y'mei T'shuva, and Yom Kippur period, we emerge with a new perspective (hopefully) of our lives. We've worked hard over the Yamim Nora’im and would like to believe that we achieved positive results. But there is something still missing.

SIMCHA. Joy. Yes, there was joy when we fell Kor'im in simulation of the kohanim and the people packed into the Azara on the most glorious of occasions. There was joy when we were singing EMET MA NEHDAR. But that is followed immediately by the sharp "reminder" that all of the above was in the past and is NOT in our present. A present that has stretched for a long time. And then the Machzor plunges us into the darkest times of the 10 Martyrs. Even without this gloomy reminder, we are well-aware of the Books of Life and Death open before G-d, so to speak. We don't say hallel on the two Yamim Tovim of Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. Yet, they are days to which SIMCHA applies. This we see in the fact that RH and YK each can terminate Shiva for mourners. Shabbat doesn't even do that.

So the Simcha is there, we get glimpse of it. But we can't really hold on to it. And what do we have right after Yom Kippur? The preparations for and then the celebration of Z'man Simchateinu. And that's very good. With our total involvement in the mitzva of Sukka - one of the very few mitzvot that one fulfills with his complete mind, body, and soul, the other being Living in Eretz Yisrael (and Mikve to some extent) - and the Arbaa Minim and the festive meals and a Simchat Beit HaSho'eiva or two, we definitely give Simcha a fair chance of coming back to us.

But that, by itself, is not enough. It isn't enough to tremble in awe of judgment on RH & YK and follow that with celebrating Sukkot and Simchat Torah. We need more. And it's there for the taking. Hoshana Rabba shows us the way. Hoshana Rabba pulls the Yamim Nora’im into the joyous holiday of Sukkot. And suddenly we see the chance for that something that was missing. It wasn't just Simcha. It was the opportunity to elevate our T’shuva efforts from the level of T'SHUVA MIYIR'A, repentance motivated by fear to the higher level of T'SHUVA MEI-AHAVA, repentance motivated by Love of G-d and Love of Torah. That Ahava is a consequence of Simcha.

We were not just looking for the element of Simcha in the High Holydays. We needed the Simcha to help us repent in the more special way. Some explain the Simcha that follows Yom Kippur as being the result of a thorough spiritual cleans-ing. But Simcha is more than a result. It is a necessary component, ingredient of the process. That's why Sukkot must follow YK so closely. We need the connection of the two, not just the experience of the two. Ahava and Yir'a must go hand in hand; they must help each other. And they must reside together well in our beings. CHAG SAMEI'ACH.

WORD of the MONTH cont. from p.2  A weekly TT feature to help clarify practical and conceptual aspects of the Jewish Calendar, thereby enhancing our appreciation of G-d's gift to us of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem...

for Kiddush L'vana this Tishrei. The molad was early Wednesday morning, 4 hours and 26 minutes (no chalakim). That translates to 5:05am Israel Summer Time. Since then, we have fallen back to Standard (Winter) Time, so let's adjust the time of the molad to 4:05am. The average time from one molad to the next is 29d 12h 44m 1p. This average time is used to calculate Kiddush L'vana times, including the NIGUD, full moon, which is the deadline for KL, rather than the actual (astro-nomical) time of Full Moon. Halfway from one molad to the next is 14d 18h 22m since the last molad. 14 days after Wednesday is Wednesday (Erev Sukkot, Sept. 26th). 18h 22m after 4:05am is 10:27pm, Leil Sukkot, the first night of the Chag. Although we generally do not say KL on Leil Shabbat or Chag, when it is the last op and we haven't yet said KL, we can.
Time of Joy... Perfect Timing!

Pesach's description as Z'MAN CHEIRUTEINU comes from The Event of Pesach, i.e. Y'TZI'AT MITZRAYIM. Shavu'ot's description as Z'MAN MATAN TORATEINU comes from its Event. Sukkot's description as Z'MAN SIMCHATEINU does NOT come from an event, but rather - we might suggest - from the time of the year and the proximity to the Yamim Nora'im (and those are not the same).

Elsewhere in this issue (and in past Sukkot issues, as well) we gave an explanation for Z'MAN SIMCHATEINU being more than a default description in lieu of something specific and special to match the events of the other two R'GALIM. But there is more.

Agriculturally, the fall is the most relaxed and happiest season of the yearly cycle. Crops have been harvested, storehouses are full, farmers don't worry about how the crops will do - they see the (hopefully) favorable results.

Spiritually, we are on a "high" from the (hopefully) successful results of the challenge of T'shuva and from the attainment of KAPARA from G-d. Having gone through the most recent Elul, Rosh HaShana,
In the Yom Kippur issue, we wrote about the first opportunity for Kiddush L’vana during Tishrei. Now let’s take another look at the...
SUKKOT READINGS

On the first day of Sukkot we read from Parshat Emor, Vayikra 23, the portion of the Festivals. We actually start the reading several p'sukim earlier with the mitzvot of not taking an animal from its mother to use it as a korban before it is 8 days old. And the prohibition of slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day. This second mitzva applies to korbanot and to "personal" use of animals for food. The first mitzva is specifically for korbanot (but its spirit belongs to "regular" animals too).

Next the Torah teaches us the mitzvot of Kiddush HaShem and its opposite. Perhaps we can understand why Chazal "backed us up" these 8 p'sukim, rather than leaving us just with the portion of the cycle of the Chagim. First of all, on Chag there are many animals used both for Korbanot and for the dinner table. The two mitzvot included in this opening portion of the Torah reading serve as a reminder that we have rules and regulations that go along with our commandments and permission to use the animals for our own purposes. The "reminder" of Kiddush HaShem and Chilul HaShem, serves us well to focus our SIMCHA in the proper direction and not allow ourselves to get carried away by improper joyful behavior. The final pasuk before the presentation of the Chagim reminds us that all the Holidays are commemorative of the Exodus from Egypt. Now, we are ready to continue with the reading about the Holidays themselves.

The Torah begins with Shabbat, followed by Pesach, the Omer, Shavuot, Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. **This 52-pasuk portion is read for 5 people, the number of Aliyot assigned to Yom Tov.**

The straightforward (P'SHAT) reading of the presentation of the cycle of the Holidays is that it begins with Shabbat. We acknowledge this in the regular Friday night Kiddush when we refer to Shabbat as RISHON HU L'MIKRA'EI KODESH, the first of the days called Sacred, meaning the days whose sanctity is accompanied by a prohibition of Melacha.

There is another way of understanding the opening p'sukim of PARSHAT HAMO'ADIM, the portion of the festivals. (This is attributed to the GR'A).

Speak to the people of Israel... these are My Holidays (which will be detailed shortly). On six of them, there are some Melachot that may be done, but on the seventh of the Holidays, no manner of Melacha is permitted, it is a SHABBAT SHABBATON. Rosh HaShana, first day of Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret, 1st and 7th day of Pesach, and Shavuot are the 6 holy days on which some Melacha is permitted. But on Yom Kippur... no melacha at all, it is Shabbat Shabbaton...

As mentioned in the Yom Kippur issue, the term Shabbat Shabbaton occurs 6 times in the Torah. Twice it is definitely referring to Yom Kippur. Twice it is definitely referring to our weekly Shabbat. Its mention in Emor is debated - let's split it down the middle. This gives Shabbat 2½ references and Yom kippur 2½. That's 5 together. The sixth time, Shabbat Shabbaton refers to the Sh'mita year. This past Shabbat (if you are reading these words before Shabbat Chol HaMoed) was all of the Torah's uses of the phrase Shabbat Shabbaton. All of them. Yom Kippur on Shabbat during Sh'mita. This last occurred 14 years ago and before that, 77 years earlier. It is a powerful convergence of Kedusha.

Maftir is read from a second Torah, from Bamidbar 29: 12-16, Parshat Pinchas. It is a 5-pasuk presentation of the Korban Musaf of the first day of Sukkot.

It is significant to note that because the number of bulls in the Musaf of the days of Sukkot change - 13 on the first day, then 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, and 7 on the seventh day - the Torah identifies each day of Sukkot as its own. In other words, there is mention of "And on the second day", "and on the third day", etc. This is not the case with Pesach. The Musaf of each day was the same as the first, and the Torah does not announce, "and on the second day of Pesach..." It could have, but it doesn't. (The Torah, for example, did not use "ditto" marks for the gifts of the Tribal Leaders, even though the gifts were identical. But with Pesach, it did. K'A'ILEH...)

Consequently, we view each day of Sukkot as a separate Chag (sort of) and each day gets full Hallel. Days 2 thru 7 of Pesach are not considered distinct from the first day and as a result Hallel is required only on the first day. What subsequently began as a custom to recite Hallel throughout Pesach has now become required, but the essential difference of that Hallel is preserved by our practice of skipping the first 11 p'sukim in each of two of the chapters among the six that make up Hallel.

Haftara of the first day of Sukkot comes from Zecharya and contains the famous prophesy of the time in the future when other nations will recognize the One G-d and those nations that persecuted Israel will be severely punished. There is a universal message of Sukkot in that people from other nations will also be challenged with the mitzva of Sukka. The universal nature of Sukkot can also be seen by the 70 bulls of the Musafs of the seven days, which correspond to the 70 nations of the ancient world (that descend from No'ach). So too, the fact that the world is judged for rainfall on Sukkot gives the holiday a universal flavor, since rain is not just for the Jewish people..

**Chol HaMoed Torah reading**

Friday (day 2), Sunday (day 4), Monday (day 5), Tuesday (day 6), and Wednesday (day 7, Hoshana Rabba), is the "same" Torah reading format. One Torah is taken out (as opposed to Chol HaMoed Pesach when two Torahs are used each day). Four people are called to the Torah and the same set of p'sukim is read for each of the Aliyot. Each Aliya consists of three p'sukim (the minimum length for an Aliya), comes from Parshat Pinchas, and deals with the Musaf offering of each day.
(In Chutz LaAretz, the Chol HaMoed reading is a bit different, reflecting the concept of SFEIKA DYOMA, doubt as to the actual date of a given day - this was the origin of the second day of Yom Tov in the Diaspora. Although today there is no doubt, certain aspects of davening and other halachic issues continue to be based on the original doubt situation. The most significant issue on this score is “eating in the sukkah on Shmmi Atzeret”. Remember, we are talking about outside of Eretz Yisrael. That some people do, some don't, some make kiddush in one place and continue their meal elsewhere, night, day, both... reflect the combination of (pretend) SAFEK (doubt) and other factors, which often contradict each other.)

There is no haftara on Chol HaMoed (except on Shabbat Chol HaMoed). Our Sages did not want to burden the people who had to work (hopefully in a permitted way) during Chol HaMoed with extra shul-time.

Shabbat Chol HaMoed

KOHELET is read on Shabbat Chol HaMoed Sukkot (unless there is none, in which case it is read on the first day of Sukkot - Shabbat - in Israel, and on Shmmi Atzeret - also a Shabbat, in Chutz LaAretz). It is read before the reading of the Torah. When Kohelet is read from a parchment megila (common in Jerusalem), brachot are recited on the reading. No brachot are said if it is read from a printed book. The megila by Shlomo HaMelech in his later years takes a serious look at the Life we all live, and his conclusions boil down to there being nothing of real value in this World. Except to be G-d-fearing. Kohelet provides a sobering balance to potentially inappropriate levity of the Chag and hopefully focuses our joy in the proper direction.

Torah reading We then take out two Torahs. We call seven people to the first Torah, from Parshat Ki Tisa, specifically Shmots 33:12 through 34:26, a total of 38 p’sukim. It is the portion following the sin of the golden calf, after Moshe pleads on behalf of the People, after G-d agrees to forgive the People, and after Moshe smashes the Luchot, destroys the Eigel, and castigates the people (and kills off the 3000 primary violators). Moshe Rabeinu asks for a greater knowledge and intimacy with G-d. G-d gives Moshe a greater glimpse of His Essence than He had previously shown Moshe, but only a glimpse. Then G-d commands Moshe to cut a new set of Luchot, which He will engrave as He had previously done with the first set. Then we read about the 13 Divine Attributes, which is followed by a summary of the SHALOSH REGALIM. The portion ends with the prohibition of eating meat & milk mixtures.

Maftir is read from a second Torah, from Parshat Pinchas. It is a 5-pasuk presentation of the Korban Musaf of the third day of Sukkot.

Haftara Shabbat Chol HaMoed comes from Yechezkeil (38:18-39:16), a total of 21 p'sukim. Yechezkel describes a battle in the end of time (before the coming of the mashich) when armies hostile to the Jewish People will attack and be thwarted by G-d. The defeat of what has become known as GOG UMAGOG, will result in the worldwide acknowledgement of the greatness of the G-d of Israel as the One G-d. There is a tradition that this war will occur on Sukkot, hence its choice as the haftara. Sukkot shares the universal message of G-d in the world.

At Mincha on Shabbat Chol HaMoed we read the first part of the upcoming regularly scheduled sedra - V’ZOT HABRACHA. Usually, there is at least a week until we get to read the full sedra, sometimes two or three weeks. This time, the Shabbat afternoon preview is less than a week before we read the whole sedra.

SICHCHAT TORAH

Just to clarify (and confuse): The Torah’s name for the 8th day of Sukkot (but Sukkot only has 8 days!) which is really its own separate Holiday, is SHMINI ATZERET. That's what we call it in the Amida and in Yaalleh V’yavo. Either Yom HaShmnti, Chag HaAtzeret HaZeh or Yom Chag Shmmi Atzeret HaZeh - depends on your Nusach. In Chutz, LaAretz, where two days are observed, the second day of Shmmi Atzeret took on the name of Simchat Torah when that occasion was linked to Shmmi Atzeret. Both days are called Shmmi Atzeret in Kiddush and davening. In Israel where only one day of Yom Tov is observed, the one day carries both names, but in Kiddush and davening it is always called Shmmi Atzeret.

On the night of Simchat Torah, after HAKAFOT (see special sheet in the Pull-Out section of this Torah Tidbits), we read the beginning of V’ZOT HABRACHA. Some call three people, some call five. This is the only night of the year that we read from the Torah, after joyously dancing with the Torahs and making Hakafot around the Bima. It reflects the joy and love we feel towards the Torah on this day of its celebration. The Old Minhag Yerushalayim (GR"A) is not to read the Torah on Simchat Torah night. Most shuls do read the Torah on Simchat Torah night.

And, just for your knowledge, Shulchan Aruch does mention Torah reading on Leil Simchat Torah, but not from V’zot HaBracha. Rather different Parshiyot are read for each Aliya.

On Simchat Torah morning, after Hakafot, we read the sedra of V’Zot HaBracha. This is the only "Parshat HaShavua" that is not read on Shabbat (except in Eretz Yisrael when Simchat Torah falls on Shabbat). Five people are called to the Torah, as on all Yamim Tovim. The sedra is not completed with these 5 Aliyot.

These five portions are reread over and over again, many times with several Torahs being read simultaneously at different locations in shul. This allows all men to receive an Aliya on Simchat Torah in a shorter period of time than it would take if reading from one Torah only. Of course, all of this depends on the size of the congregation.

There are places, by the way, that only 5 people are called to the Torah, like any other Yom Tov, with no repeating. Not everyone gets an Aliya.
There is a custom that the last Aliya before Chatan Torah is given to one of the oldest men in shul, and with him, all young boys (who cannot take their own Aliya) are invited to share this KOL HA’NE’ARIM Aliya.

Following this, the Chatan Torah is called for the last Aliya in the Torah. A chupa is often made over the Bima by four tall guys with a tallit, as the Torah is completed.

After V’zot HaBracha (and the Book of D’varim, and the whole Torah) is completed, the Torah is lifted, closed, and "dressed" and a second Torah is read from.

This time, the honor of the Aliya goes to the Chatan B’reishit for whom will be read the beginning of the Torah. We never finish with the Torah. We begin it as soon as we get to the end. This is the "real" reason for our great joy. We celebrate, not the conclusion of the Torah, but the wonderful feeling of beginning again and of being the people to whom the Torah was given and for whom the Torah is our way of life. Again a Chupa is made for this Aliya (customs vary).

The whole first chapter of B’reishit is read, plus the first four p’sukim of the 2nd chapter, which describes the first Shabbat.

Maftir read from a third Torah, comes from Parshat Pinchas and presents the Musaf of Shmini Atzeret.

The Haftara for Simchat Torah picks up where the Torah left off - with the beginning of the Book of Yehezukia. Aside from it being the natural choice for Haftara of V’zot HaBracha because it is its continuation, it also contains G-d’s encouragement to Yehezukia to cling to the Torah and immerse himself in it day and night. This portion is particularly suited for Simchat Torah.

The reading for the first day of Sukkot begins by saying: “When an ox, sheep, or goat is born...” So we have a stork delivering the Zodiac symbols for Taurus (bull), Aries (ram), and Capricorn (goat).

In the upper-left is a graphic standing for OTO V’ET B’NO, the prohibition of slaughtering a cow and its offspring on the same day. The Torah uses the masculine form OTO (and also B’NO), although in practical terms, it is more common to know who the mother cow of a calf is than to know who sired it. Nonetheless, the prohibition applies to both male and female cows and male and female calves. BTW, this prohibition applies even if the cow and calf are owned by different people. The Mishna teaches us that if one comes to buy a calf, for instance, from a dealer who had sold the mother of that calf earlier that day, and the day is pre-Yom Tov, let’s say, when it was very common for people to bring animals to a shochet, then the seller has to tell the one who wants to buy the calf that its mother was just sold and likely to be on its way to slaughter. The buyer may not slaughter the calf without checking on the status of the mother cow. What does all this have to do with Sukkot or Yom Tov? Not much, but it’s in the Torah reading and therefore fair game for discussion (if you are so inclined).

The obvious part of the ParshaPix is/are the symbols of the Chagim. Pesach is represented by a Seder plate, there is a S’firat Ha’omer counter, a pair of Luchot for Shavuot, and a Shofar for Rosh HaShana. The Shofar, you will notice, is Xed out. Ask your children and guests why they think that was done. The answer is that in Emor, the term used for Rosh HaShana is Zichron T’ru’a, which is considered a reference to Shabbat when we don’t blow the Shofar, we only remember it. Yom Kippur is represented by the scales, tipped, hopefully, towards Good Life. Sukkot is represented in three ways: In the parsha, it is first called Chag HaAsif, the harvest festival, without reference to its mitzvot. That’s the fellow in the lower-right; he’s bringing in the harvest. Then the topic of Sukkot is brought up again, this time in the context of the Four Species, lower-left, and the Sukka, bottom-center. The Torah open on the top of the PP is right-side heavy, indicating V’zot HaBracha (hold it up to a mirror and you’ll see the B’reishit Torah). And finally, Migdal David represents the city of Jerusalem, mentioned prominently in the haftara of the first day of Sukkot. Remember, ParshaPix is a good generation-gap closer for reviewing Parsha.

What does Sukkot commemorate?

All holidays - Biblical, Rabbinic, Modern - mark events that occurred on the dates we celebrate the holidays. So too for fast days. Dates are significant. We left Egypt on the 15th of Nissan - hence, the date for Pesach. We received the Torah at Har Sinai on Shavuot. Rosh HaShana marks the Creation of Human Beings. Purim and Chanuka are locked into their calendar positions by what occurred on those days. On the sad side, Tish’a b’Av and the other fast days associated with the Churban (destruction) of the Beit HaMikdash, each fall on days that something particular occurred. So too for Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim in our own time.

What happened on the 15th of Tishrei? If something (GR’A) then okay, but if not, then what is Sukkot doing specifically at this time of the year and on that date?

Tur says that had the mitzva of Sukkot been commanded at Pesach-time (because of its connection to the Exodus), it would not be noticeable that we are performing a mitzva; it would seem that we are merely seeking comfort in the warming springtime. On the other hand, when we leave our homes as others are returning to theirs in anticipation of cooler and wetter weather, the mitzva aspect of Sukkot is manifest.

Rambam seems to take an opposite view, namely that the timing of Sukkot is a kind gesture by G-d - we dwell in the Sukka when it is neither too hot nor to cold, to do so in an enjoyable manner. (A lot depends upon where you live - Eretz Yisrael is highly recommended.)

Ramban says that Sukkot is set at the other side of the year from Pesach to emphasize that we must appreciate G-d’s having taken us out of Egypt and protecting us in the Wilderness - ALL YEAR ROUND. Pesach and Sukkot are each a 7-day
commemoration of the Exodus, each begins on the 15th day of the first month of the year (both Nissan and Tishrei are first months).

According to the Vilna Gaon, after the Sin of the Golden Calf, the Heavenly Clouds left the people. Only after the command to build the Mishkan, and after the materials were collected and the construction was about to begin, did the Clouds return. The GR"A says that this happened on 15 Tishrei, hence that date for Sukkot, the Sukka reminding us of the Clouds.

Menoras HaMaor says that Sukka is a humbling experience, perfect for the Jew who has just brought in the harvest and is about to tuck himself comfortably into his home for the winter. He would usually burst with pride at what he accomplished. Sukka brings the Jew out of his complacency and remind him - in the frail Sukka - of G-d's dominion over nature.

Chidushei HaRim says that the reason given by the Torah for Sukka - in order that your generations shall KNOW... KNOWLEDGE can be achieved best (or only) in a sin-free atmosphere, only right after the Yamim Nora'im. A person does not sin unless he is overcome by foolishness. Thus, we are capable of fulfilling the mitzva of Sukka best during the days following Yom Kippur, when T'shuva has restored our mental powers.

### The Composite Chag and the Simcha Machine

The view of the GR"A notwithstanding, it seems obvious that Sukkot is not so much a holiday in and of itself, but it can be seen as a composite - a very specific and special composite, of other chagim.

Picture, if you will, a machine that we will use to filter out the element of simcha (joy) from other holy days, copy that element of simcha without its partner emotions, and build with that simcha, a special holiday, one well-suited to represent them all.

Put Pesach into the machine and extract the joy of leaving Egyptian slavery and humiliation to become G-d's people. Leave behind the reminders of the bitter years as slaves. Leave behind the nervous anticipation of what will become of this new nation, so long enslaved. Take that pure joy of Pesach, duplicate it (don't take it away from Pesach) and fashion another seven day holiday beginning on the 15th of the first month of the year (Nissan and Tishrei both qualify for that honor), and let it too be in commemoration of the Exodus.

Now take Shavuot, the time of the receiving of the Torah. Put it into the machine to separate its exquisite joy from the other feelings of awe and dread. The thunder, lightning, fire and smoke, ever strengthening sound of the Shofar were not joyful experiences, they were terrifying. But the joy of Torah is real and very much a part of Shavuot. Duplicate it. Leave the original with Shavuot and take the copy, the pure joy of being one of G-d's nation. Attach that to an eighth day that will follow the seven days of the Chag. Let that be a day of rejoicing in the Torah. Pure joy. Let's call it Simchat Torah. Let's put it right after the seven days of the Chag rather than after seven sevens of days following the first day of Pesach. The weather is not ideal and waiting will be a hardship - but the parallelism remains.

Now take Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, the Yamim Nora'im. Days of Awe. Days when the heavenly books of Life and Death are open before G-d. Put them into the machine and don't be surprised by the great joy that filters out. We don't always feel the joy on RH and YK, because many other emotions - all somber and serious, cloud the mixture. But take the joy of G-d's forgiveness, take the joy of being HaShem's children - even if He needs to castigate us. Copy it and pour it onto the seventh day of Chag - Hoshana Raba. Let that day be the culmination of the T'shuva and Kapara process begun nearly two months earlier.

You've got a holiday that is so joyous that our Sages identified it as Zman SimchatEinu, the time of our joy. Fully recognizing that Simcha is a mitzva for all three Regalim, and probably for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur as well, our commentators nonetheless point out that the command of Simcha is not mentioned specifically in connection to Pesach, only once with Shavuot, and three times with Sukkot.

If you are not yet convinced that Sukkot is a composite of the other chagim, take a look at its Torah reading of the first day. Topic: the cycle of the year. Shabbat, Pesach, the Omer, Shavuot, Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. All other holidays have readings that are specific to each Chag. Not Sukkot. It is the holiday of holidays.

And what about its name. No, not Sukkot or Chag HaAsif. The other name. Chag. Sukkot is called Chag. Just Chag. For it is the quintessential Chag. And it is perfectly suited to its role. Agriculturally, it is only after the harvest that one can be truly joyous. Too many worries about the crops at Pesach and Shavuot time.

And emotionally, only after the spiritually cleansing experience of the Yamim Nora'im can we be truly happy. And not even too much later. Right after Yom Kippur is best. And that's what we have. No time to come down from the high of Yom Kippur. Too busy building the Sukka, acquiring the Arbaa Minim. Preparing for Yom Tov.

What also adds to our Joy is G-d's telling us that He remembers fondly our kindness to Him, by our following Him through the Midbar...

What bracha do you say when you sit on bubble gum?

**LEISHEV BAZOOKA, of course**

(Old one, but timely)
Rain, Rain... Come

The second bracha of the Amida - every Amida, weekday, Shabbat, Chag - is known as the bracha of G'VUROT, strengths or powers (of G-d). It is in this bracha that we mention G-d as the Rainmaker, during the rainy season.

From Musaf of Shmini Atzeret until Musaf of the first day of Pesach, we say that G-d is (among other things), the MASHIV HARU'ACH UMORID HAGASHEM (MHUH), the Causer of the wind to blow and the rain to fall.

This is what Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua discuss in the opening mishna of Masechet Taanit. Rabbi Eliezer felt that we should begin "mentioning" rain from the first day of Sukkot, since the world is judged for rainfall on Chag (Sukkot). Rabbi Yehoshua objected and said that rain is a negative sign on Sukkot, so why mention it. R’ Eliezer claims he was not suggesting asking for it; only mentioning it at this appropriate time. R’ Yehosha states that if mentioning is not a request then we should mention MHUH all year round. Meaning that it is his opinion that we should mention rain only when we want rain, namely at the beginning of the rainy season. R’Yehoshua's opinion prevails and we begin mentioning MHUH from Shmini Atzeret Musaf. We will ask for rain from the 7th of Cheshvan.

If one omits MHUH from the second bracha of the Amida, AND does not say MORID HATAL either, the Amida must be repeated. In Israel (and in many communities in the Diaspora), where MORID HATAL is said when MHUH is not said, it is considered that G-d’s role as Weather Maker is acknowledged throughout the year. Therefore, if one forgets MHUH, he can assume that he said MORID HATAL in its place (by force of habit) and his Amida is not invalid.

REMEMBER: for the two weeks after we start to say MHUH, we still say V’TEIN BRACHA in BAREICH ALEINU. We do not yet say TAL UMATAR until 7 Cheshvan (that is, in Israel. Beginning of December in Chutz LaAretz.) The Mishna explains that we delayed asking for rain until the last Oleh Regel (Pilgrim) returns home. Although this is anachronistic in our time, we retain the delay of two weeks as a practice of old, and as a reminder that this particular practice was based on our care and concern for every single Jew. This lesson is important and is therefore perpetuated even when the exact circumstances do not necessarily exist. Saying Tal U'Matar before its time challenges the validity of the Amida. Remember: MHUH and V’TEIN BRACHA until 7 Cheshvan.

B'reishit STATS
First of the 54 sedras; first of 12 sedras in B'reishit
Written on 241 lines in a Sefer Torah, ranks 9th
23 Parshiyot; 10 open, 13 closed, ranks 6th
146 p'sukim - ranks 8th (5th in B’reishit), same as Mikeitz; but Mikeitz is longer in lines, words, letters
1931 words - ranks 8th (5th in B’reishit)
7235 letters - ranks 11th (5th in B’reishit)

MITZVOT
One (positive) mitzva in B’reishit

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary
Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam’s Sefer HaMitzvit. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition).
[P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha p’tucha (open) or s’tuma (closed) respectively. Number of p’sukim in each parsha is indicated in parentheses. Perek:pasuk is given for the beginning of each parsha and for each mitzva.
Kohen - First Aliya - 34 p'sukim - 1:1-2:3

This Aliya contains the first account of Creation.

[P>1:1 (5)] The first parsha contains the "summary" statement of Creation (or the first phase of Creation - see further) and the account of Day One.

Baal HaTurim points out that the G'matriya of B'REISHIT BARA is 1116, as is the numeric value of the phrase: B'ROSH HASHANA NIV'RA - on R.H. it (the world) was created. Furthermore, the letters of B'reishit rearrange to spell ALEF B'TISHREI, the first of the month of Tishrei (or B'ALEF TISHREI - on the first of Tishrei - same thing), "confirming" the opinion that the world was created in Tishrei (R. Eliezer), rather than in Nissan, as the other opinion holds (R. Yehoshua).

If we could prove things with G'matriyas and anagrams, then maybe R. Eliezer would "win" the dispute, but as is, the dispute as to when the world was created remains a dispute - and halachically, it leans towards Nissan.

"In the beginning, G-d created the Heavens and the Earth. And the Earth..."

Did that happen on day 1 of Creation? Or is something before Day 1 being described?

Here is one possible answer. The first two p'sukim of B'reishit describe the totally, exclusively Divine aspect of Creation of Something from Nothing — YEISH ME'IAYIN. Before "B'reishit", perhaps nothing existed — except G-d. With the Divine Command of B'reishit, everything that now exists came into existence for the first time. All matter, all energy, thoughts, concepts, time — everything. According to this point of view, SHAMAYIM and ARETZ mean everything in the universe.

The first form that all of Creation had was TOHU VAVOHU, chaos. That's the second pasuk. And, this stage of Creation occurred BEFORE Day One. Not on the first day - before the Day One. And not a day before, not an instant before nor an eon before. It is pointless speculation to attempt to give a time-frame for the first two p'sukim, because TIME has meaning only in the context of the ordered world that began to take shape on Day 1. No wonder we are not supposed to concern ourselves with what had happened before the world was created!

"And G-d said: Let there be light..."

Thus begins the Torah's description of Days 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. And what happened on those days? G-d put everything in order, distinguished one thing from another. It was creation of Something from Nothing. YEISH MI'YEISH. Forming, shaping. The kind of Creation that we emulate in our lives.

And how long was one of these days of Creation? Maybe they each were a thousand years long. Or an eon. Or maybe they each were 24 hours long. Either that Torah talks "our language" or not. Take your pick. Either way fits.

Shabbat B'reishit is a time of rediscovery and re-creation. Just like on Pesach and Shavuot when we read of the events of Egyptian slavery and the Exodus on the one and the events of Matan Torah on the other, and we try to put our­selves into the events, to make them fresh, as if today we came out of Egypt, as if the Torah were given today, so too should we enthusiastically read and hear the description of Creation and put ourselves into the position of discovering G-d through the world and nature that He brought into existence for us. Don't just see things as "once upon a time..." — get excited, because G-d "renews with His Goodness, every day and always, the Acts of B'reishit".

Without going into detail, here is a breakdown of the first Aliya for your consideration.

2 p'sukim, as mentioned above, for the first phase of creation. Notwithstanding the argument above that broke these two p'sukim off of the description of the first day (so to speak), they are part of the first PARSHA, together with the creation of Light, etc.

3 p'sukim for Day 1, the creation of light, the separation of light and darkness, and their being identified as day and night. One KI TOV. The day is called YOM ECHAD rather than RISHON, because RISHON has meaning only if there is a SHENI, which there wasn't yet.

[P>1:6 (3)] The next parsha is for the Second Day of Creation. The creation of the Heavens and the separation of the Upper and Lower waters. (Some say that angels and various forces were created on the 2nd day too.)

[P>1:9 (5)] The next parsha contains the Third day of Creation which consists of two “sections”. First, two p'sukim for the “gathering of the lower waters” into different areas and the formation of dry land. And the “naming” of Land and Seas. KI TOV. And then the Divine command to the Land to spring forth with vegetation. 3 p'sukim with another KI TOV introduce us to the Plant Kingdom.

[P>1:14 (6)] Next we find the account of Creation on the fourth day. The Sun, Moon and stars (and other “heavenly bodies”) are placed in their appointed positions and orbits. KI TOV.

[P>1:20 (4)] Next comes the Fifth Day, with its account of Animal Kingdom, part one. Swarming insects, fish, birds. KI TOV. And P'RU URVU.

[P>1:24 (8)] Next comes the largest parsha yet, with the formation of Animal Kingdom, part two. Land animals (most mammals). “Creepy things” probably includes most reptiles as well.

Fifth day creatures and sixth day creatures do not
necessarily divide along modern biology’s taxonomic guidelines. For example, dolphins and bears are both mammals (and NFL teams), but aquatic mammals were (probably) created on the fifth day. The bat, although a mammal, (probably) preceded the mouse by a day. What about flightless birds? And mammals that spend much time in the water, but do come onto land at times? Questions. One KI TOV.

Then comes the formation of human beings, first as a single being both male and female and then separated into two different beings, male and female (but with some “crossing” of characteristics). P’RU URVU. Which will combine them once again. TOV ME’OD. THE sixth day. YOM HASHISHI.

[P>2:1 (3)] This relatively long first Aliya concludes with the 3-pasuk parsha introducing us to Shabbat B’reishit, the day that G-d blessed and sanctified because He “rested” from Creation. We say this parsha in the Friday night Amida, right after the Friday night Amida, and at the Friday night table as the first part of Kiddush. This should tell us how important it is that we learn well (as best as we can) the Torah’s account of Creation.

And that’s without going into detail.

Levi - Second Aliya -
16 p’sukim - 2:4-19

[P>2:4 (37)] Now we have a restatement of Creation, focusing on Gan Eden, the formation of Adam, Adam’s dominance over Nature, and his first prohibition - eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil.

"It is not good that man shall be alone" is explained in different ways, including that only G-d is singular. Man needs to know that as great as he can become, as much as he can accomplish, he is not a god.

All creatures were brought before Adam as "candidates" for partner-to-Adam. None was found suitable, but Adam named them all (as people have done throughout the ages).

In the first account of Creation, Man was the final act of Creation, but not so much the purpose and focus of creation. In this second account, Man is presented as the focus of creation. We must see things both ways in order to maintain a healthy perspective on this world, our role in it, and our responsibilities towards it and all elements of nature.

To paraphrase a famous saying: A person should write the following on two pieces of paper, fold each one, and put one in his left pocket and one in his right pocket. One should say: A mosquito was created before I was. The other should say: For me the whole world was created.

Shlishi - Third Aliya -

27 p’sukim - 2:20-3:21

The Torah’s wording implies that Adam was first created as a combined male-female being, then (still on Day Six) he was physically separated as Adam and Chava, with the command and challenge of recombining spiritually, emotionally, and physically - “and they shall become one flesh”.

Next the Torah tells us cryptically of the episodes of the Serpent’s enticement of Chava, the eating from the Tree, the punishments for the Serpent, Chava, and finally, Adam.

The sin(s) of Adam and Chava are not just personal sins, but more significantly, they help us define and understand (some of) human nature.

[S>3:16 (1)] This 1-pasuk parsha consists of G-d’s "punishment" (call it “redefining”) of Chava (woman-kind).

[S>3:17 (5)] And this parsha consists of Adam’s "punishment" (same other possibility) and G-d’s act of Chased, in clothing the naked. This act is one of the many pointed to in our challenge to emulate the qualities of G-d.

It is interesting to note that the "story" parts of Shlishi and most of R’vi’i are part of one large parsha, but G-d’s statements to Adam and Chava, and His kindness to them are slightly isolated in the form of two parshiyot S’tumot, thus calling specific attention to them and the lessons we learn from them.

R’VI’I - Fourth Aliya -
21 p’sukim - 3:22-4:18

[p>3:22 (3)] This Aliya begins with the expulsion from Gan Eden, which is also seen as a metaphor for a re-definition of the role of humans in this world and of their (our) relationship with G-d.

[S>4:1 (26)] The Torah continues with the “births” of Kayin and Hevel and Kayin’s killing of Hevel following the attempt of each to make an offering before G-d.

Kayin’s response to G-d’s query as to where Hevel was, echoes in our collective Jewish Experience throughout all the generations: HASHOMEIR ACHI ANOCHI? Am I my brother’s keeper? Kayin said it to shirk his responsibility for his brother. We are constantly challenged to be the kind of human and Jew who knows very well that we are responsible for each other.

Kayin’s punishment and fate is presented, as is his lineage.

It is possible that Kayin sired different species of humanoids. This is how some want to explain the evidence of the existence of pre-historic man. Kayin’s whole line was destroyed in the Flood. (Almost, that is. See below)
Chamishi - Fifth Aliya -
8 p'sukim - 4:19-26

This portion contains the story of Lemech, the great-great-great-grandson of Kayin and his accidental killer. Lemech's two wives were Ada and Tzila.

The Torah mentions more descendants of Kayin and their roles as the "firsts" in various fields of human activity. Yaval (son of Lemech and Ada) was the "first" tent-dwelling animal raiser. His brother Yuval was a musician. Tuval-Kayin (son of Tzila) worked with iron and copper. His sister was Na'ama.

Rashi (quoting B'reishit Rabba) says that she was the wife of No'ach. What is significant about that is that Kayin's line was not completely severed by the Flood. Although we refer to all of mankind as Bnei No'ach, who descended from Adam through Sheit, on the mother's side there is Na'ama and before her, Kayin.

This portion also contains Lemech's lament for having killed Kayin. (Rashi adds that Lemech also killed his son Tuval-Kayin (accidentally, in his grief), because he (TK) directed the blind Lemech's hands with bow and arrow to kill what he thought was an animal, and turned out to be Kayin.

By the way, in case your Chumash does not have the same Aliya breakdown as is presented here, don't worry. There are different versions.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya -
24 p'sukim - 5:1-24

The lineage from Adam through Sheit (Seth) to No'ach (into the next Aliya) is set down, with the age of the father at the birth of the son, and each person's age at his death. These numbers help us construct the first part of our timeline. Although many sons and daughters are born to this list of patriarchs of the world, only one representative of each generation is named. Some say that only the named individual had the longevity that is recorded; the "average man and woman in the street" lived much shorter lives. Others say that the lifespan of the human was generally much longer before the Flood.

[S>5:1 (5)] This is the Book of the Chronicles of Mankind... Adam and Chava were created. Adam was 130 years old when Sheit was born. He lived another 800 years after Sheit was born, during which time he fathered many sons and daughters. He lived 930 years and then he died.

The wording seems strange, and is repeated with each generation.

[S>5:6 (3)] Sheit was 105 when Enosh was born. He lived another 807 years for a total of 912. Sons and daughters. And he died.

[S>5:9 (3)] Enosh, 90, Keinan + 815 = 905...

[S>5:12 (3)] Keinan, 70, Mahalalel, + 840 = 910...

[S>5:15 (3)] Mahalalel, 65, Yered, + 830 = 895...

[S>5:18 (3)] Yered, 162, Chanoch, + 800 = 962... (Yered is the Avis, K2, Buzz Aldrin... of longevity.)

[S>5:21 (4)] Chanoch, 65, M'tushelach, + 300 = 365... Shishi concludes with mention of Chanoch, who was taken from this world (possibly not by death) at the relatively young age of 365.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya -
16 p'sukim - 5:25-6:8

[S>5:25 (3)] M'tushelach, 187, Lemech, + 782 = 969, the oldest age recorded in the Tanach. According to Tradition, he died immediately prior to the Flood, which was held up for 7 days of mourning for him.

[S>5:28 (4)] Lemech 182, a son. He named him No'ach (note the different wording for the birth of No'ach)... + 595 = 777.

[S>5:32 (5)] No'ach, 500 (note how much older than previous generations), Sheim, Cham, Yefet.

The Torah now describes the deterioration of society...

[P>6:5 (4)] and G-d's "regret" for having created Man. His decision to destroy the world (almost), No'ach alone found favor in G-d's eyes. Stay tuned for the continuation, next week.

This last 4-pasuk parsha is reread for the Maftir.

Haftara - 31 p'sukim -
Yeshayahu - 42:5-43:10

From its opening words describing G-d as the Creator of Heaven and Earth, we see parallels in the prophets wording and that of Parshat B'reishit.

Rabbi Jacobson z"l in his A Haftara Companion, points out that in B'reishit, the word BARA is past tense - created. In the haftara, the word is BOREI, creates, implying an ongoing process and supervision of the world. This is an important concept that is rejected by those who "admit" that G-d created the world a long time ago, set it in motion, and then has nothing more to do with it. This is definitely not a Jewish concept. We proclaim in Shacharit that G-d is M'CHADEISH B'CHOL YOM TAMID, MAASEI V'REISHIT, He renews (UVTUVO, and with Goodness), every day and always, the acts of Creation.

There are many other key words that are found in
The sedra introduces us to the very first song - that of Lemech. The haftara tells us of a SHIR CHADASH, a new song of the future. The sedra tells of the beginning of time and the corruption of subsequent generations. The haftara prophesies of the “end of days” (perhaps), when Israel’s scattered exiles will be gathered and returned and even other nations will join in the New Song.

A straightforward ParshaPix in celebration of Creation of the World.

Upper-left are light switches turned on and off, representing the creation of light and dark, day and night, on day one of Creation.

Upper right is a depiction of the creation of the heavens on the second day, with the separation of the upper and lower waters. The cloud represents the upper waters; the sea, the lower.

Below the sea on the right side is a grassy area with trees, representing the third day.

To the left are the creations of the fourth day - the sun, moon, and stars.

The ladybug, bird, octopus, and fish represent the fifth day’s creations.

Kangaroo, beaver, kitten, hippo, and the two people are some of the sixth day’s creations.

The pair of candles, of course, stands for the culmination of Creation - the Shabbat, which G-d sanctified and gave to us to keep, preserve, and cherish as a reminder of Creation and the Creator.

THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE
OF JEWISH LAW

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Lesson #395

Stealing (Part 1)

When I studied in law school, quite a while ago, we were taught and it turned out to be so in the practice of law, that there was civil law and criminal law. In New York State there were courts that judged civil cases and other courts that judged criminal cases. Halacha does not set up such a dichotomy. The laws of stealing (theft) and robbery are all part of Shulhan Aruch Choshen Mishpat, the civil law part of the Shulhan Aruch.

There are many differences in halacha between stealing and robbery. Stealing is usually done without the victim’s being aware of it at the time of the theft (that is, it is usually done secretly); robbery is usually done openly with the victim being aware of the robbery.

Maimonides in his introduction to “The Laws Concerning Theft” lists seven commandments regarding stealing, two positive and five negative. (1) not to steal; (2) to administer the laws of theft; (3) to maintain accurate scales and weights; (4) not to act dishonestly regarding weights and measures; (5) not to possess extra [dishonest] weights and measures, even if one does not use them for buying and selling; (6) not to move a boundary line; and (7) not to abduct human beings. The basic command not to steal is found in the verse, “You shall not steal, you shall not deny falsely, and you shall not lie one to another.” (Vayikra 19:11) Thus if one steals anything having the value of at least a peruta (the smallest coin) one transgresses the commandment not to steal. There is no flogging administered for transgressing this commandment, since the part relating to the victim must be undone by making restitution. No flogging is administered in halacha for violating a prohibition that can be rectified by restoring the stolen or robbed property or by making a monetary payment. The prohibition against stealing applies equally against stealing from a Jew or from a Gentile. Halacha does not make a distinction between stealing from a Jew and stealing from a Gentile. Or from an adult or from a minor. It is prohibited to steal anything, however, small its value. It is prohibited to steal in jest or to steal an object with the intent of restoring it to its owner, or with the intention of paying for it and for paying the victim the double penalty or to distress the victim. All these things are prohibited so that a person will not get accustomed to stealing. The Torah also provides for a thief to have to pay a double penalty if there were witnesses to the theft and other criteria were met. For example, if the value of the stolen object was $100 the thief will have to pay $200.

The theft commences as soon as the thief acquires the object he is stealing. An object is stolen the same way an object is acquired if it is purchased. If the thief lifts the object, he steals it the moment it is lifted up, and this is effective any place that the thief lifts the object, even in the premises of the owner or in a public place. He has transgressed the commandment not to steal. If he steals the object by drawing it to him, then the theft occurs when the object is drawn into the premises of the thief or to a side street that is not frequented by many people, or premises belonging to both the thief and the victim. If the object, such as an animal, enters upon the premises of the thief and he intends to steal it, the theft occurs immediately if the premises are guarded by a fence around it, even if the thief is not present. If the object is on his premises, such as landing there by mistake, as when someone, the owner or another, drops it there, the theft occurs if the thief is present and intends to steal it.

When the thief has to make restitution for what he stole, there are different opinions. There is one opinion that holds that payment may be made by the thief paying in cash or in kind, or by transferring real estate of that value to the owner. These payments in kind may be made even if the thief has cash. If the payment is
made by transferring real estate, it must be made from the highest quality land of the thief. There is another opinion that if the thief possesses cash or real estate he is not permitted to pay in kind. (I think in our times the latter opinion should be followed.) If the thief does not have assets to make restitution, the amount owed becomes a debt that can be collected at any time without any limit. In Biblical times, the thief who could not make restitution was sold as a slave to be able to pay the debt.

This applies only to males. A thief who wants to make peace with his Maker will make an effort to pay off this debt. If two persons steal an object they are jointly liable for the entire value of the stolen object. Each thief is deemed to be guarantor of the other to make restitution. Even if one fled or has no assets to pay for the theft, the victim may collect the entire amount of the theft from either thief.

Levi, a witness, saw Reuven enter into Shimon's premises and steal an object. The object came into the hands of Levi, if Levi is certain that Reuven stole the object, Levi must return the object to Shimon. If Levi returns the object to Reuven, he must pay Shimon for the object. If Levi loses the object, Shimon may collect compensation from either Reuven or Levi. However, if Levi is not certain that Reuven stole the object from Shimon, as for example, Reuven, before taking the object from Shimon's premises informs Levi that the object is Reuven's and he is retrieving his own object, then if Levi returns the object to Reuven, Shimon cannot sue Levi, since Levi was told by Reuven that the object was his and Levi does not know otherwise. Shimon must sue Reuven. But if Levi returns the object to Shimon, Reuven can sue Levi since Levi had no right to return the object to Shimon once Reuven claims the object was his. Levi may not help Shimon at the expense of Reuven. Levi should have brought a lawsuit in Beit Din naming both Reuven and Shimon and let Beit Din decide who gets the object.

The topic of this lesson is more fully discussed in Volume IX, chapter 348, of a Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law. Copies of this volume can be purchased at local Judaica bookstores.

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Spiritual & Ethical Issues in the Stories of Sh'mot

by Dr. Meir Tamari

The Plagues [4]

Ed. note: After two issues with Dr. Tamari's article on Sh'mita, we return now to his articles on Sh'mot.

Repetitively, G-d says that through the plagues, Par'o, the Egyptians and Bnei Yisrael will know and understand the greatness and Majesty of His Name and that there is none else besides Him in all the world. Our Sages taught: "Everywhere that one finds the power and the might of G-d there one finds also His humbleness" (Megila 31a). These manifestations of greatness include Mercy and Love for His creatures, and so their punishment and destruction are accompanied by expressions and acts of Divine Chessed.

"In the plagues, G-d followed the plan of a conqueror attacking an enemy. First He cut off their water supply, essential for their very lives. When they did not surrender and repent, He sent heralds and criers [frogs] that disturbed the tranquility of normal life-style and troubled them greatly. When they nevertheless did not obey, He shot clouds of dust that bred vermin and disease [kinim]. Then, there followed pestilence, the attacks on their cattle and their crops, and the siege that caused them to be immobile [Darkness]. When they persisted in their rebellion, He killed their leaders and great people [Bechorot]" (Tanchuma).

Abarbanel adds an additional plan to that of Tanchuma: "The plagues were also a punishment mida-keneged-mida of Par'o and the Egyptians for the suffering and the hardships that they caused to Israel. The Nile was turned into blood just as Egypt had shed the blood of the children, the constant and pervasive noises and croaking of the frogs was the punishment for the cries and shrieks of the mothers which were disregarded by the cruel Egyptians and kinim came as a punishment for the toiling in the dust imposed by the taskmasters for their pleasure. Then followed punishment by the intrusion of wild beasts into the homes of Egypt for the forced entries into Israelite homes to seize laborers, the death of their flocks for the theft of the cattle of Israel, the bubonic plague for the sicknesses caused to Israel by their laboring under foul conditions, the hail stones for the stones they threw at their slaves, locusts for the theft of crops and darkness for darkening the lives of Israel through the exile. Finally, Makat Bechorot because they dared to enslave Israel, G-d's first-born".

"A human king, when he plans persecution or destruction against an enemy, makes sudden or preemptive moves in order to take them by surprise and unprepared. G-d, however, in His Mercy warned Par'o before each of the first two plagues in every set of d'tzach, adash and b'achav, in order to allow him to do T'Shuva. In the case of barad such warning was accompanied by the advice to gather the flocks and herds under roofs to protect them against the plague, showing His Mercy for His creatures" (Shmot Rabba 7:17). "Human justice often punishes the unwary and the ignorant. However, the Divine Judge, in His Mercy, sent two warning plagues before each one of punishment. These warning plagues did not damage either the bodies or the wealth of the Egyptians but only caused them discomfort or annoyance. The three plagues of punishment, however, fittingly reduced them to poverty through the kinim and the hail, and in the choshech they were like the blind and like prisoners; and these are all comparable to death" (Ramban).

"The third plague in each group of d'tzach, adash, b'achav was inflicted on the bodies of the Egyptians whereas the first two in each group were not. This would lead us to see the two warning plagues as G-d's education of human beings against the idolatrous and egoistical philosophies personified by Par'o" (Gershuni).
Above all, the balance of mercy and punishment is related to the people of Israel; "in order that you may tell your children and children's children that with a mighty hand the Lord took us out of Egypt". They witnessed the punishments that were visited on Egypt and learnt that G-d is the only true and faithful Judge. However, each plague was also a chesed for Israel, whereby they not only witnessed the punishment of their oppressors but also received spiritual guidance. "Every plague that was visited on the Egyptians was born of one of the Ten Sayings with which the world was created. Then with the Ten Commandments Israel was given corresponding mitzvot in order to correct and improve that world" (Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk).

"Why is the Shabbat before Pesach always called Shabbat Hagadol? Because of the great miracle that happened to our fathers in Egypt when they took the lambs for the Korban Pesach on the 10th of Nissan which then was a Shabbat. Although the Egyptians saw them taking the lamb that was their god and preparing it for slaughter, yet they were powerless to do them any harm and that was a great miracle' (Tur). However, the 10th of Nissan is not always on a Shabbat every year, yet we continue to call the Shabbat before Pesach Shabbat Hagadol. The creation is called Gadol in reference to G-d's Mercy that is Gadlut, because the world was created wholly in mercy. Regarding Yetzi'at Mitzrayim, however, we speak of B'yad Chazaka, referring to the power and might of G-d shown in the plagues that He brought on Egypt. While each plague was a mixture of din and chesed, punishment and mercy to Egypt, the miracle that was granted to Israel on that 10th of Nissan was pure mercy, since Israel suffered no damage or judgment thereby. In order for there to be pure mercy, that day had to be a Shabbat, a day on which there is only mercy but no judgment and so no Beit Din is then in session. We continue to call the Shabbat before Pesach Shabbat Hagadol in memory of His Mercies" (Shem MiShmuel).

Rabbi S. R. Hirsch and others stress that the plagues were not simply vindictive acts only meant to punish Egypt but examples of G-d's infinite mercy that exist even when He is Judge and Ruler. The first two plagues of each of the three sets were meant to teach lessons that would bring about repentance while only the third came as a justified punishment for refusal to repent.

G-d as only the source of mercy is as untrue as G-d solely the stern and zealous One who punishes and seeks retribution; "Avinu Malkenu - Malkenu, Hashem is lofty in judgment and Avinu, the holy G-d is sanctified in Tzedaka" (Prayer of Yamim Nora'im)

**MISC section - contents:**

[1] Vebbe Rebbe
[2] Candle by Day
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**WEBBE REBBE**

The Orthodox Union – via its website – fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and the Israel Center. The following is a Q&A from Eretz Hemdah...

**Q** There are many brands of bamboo mats and the like that serve as s'chach with hechsherim (rabbinical approval). What are the rabbis attesting to that is not self-evident?

**A** Major criteria of s'chach, that it is made from something that grew from the ground and is now detached, are clearly fulfilled in the mats in question. However, other issues which either require or benefit from certification exist, especially in regard to the requirement that s'chach be made out of something that is not mekabel tum'a [=MT] (able to become impure) (Sukka 11a)

The mishna (ibid. 19b) says that the kashrut of a mat of reeds for s'chach is a function of one or two of the following factors: Is it small enough for it to often be made for lying on? Was the intention in making it for s'chach or for lying down? The point is that certain types of tum'a are transferred when sitting or lying on something; therefore, some mats are utensils that are MT because of these functions. The Rama (Orach Chayim 629:6) says that is insufficient that an individual’s intention in making it (to use or to sell) was to be used for s’chach. Rather, most of the mats of this type produced in that place must not be for lying or sitting but for functions
such as s’chach. This is a rabbinic concern that people who cannot discern one’s intentions will assume that it was not produced for s’chach. The Mishna Berura (629:18) claims that in his time most mats were made for lying on and were problematic. However, present-day poskim point out that most of the type of mats used for s’chach these days are clearly made specifically for that purpose. A hechsher could confirm that the certifying rabbi’s conclusion is that the mat was made for s’chach and is not too similar to mats for lying or sitting on.

R. Yehuda disqualifies a sukkah that rests upon a bed (Sukka 21b). One of the gemara’s explanations is that s’chach may not even be supported by something that is MT (including a bed). The concern is that people might use that which supports the s’chach as s’chach, and therefore the standards for the two should be similar (see Ran, ad loc.). Although most authorities either do not accept R. Yehuda’s opinion or this explanation of his ruling (see Beit Yosef, end of OC 630), it is customary to try to conform to this stringency (Mishna Berura 630:59). Therefore, it is best that the strings that hold the slats or pieces of bamboo together be made from something that grew in the ground (i.e., not synthetic) and is not MT. The gemara (Sukka 12b) says that processed flax is unfit as s’chach, and different Rishonim give various explanations. According to some, cotton thread is fit for s’chach (see Mishna Berura 629:12), but in any case it would at worst be a rabbinic disqualification. Therefore, it is likely that it is permitted to support the s’chach with it, as a rabbinic concern lest one come to do X usually only applies if X is a problem from the Torah (see Bi’ur Halacha, beginning of 630). Furthermore, it is not clear that the threads that connect the strips are considered actual support for the s’chach (see Shevet Halevi VI, 74). In any case, most of the brands with hechsherim use fibers that were not processed to form the mat and thus avoid possible halachic questions.

Some raise questions about the mats despite the hechsherim. That is due to the injunction not to use pieces of s’chach that are four tefachim wide or more (Shulchan Aruch, OC 629:18), as it could look as if one is in a home with a permanent roof. (The albeit not unanimous) consensus is that pliable connected strips are unlike a thick beam and are halachically fine.

In summary, halachically produced s’chach mats are efficient and acceptable. Their hechsherim reduce the possibility of fraud and the uncertainty that non-experts might have.

Ed. note: Based on the Vebbe Rebbe -- a mat made for sleeping on or sitting on CANNOT be used as s’chach. Mats made for s’chach with hashgacha are okay. Others need be questioned.

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[2] Candle by Day

The word "lonely" exists in our vocabulary only because we are lacking in personal resources.

From "A Candle by Day" by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein

A Candle by Day • The Antidote • The World of Chazal
by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein
Now available at 054-209-9200

[3] CHIZUK and IDUD

for Olim & not-yet-Olim respectively

The Zohar (5:103b) teaches: "When a person is seated in his Sukkah, Abraham and 6 distinguished visitors partake of his company." This lesson lies at the base of what is commonly known as the Ushpizin.

During Sukkot, the souls of the seven shepherds of Israel -- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, and King David -- actually leave Gan Eden to partake in the divine light of the earthly Sukkot. As the Jew enters his Sukkah, he recites the Ushpizin formula that in fact constitutes an invitation to these Heavenly guests to join him and his family.

However, outside Israel, no matter how beautiful our Sukkah, regardless of how sincere our invitation, one guest will never appear. The patriarch Isaac cannot come.

In B’rei Shit 26: we read: “And there was a famine in the Land” And Isaac went to Gerar, to Avimelech King of the P’lishtim. And God appeared to him (Isaac) and said ‘Do not descend unto Egypt’ Dwell in this Land…”

Rabbenu Behaye in quoting the Midrash Rabbah writes, “God commanded him not to travel beyond the borders of Israel, the reason being that he had been sanctified on Mount Moriah thereby becoming a sacred and perfect Olah offering. This was a divine warning that at no time must he ever leave the Holy Land lest he become contaminated by the lands of the heathen.” Thus, of the three Patriarchs, he is the only one to have lived out his entire life in Eretz Yisrael without crossing its borders.

There is a second message in Isaac’s refusal to grace our Sukkah in the Diaspora.

Jewish mystical texts explain that each of the seven Ushpizin correspond to a fundamental spiritual pathway (Sefirah) through which the world is
metaphysically nourished and perfected. Abraham represents Chesed, love and kindness. Jacob represents beauty and truth and so on. Isaac represents Gevura, heroism and personal strength.

It is only in the Land of Israel that the Jewish nation can aspire to this Divine Sefira.

Rabbi Sender Shizgal, Jerusalem

TORAH THOUGHTS as contributed by Aloh Naaleh members for publication in the Orthodox Union's 'Torah Insights', a weekly Torah publication on Parshat HaShavu'a

[4] Wisdom & Wit

It was the custom of R’ Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld to spend some of the dancing time on Simchas Torah dancing with circle of little boys.

One year, a little boy approached him timidly, and said to him: “Rebbe, I have a question. May I ask you?”” Surely, my son,” replied R’ Yosef Chaim.

“Why is it, Rebbe,” the little boy said, that we first say Ein Keilokeinu, Ein Kadoneinu... -There is none like our God, there is none like our Master - and then go on to say, - Who is like our God? Who is like our Master? Should the order be reversed, with us first asking” Who is like our God” and only after that saying “There is none like our God?”

“My son,” said R’Yosef Chaim,”you are no doubt aware of the Cave of Tzidkiyahu here in Yerushalayim, and I’m sure that you know that there are caves throughout the world. Some are short and some are very long. Inside the caves, there is no light. If a person wants to explore a cave, he needs to be able to find his way out afterwards. If the cave is a very long, convoluted one, the wise man will make a note of what he has passed, or even leave signs as he goes, so that he can find his way back. If a person is foolish and does not take note of how he went in, he can become hopelessly lost and never find his way out.

“From this we see that the signs a person posts on the way are essential for him later on. For us, too, it is essential to post 'signs'as we go through life. Our 'signs'are the ones we have been given from generation to generation. The first such 'sign' tells us, “There is none like our God.” The next ‘sign’ tells us, “There is none like our Master.” Once we have posted these ‘signs’ in our minds, we can go on to ask,“Who is like our God?” Without those ‘signs’ such questions would be dangerous and endanger our very souls.

“You are a young boy, and there will be many different places where you will travel to, and many different events which will occur to you throughout your life. Just be sure that as you go through life, you constantly have these ’signs’ before you, to mark your way through life.”

I [Shmuel Himelstein] can add that I heard a similar thought from my late father-in-law, R’ Zevi Tabory z”l, on the passage in the kedusha of Shabbos and Yom Tov. There we say, “Kevodo Malei Olam, Ayei Mekom Kevodo” His glory fills the entire world; where is the place of His glory? - Only after the Jew knows full well that Hashem’s glory fills the world is he permitted to ask, “Where is the place of His glory? …”

Shmuel Himelstein has written a wonderful series for ArtScroll: Words of Wisdom, Words of Wit: A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit; and "Wisdom and Wit"— available at your local Jewish bookstore (or should be).

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A BULL, SHEEP OR GOAT...

On the first day of Sukkot we read from the portion of EMOR in the book of Vayikra, 22:26-23:44. Most of these 52 verses deal with the holidays. Starting in Chapter 23 the three first verses deal with Shabbat, then 4-8 talks about Passover, 9-14 talks about the Omer, 15-22 talks about counting the Omer and Shavuot, 23-25 talks about Rosh Hashana, 26-32 Yom Kippur , 33-44 talks about Sukkot. Chapter 23 starts off with G-d telling Moshe to speak to the people telling them that “there are special times, MO’ADIM, that you must celebrate as sacred holidays... the following are MY special times” and ends in verse 44 with “Moshe related the rules of G-d’s special times to the Israelites.”

Chapter 23 seems like an appropriate reading for any of our holidays – Sukkot included.

But why doesn't the Torah reading start out in chapter 23? Why are the last verses of chapter 22 added on? These don't seem to have any connection at all to the other verses and to the holiday at hand, Sukkot? These verses talk about the laws of acceptable animals for sacrifices. Why would our Rabbis have us read these verses that don't seem to be related at all to Sukkot? What can be learned from this?

In Rabbi Yitzchak Reiner's book MO'ADEI NECHAMA, he brings an answer to this question based on Nechama Leibowitz's teachings The verses say "when a bull, sheep, or a goat is born... after the eighth day it shall be acceptable as a sacrifice..." The P’sikta explains these verses that
G-d is saying “I didn’t ask you to bring a sacrifice from your possessions, but rather from what I have given you - KI YIVALED. Man can never give anything to G-d unless G-d gives to him first. The Midrash Rabba gives a list of examples of this idea. No one will do a brit mila until G-d gives him a son, he won’t build a fence until G-d gives him a roof, doesn’t build a sukkah unless G-d gives him a courtyard, doesn’t buy a lulav unless G-d gives him money. So this is the lesson the Rabbis wanted us to learn from these verses. When we build our sukkah for Hashem, we are only able to do it because G-d has blessed us with the space to do it.

This Lamb (sheep) recipe is good for Yom Tov or for a Chol HaMoed barbecue. Enjoy the mangoes while they are still in season.

**LAMB AND MANGO KABOBS**

1 lb. (450g) lamb, cubed  
1/4 cup (60ml) hoisin sauce  
2 Tbsp (30ml) light soy sauce  
2 Tbsp (30ml) rice wine vinegar (or white wine vinegar)  
2 Tbsp (30ml) olive oil  
2 tsp (10ml) grated fresh ginger  
1 or 2 large mangos, cubed  
wooden skewers soaked in water

Make marinade by mixing sauces, vinegar, oil and ginger. Marinate lamb cubes at least 4 hours or overnight in the fridge.

Soak wooden skewers in water. Heat barbecue (or oven grill). Make mango cubes the same size as lamb cubes. Alternate lamb and mango cubes on skewers.

Grill over medium hot coals until lamb is tender and golden brown, basting with marinade as needed to keep moist.

Good served with pita bread, couscous or rice.

If you can’t find hoisin sauce here’s a recipe so you can make it yourself.

**HOISIN SAUCE**

4 Tbsp soy sauce - light or dark  
2 Tbsp peanut butter  
2 Tbsp black beans or dark red kidney beans, cooked  
1 Tbsp honey OR molasses  
2 Tbsp white vinegar  
1/2 tsp garlic powder or one clove minced  
2 tsp sesame seed oil  
20 drops Chinese-style Hot Sauce  
1/2 tsp black pepper

Mix all ingredients together by hand, blender or in food processor. At first it will not appear to mix, but don't give up.

[6] **What does Sukkot commemorate?**

All holidays - Biblical, Rabbinic, Modern - mark events that occurred on the dates we celebrate the holidays. So too for fast days. Dates are significant. We left Egypt on the 15th of Nissan - hence, the date for Pesach. We received the Torah at Har Sinai on Shavuot. Rosh HaShana marks the Creation of Human Beings. Purim and Chanuka are locked into their calendar positions by what occurred on those days. On the sad side, Tish’a b’Av and the other fast days associated with the Churban (destruction) of the Beit HaMikdash, each fall on days that something particular occurred. So too for Yom Ha’Atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim in our own time.

What happened on the 15th of Tishrei? If something (GR"A) then okay, but if not, then what is Sukkot doing specifically at this time of the year and on that date? Tur says that had the mitzva of Sukka been commanded at Pesach-time (because of its connection to the Exodus), it would not be noticeable that we are performing a mitzva; it would seem that we are merely seeking comfort in the warming springtime. On the other hand, when we leave our homes as others are returning to theirs in anticipation of cooler and wetter weather, the mitzva aspect of Sukka is manifest.

Rambam seems to take an opposite view, namely that the timing of Sukkot is a kind gesture by G-d - we dwell in the Sukka when it is neither too hot nor to cold, to do so in an enjoyable manner. (A lot depends upon where you live - Eretz Yisrael is highly recommended.)

Ramban says that Sukkot is set at the other side of the year from Pesach to emphasize that we must appreciate G-d’s having taken us out of Egypt and protecting us in the Wilderness - ALL YEAR ROUND. Pesach and Sukkot are each a 7-day commemoration of the Exodus, each begins on the 15th day of the first month of the year (both Nissan and Tishrei are first months).

According to the Vilna Gaon, after the Sin of the Golden Calf, the Heavenly Clouds left the people. Only after the command to build the Mishkan, and after the materials were collected and the construction was about to begin, did the Clouds return. The GR"A says that this happened on 15 Tishrei, hence that date for Sukkot, the Sukka reminding us of the Clouds.

Menorat HaMaor says that Sukka is a humbling experience, perfect for the Jew who has just brought in the harvest and is about to tuck himself comfortably into his home for the winter. He would usually burst with pride at what he accomplished. Sukka brings the Jew out of his complacency and remind him - in the frail Sukka - of G-d’s dominion over nature.

Chidushei HaRim says that the reason given by the Torah for Sukka - In order that your generations shall KNOW...
KNOWLEDGE can be achieved best (or only) in a sin-free atmosphere, only right after the Yamim Nora'im. A person does not sin unless he is overcome by foolishness. Thus, we are capable of fulfilling the mitzva of Sukka best during the days following Yom Kippur, when T'shuva has restored our mental powers.


The view of the GR"A notwithstanding, it seems obvious that Sukkot is not so much a holiday in and of itself, but it can be seen as a composite - a very specific and special composite, of other chagim.

Picture, if you will, a machine that we will use to filter out the element of simcha (joy) from other holy days, copy that element of simcha without its partner emotions, and build with that simcha, a special holiday, one well-suited to represent them all.

Put Pesach into the machine and extract the joy of leaving Egyptian slavery and humiliation to become G-d's people. Leave behind the reminders of the bitter years as slaves. Leave behind the nervous anticipation of what will become of this new nation, so long enslaved. Take that pure joy of Pesach, duplicate it (don't take it away from Pesach) and fashion another seven day holiday beginning on the 15th of the first month of the year (Nissan and Tishrei both qualify for that honor), and let it too be in commemoration of the Exodus.

Now take Shavuot, the time of the receiving of the Torah. Put it into the machine to separate its exquisite joy from the other feelings of awe and dread. The thunder, lightning, fire and smoke, ever strengthening sound of the Shofar were not joyful experiences, they were terrifying. But the joy of Torah is real and very much a part of Shavuot. Duplicate it. Leave the original with Shavuot and take the copy, the pure joy of being one of G-d's nation. Attach that to an eighth day that will follow the seven days of the Chag. Let that be a day of rejoicing in the Torah. Pure joy. Let's call it Simchat Torah. Let's put it right after the seven days of the Chag rather than after seven sevens of days following the first day of Pesach. The weather is not ideal and waiting will be a hardship - but the parallelism remains.

Now take Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, the Yamim Nora'im. Days of Awe. Days when the heavenly books of Life and Death are open before G-d. Put them into the machine and don't be surprised by the great joy that filters out. We don't always feel the joy on RH and YK, because many other emotions - all somber and serious, cloud the mixture. But take the joy of G-d's forgiveness, take the joy of being HaShem's children - even if He needs to castigate us. Copy it and pour it onto the seventh day of Chag - Hoshana Raba. Let that day be the culmination of the T'shuva and Kapara process begun nearly two months earlier.

You've got a holiday that is so joyous that our Sages identified it as Zman Simchateinu, the time of our joy. Fully recognizing that Simcha is a mitzva for all three Regalim, and probably for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur as well, our commentaries nonetheless point out that the command of Simcha is not mentioned specifically in connection to Pesach, only once with Shavuot, and three times with Sukkot.

If you are not yet convinced that Sukkot is a composite of the other chagim, take a look at its Torah reading of the first day. Topic: the cycle of the year. Shabbat, Pesach, the Omer, Shavuot, Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. All other holoidays have readings that are specific to each chag. Not Sukkot. It is the holiday of holidays.

And what about its name!. No, not Sukkot or Chag HaAsif. The other name. Chag. Sukkot is called Chag. Just Chag. For it is the quintessential Chag.

And it is perfectly suited to its role. Agriculturally, it is only after the harvest that one can be truly joyous. Too many worries about the crops at Pesach and Shavuot time.

And emotionally, only after the spiritually cleansing experience of the Yamim Nora'im can we be truly happy. And not even too much later. Right after Yom Kippur is best. And that's what we have. No time to come down from the high of Yom Kippur. Too busy building the Sukka, acquiring the Arbaa Minim. Preparing for Yom Tov.

What also adds to our Joy is G-d's telling us that He remembers fondly our kindness to Him, by our following Him through the Midbar...

V'ZOT HABRACHA... And this is the blessing that Moshe, the man of G-d, gave the Children of Israel before his death. Moshe Rabbeinu has completed his work. But before he leaves this world, he has one last job to perform. He must bless his beloved people.

Moshe often spoke to the people as their leader, or prophet, or lawgiver. Now he speaks as a loving father. Another loving father - Yaakov Avinu – also blessed his children before his death. Yaakov wanted to tell his sons what the future would bring, but Hashem did not allow him to do so, and so his blessings were mainly about the past. Moshe's blessings, however, were about the future of the Jewish People as they were about to enter, conquer and settle Eretz Yisrael.

The Torah began with B'reishit and the miracle of Creation. It ends with the
death of Moshe Rabbeinu. As he stood on Har Nevo, Moshe saw the entire Land of Israel spread out before him. Moshe, who had "met" Hashem face to face, did not have to walk through the Land like Avraham Avinu. He was able to see everything from one place.

Of course if Heaven and Earth are eternal witnesses, they will also be eternal witnesses to our failures and sins! How then will we ever be forgiven and our sins forgotten? But the prophet Yishayahu declared that Hashem will one day "...create new heavens and a new earth, so that the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Meanwhile, Moshe reminds us that the Torah is our "life", and although Hashem will always remain our Father, no matter what we do, we should live a life of Torah.

The last sentences in the Torah describe Moshe's death. Who wrote them? Were they written by Yehoshua after Moshe died? Or did Hashem dictate them to Moshe just as He dictated the rest of the Torah? And who wrote: There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moshe, whom Hashem knew face to face. Did Moshe write this about himself? There is an opinion in the Gemara that Moshe wrote these words b'dema - with tears in his eyes. Was he crying because he would soon die? Absolutely not! A beautiful explanation from the Ba'al Tif'eret Shlomo says that Moshe cried because he, the most humble of all men, was commanded to write such great praise about himself!

V'Zot Habracha is the only parsha which is not read on a specific Shabbat. Instead, it is read on Simchat Torah when we finish reading the Torah and immediately roll the scroll back and begin at the beginning once again. One of the first prayers every Jewish child learns is in V'Zot Habracha: Torah tziva Ianu Moshe, Morasha K'hilat Yaakov - The Torah which Moshe received and commanded us to follow is the heritage of the entire Jewish people. It is ours forever. Ashreinu - how fortunate we are! Chazak chazak v'nitchazek. And Chag Sameach!


When we leave the Sukka at the end of Hoshana Rabba, we mention in our parting prayer, the Sukka of the skin of the Livyatan. This column is NOT about that Livyatan, since its identity is the subject of machloket and debate. Instead, we are taking the Modern Hebrew word Livyatan which means whale...

The following is culled from various websites:

There are 79 recognized species of whale in the world. Experts speculate that there are still undiscovered species. Largest whale - which is also the largest animal in the world, now and ever (with the possible exception of the Biblical Livyatan...) - is the blue whale, which grows up to 110 feet (33.5m) long and can weigh over 150 tons. Just as a comparison, the auditorium at the Israel Center, from Aron Kodesh to the back of the room is a little more than 11m. Triple that length to get the length of a large blue whale. Females are larger than males in all species of baleen whales (which is what a blue is). Blue whales are also the loudest animals on Earth! "Their call reaches levels up to 188 decibels. This whistle can be heard hundreds or perhaps even thousands of miles away. The blue whale is louder than a jet, which reaches only 140 decibels! Human shouting is only 70 decibels; sounds over 120-130 decibels are painful to human ears."

The smallest whale is the dwarf sperm whale which grows to about 2.6m. 13 of them lined up head to tail would equal the length of one big blue whale.

The deadliest whale is the killer whale, or orca. It is also the deadliest predator in the oceans. They are also the fastest whales and can swim up to 48km/h in short bursts.

Sperm whales can dive 3km below the surface when hunting giant squid.

[10] from Machon Puah

Irregular Cycles

We have already discussed at length the importance of relieving pressure that results from and may cause infertility.

Let us assume that we have countered out all pressure, yet the couple are still not getting pregnant.

We will now move to the next stage of testing which is a full medical assessment. Due to the halachic questions related to male testing, the possibility of female factors should usually be ruled out first, and all non-invasive tests should be performed on the wife before male testing is started.

The most simple test is the timing of ovulation. Usually ovulation should take place every month and we can assume that a woman with a regular cycle does indeed ovulate regularly. However, many women do not have a regular cycle, and this may require closer attention. A mild irregularity, such as a woman who has a cycle that can be sometimes 28 days and sometimes 32 days is
perfectly normal and usually has no significance, however, a more severe irregularity could be a woman who has a cycle that is sometimes 25 days and sometimes 45 days, or a woman who can have a cycle that is every few months. These are definitely more serious and may require treatment.

In these cases most woman know before they get married that they have such an erratic cycle and they may even have done some testing before the marriage. This is another case in which there is no reason to wait for a couple of years before starting treatment, but this should be dealt with as soon as possible.

Sometimes a woman had a regular cycle before she got married, but after the marriage her cycle becomes erratic. This could be due to pressure, or a change in lifestyle. Sometimes mild exercise and being particular to eat breakfast every day can address this problem, and that is enough, but not always.

Over the next few weeks we will look at some causes of an irregular cycle, as well as how to check the exact timing of ovulation, and the halachic questions that exist as a result of such an irregular cycle.

The Puah Institute for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha is based in Jerusalem and helps couples from all over the world who are experiencing fertility problems. Puah offers free counseling in five languages, halachic supervision and educational programs. Puah has offices in New York, Los Angeles and Paris. To contact the Puah Institute please call (02) 651-5050 in Israel or 718-336-0603. Visit our website at www.puah.org.il.


We received email from two TTReaders who noticed that we said that the havdala for Motza’ei Shabbat-Yom Kippur is the regular one for Shabbat, but that the candle should be lit from the flame that rested over Yom kippur, rather than from a struck match. Yet, the b’samim bracha was missing. What gives, they asked. The truth is that it was inadvertently omitted and we deeply regret the mistake and apologize to those who skipped b’samim and its bracha because of us.

On the other hand, read this email from a different TTReader, AB:

I noticed that when you presented the Havdala blessings that you omitted the bracha regarding the besamim. I would have to say that you were "begging the question" by not including an explanation as to why it was omitted.

From what little I know about it, there is no obligation to smell besamim on Motza’ei Yom Kippur when it falls on Motza’ei Shabbos. That is according to Kol Bo, since, due to the fast there is no "Neshama Yeseirah" on Yom Kippur. I'm sure that we all know that it is due to the Neshama Yeseirah’s departure after Shabbos that we use b’samim.

However, both the Magen Avraham and the Taz write that when Yom Kippur coincides with Shabbos, one should smell besamim since it is not considered to be a bracha l’vatala [since one derives hana’a from such a pleasant aroma.]

Perhaps this explanation, or something to the same effect, ought to have been included at the bottom of the page. I wonder how many others had the same question?!

Luach Eretz Yisrael and other sources all say to include B’samim. But AB's comments are well done, informative, and welcomed.

On another issue of concern to several TTReaders was the ad for Pesach vacations in Chutz LaAretz. The ad didn't even mention where the vacations are held, but these readers seem to have known. They objected to Torath Tidbits carrying an ad that would take people away from Israel rather than bring people to Israel.

We thought things over before we ran the ad, and consulted some of our advisors. We decided to run the ad because we are convinced that it does not target people who live in Israel, nor do we think that someone is going to be enticed to leave Israel for Pesach, unless they were already planning such a trip.

The ad is geared towards tourists in Israel at this holiday season, who might consider one of the advertiser's venues. We also felt that someone from abroad who wants to come to Israel for Pesach would not be enticed by any offers for other locations.

No one commented on the ad for a January trip to Australia and New Zealand, but we will make a comment anyway.

Neither ad contained an Israeli phone number - only toll free numbers for the States and an Australian phone number. The target of both ads was clearly the tourist rather than the local.

We might also add that when one lives in Israel (as all Jews should), he should not leave without one of several acceptable "heteirim" and then come back soon and in good health.

[12] Hoshana Rabba the multi-dimensional quasi-holiday

The Mishna tells us of various rituals practiced in the Beit HaMikdash during the seven days of Sukkot. One involved bringing large branches of willow, grown in the Motza area just outside Jerusalem, and lean them against the Altar in the courtyard of the Mikdash. Known as "River Willow" (not the same as the willow tree), the Aravot are also one of the Four Species taken in hand daily (except for Shabbat) during the seven days of Sukkot. Use of the willow is considered to be a silent prayer for beneficial rain during the imminent rainy season. Furthermore, the mishna teaches us that the world is judged at four times of the year, one of which is the Divine Judgment for Water on Sukkot. In the Mikdash Arava-draped Altar was circumambulated once and on the seventh day of Sukkot, seven times. During these Hakafot, prayers are recited which include the petition to G-d: "ANA HASHEM HOSHIYA NA", "Please G-d, save us!" HOSHANA is a contraction of HOSHIYA and NA, and is itself a word off-repeated in the text recited during the circuits. In commemoration of the circumambulation of the Altar in the Mikdash, we march around the shul during the morning services, carrying our Four Species -
once on each weekday of Sukkot (on Shabbat, Hoshanot are recited without the Four Species and without circling the synagogue), and seven times on the last day of Sukkot - known as Hoshana Rabba because of the many Hoshana prayers that are recited. The word Hoshanot has also become synonymous with Aravot, the willow branches - especially those taken on Hoshana Rabba.

Traditionally, five willow branches are tied together - this, in addition to the two that are joined to the Lulav for all of Sukkot - for the special commemorative practice of Hoshana Rabba. Towards the end of the Hoshanot prayers, the willow bundle is symbolically beaten on the ground (actual ground outside the synagogue is preferred to the floor inside) and a special prayer for favorable judgment - for ourselves - is recited.

The four times of the year that G-d judges to world are Pesach (Passover) for grain, on Shavuot for "fruit of the trees", on Rosh HaShana all people "pass before G-d" and are inspected and judged, and on Chag (i.e. Sukkot-Shmini Atzeret), we are judged for water. Although the mishna mentions RH as a judgment day, and we actually call it Yom HaDin, we consider our personal judgment period to begin on Rosh HaShana, continue through Yom Kippur, and culminate on Hoshana Rabba, when the "object of judgment", so to speak, shifts from people to rainfall. Because of our obvious dependency on rainfall - and the dire consequences of drought, hurricanes, floods, etc. to humans - our "personal" judgment, so to speak, continues and is inextricably linked with the judgment for rainfall.

We openly pray for rain on Shmini Atzeret following the seven days of Sukkot when our prayers were silent and subtle because we don't want it to rain on Sukkot itself. Nonetheless, it is obvious that we focus on water during all of Sukkot - in the Mikdash, there was (and will be) the performance of Water Libation. The Four Species are all particularly water-intensive plants.

Hoshana Rabba is a Yom HaDin, a judgment day, but of a significantly different nature from Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. G-d's judgments are hopefully met by our introspection, reflection, and resolve to become better people.

There is a tradition observed in part or completely by many, to spend the night of Hoshana Rabba in the study of Torah. This is an appropriate expression of our repentance processes and of our joy of Judaism.
Thoughts of Sukkot in the Mikdash

Chag HaSukkot, the third of the Shalosh Regalim, is a festival of many names: Chag Ha'asif - the Feast of the Ingathering, or just plain CHAG - THE holiday par excellence. Sukkot is almost always called HeChag in the Mishna, Gemara, and the various Midrashim. And more than any other Chag celebrated in the Beit Hamikdash, the Festival of Sukkot had (and will have in the future as the prophet Zechariah assures us) an aura of universality. Not by coincidence, Sukkot, more than any other holiday was blessed with an abundance of Korbanot Tzibur. "You shall offer as Olot …thirteen young bullocks, two rams, fourteen male lambs in their first year, …aside from the Olat Tamid..." Thirteen bullocks were sacrificed on the first day of the Chag and the number decreased by one every day, for a total of 70 for the seven days of Sukkot.

"...To what do these 70 bullocks correspond? [They correspond] to the seventy primordial nations (enumerated in Bereishit 10). R. Yochanan said, 'Alas for the idolaters ...When the Mikdash stood, the Mizbei'ach atoned for them, but now, in the absence of the Bayit, what atones for them?" (Sukka 55b) A Midrash states that if the nations had understood the vital importance of the Mikdash to them, instead of destroying it, they would have surrounded it with armies to protect it. During one of the later Maccabean wars, the Seleucid King Antiochus VII Sidetes, even while he was the process of administering the Jews a crushing defeat, honored the Beit Hamikdash and Sukkot. As the fortifications of Jerusalem crumbled before him, "because of the festival (of Sukkot)", the Syrian king granted the beleaguered defenders a truce. "And besides that, he sent in a magnificent sacrifice, bulls with their horns aureated, with all sorts of sweet spices, and with cups of gold and silver... which was quite a different conduct from Antiochus Epiphanes, who, when he had taken the city, offered swine on the altar..." (Antiquities 13:8). Can we see this unexpected benevolence shown by a heathen king "because of the festival" as an adumbration of the glorious future that awaits us? "And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up [to Jerusalem] from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts and keep Chag HaSukkot" (Zechariah 14:16). And of course, once in seven years, on the first day of Chol Hamo'ed Sukkot at the conclusion of the Shmita year, in an impressive ceremony in the Beit Hamikdash, the king read from Sefer Devarim to all Am Yisrael.

In the days of the Mikdash, Sukkot - also referred as Z'man Simchateinu, the time of our rejoicing - was (and is today) the most joyous festival in the Jewish calendar. The Mishna says, "On twelve days (during the year) the flute was played before the Mizbei'ach... (Arakhin 2:3). Eight of these twelve days were on Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret. Two unique Mitzvot symbolize the Chag, "dwelling" in the Sukka and the "taking up" of the Arba Minim. In the early days of Bayit Sheini, the people "made themselves Sukkot, everyone upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the House of the Lord... (Nechemiah 8). They constructed Sukkot in the courtyards of the Beit Hamikdash to provide the Kohanim a place where they could eat Kodashim during the Chag.

The Torah says, "You shall take for yourselves the fruit of an Eitz Hadar (Etrog)... and you shall rejoice before the Lord your G-d seven days" (Vayikra 23:40). The Ti'feret Yisrael explains, "Before the Lord your G-d means only in the Mikdash. The Mishna says, "Originally the Lulav (and the rest of the Arba Minim) was carried seven days in the Mikdash but in the 'provinces' one day only." (Sukka 3:12). Bartenura notes that "In this case, the definition of 'provinces' included Jerusalem outside of the Mikdash." The Mishna continues, "After the Mikdash was destroyed, R. Yochanan ben Zakkai ordained that in the provinces, (the Arba Minim), should be "taken up" all seven days in memory of the Temple..."
The Simchot Beit Hasho'ieva celebrations (the Festival of the Water Drawing), held nightly during Chol Hamo'ed Sukkot, were the most joyous events in the entire Mikdash calendar. The Gemara says, "He who has not seen the joy
of the Simchat Beit Hasho'eiva has never seen rejoicing in his life." These public celebrations were held in conjunction with the Nisuch Hamayim (water libation) which accompanied the morning Tamid and its obligatory Nisuch Hayayin (wine libation) on Sukkot. The Simchat Beit Hasho'eiva started after the conclusion of the afternoon Tamid - the final Korban of the day. The Mishna says, "Fifteen stairs led up from (the Court of the Women) to the Court of the Israelites, corresponding to the fifteen Songs of Ascents in Tehillim (120-134) and upon them the Levvim used to sing" during the Simchat Beit Hasho'eiva and play their musical instruments. While huge crowds watched the proceedings, only the spiritual leaders of the people - "men of piety and good deeds danced with burning torches in their hands singing songs and praises". Some of the dancers "used to sing, 'Happy is our youth which did not disgrace our old age.' These were the men of piety and good deeds. Others used to sing, 'Happy is our old age which has atoned for (the sins of) our youth.' These were the Ba'alei Teshuva. And all of them sang, 'Happy is he who has not sinned but God will forgive them.'" Very early at "cock's-crow", the Kohanim opened the massive Nicanor Gates and sounded silver trumpets; this signalled the conclusion of that night's celebrations. The enormous crowd flowed down to the Shilo'ach spring south of Jerusalem. Upon sounding the trumpets, the Kohanim drew water into a golden flagon and returned to the Mikdash. They entered the Azara through the Sha'ar Hamayim, the Water Gate, located in close proximity to the Mizbe'ach. As a rule, the Sha'ar Hamayim was closed, however during Sukkot, it was opened to facilitate the entrance of the Kohanim. During the morning Tamid, to the accompaniment of trumpets, the Kohein Gadol ceremoniously poured the water into the western of the two silver cups embedded on the south western corner of the Mizbe'ach. At the same time, another Kohein poured the Nisuch Hayayin (the wine libation) into the eastern cup. The festivities of the Simchat Beit Hasho'eivah "did not override Shabbat or Yom Tov": they took place only during Chol Hamo'ed. "On the eve of Shabbat, they used to fill a gold flagon... with water drawn from the Shiloach" to use on Shabbat for the Nisuch Hamayim. The Torah states: "When an ox, sheep, or goat is born..." The Shofar, you will notice, is Xed out. Ask your children and guests why they think that was done. The answer is that in Emor, the term used for Rosh HaShana is Zichron T'ru'a, which is considered a reference to Shabbat when we don't blow the Shofar, we only remember it. Yom Kippur is represented by a Seder plate, there is a S'firat HaOmer counter, a pair of Luchot for Shavuot, and a Shofar for Rosh HaShana. The Shofar, you will notice, is Xed out. Ask your children and guests why they think that was done. The answer is that in Emor, the term used for Rosh HaShana is Zichron T'ru'a, which is considered a reference to Shabbat when we don't blow the Shofar, we only remember it. Yom Kippur is represented by the scales, tipped, hopefully, towards Good Life. Sukkot is represented in three ways: In the parsha, it is first called Chag HaAsif, the harvest festival, without reference to its mitzvot. That's the fellow in the lower-right; he's bringing in the harvest. Then the topic of Sukkot is brought up again, this time in the context of the Four Species, lower-left, and the Sukka, bottom-center. The Torah opens on the top of the PP is right-side heavy, indicating V'zot HaBracha (hold it up to a mirror and you'll see the B'reishit Torah). And finally, Migdal David represents the city of Jerusalem, mentioned prominently in the haftara of the first day of Sukkot. Remember, ParshaPix is a good generation-gap closer for reviewing Parsha.
ParshaPix for Parshat B’reishit
- A straightforward ParshaPix in celebration of Creation of the World.
- Upper-left are light switches turned on and off, representing the creation of light and dark, day and night, on day one of Creation.
- Upper right is a depiction of the creation of the heavens on the second day, with the separation of the upper and lower waters. The cloud represents the upper waters; the sea, the lower.
- Below the sea on the right side is a grassy area with trees, representing the third day.
- To the left are the creations of the fourth day - the sun, moon, and stars.
- The ladybug, bird, octopus, and fish represent the fifth day’s creations.
- Kangaroo, beaver, kitten, hippo, and the two people are some of the sixth day’s creations.
- The pair of candles, of course, stands for the culmination of Creation - the Shabbat, which G-d sanctified and gave to us to keep, preserve, and cherish as a reminder of Creation and the Creator.

TTRIDDLES... are Torah Tidbits-style riddles on Parshat HaShavua (sometimes on the calendar). They are found in the hard-copy of TT scattered throughout, usually at the bottom of different columns. In the electronic versions of TT, they are found all together at the end of the ParshaPix-TTRiddles section. The best solution set submitted each week (there isn't always a best) wins a double prize a CD from Noam Productions and/or a gift (game, puzzle, book, etc.) from Big Deal.

Last issue’s (Yom Kippur) TTriddles:
The seriousness of Yom Kippur did not lend itself to too many TTriddles. In fact, there was only one regular TTriddle, three unexplained ParshaPix elements, and a hidden-in-plain-sight item that requires comment.

It’s one of two different sets of five

We actually had this TTriddle or something very like it in the past. The two sets of five referred to in the TTriddle are the five davenings of Yom Kippur and the five INUYIM. NE’ILA is the fifth of the five davenings of the day. (This does not include Kol Nidre or Kabbalat Shabbat - only t’filot with an Amida is included in the count of five. The prohibition of wearing leather footware on Yom Kippur is called NE’ILAT HASANDAL. So the correct answer to this TTriddle is NE’ILA is in both sets of five.

The three UNEXPLAINEDs are all from the same source. There was a photo of a rose, the planet Venus, and a graphic of a rainbow.

A particularly beautiful and favorite part of the Yom Kippur Musaf repetition is the description of the radiance of the Kohein Gadol after successfully emerging from Kodshei Kodashim b'Shalom and b'li pega - in peace and without injury.

First there is the beautiful SHANA TOVA GREETING of the Kohein Gadol, a prayer for many different good things in the year to come - arranged alphabetically. Then comes EMET MA NEHDAR HAYA KOHEIN GADOL - Truly, how splendid was the KG, BTZEITO MIBEIT KODSHEI HAKODASHIM, as he emerged from the Holy of Holies...

This introductory remark is followed by an alphabetical, poetic description of MAR’EI KOHEN.

The DALET sentence: Like the form of the rainbow in the midst of the cloud...

The VAV sentence: Like a rose placed (planted?) in a beautiful garden...

The KAF sentence: Like the star (planet) NOGA (Venus, at least in modern Hebrew - maybe that's what the poet was referring to also) at the eastern boundary (of the sky)... [Venus is often the morning star and is truly a beautiful sight before dawn in the eastern sky. FYI, at other times during its trip around the sun, it is the evening star in the west - also a beautiful sight, and then there are times when we cannot see the planet Venus at all.]

May we be ZOCHEH to see these things speedily in our time...

And then there was the graphic in the upper right corner of the KAPAROT page

Ever see one like it? It is the design for the reverse side of the new 2 shekel coin that was supposed to be in circulation already and we don't know the latest information as to when we will see it.

This week's TTriddles:

[1] Initially tossed and mixed small herbs
[2] Is the rooster a coop father or is this?
[3] The 18th letter patriarchs
[4] AAAAAADHILLMORSTUVV
[5] Laugh in Russian yes virtual city
[7] We take a Yamim Nora’im idea and apply it to 3/4