

UNEDITED INTERNET VERSION
V2

AFTER SUCCOS TALKS

Now that the HolyDays are over
What do we do ?

Collection of Drashas from the
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<http://www.bilvavi.net/sugya/succos>

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1.1 | *Internalizing Sukkos For the Rest of the Year*¹

Carrying Over the Yom Tov into the Year

In the *Shemoneh Esrei* of the Three Festivals (Sukkos, Pesach and Shavuot), we say, “And lift us, Hashem our G-d, the blessings of Your festival, for life and peace, happiness and gladdening.”

There are those who explain² this prayer to mean that we are asking Hashem to let the blessings of Yom Tov carry over into the rest of the year. “Blessing”, *berachah* in Hebrew, comes from word *beraicha* – a pool, connoting that we want Hashem to pool upon us His sustenance³; in other words, we want to be affected by the special power of the Yom Tov for the rest of the year as well.

It is well-known that not only is Yom Tov an opportunity for immense holiness and growth, but even *Chol HaMoed* is a holy time; *Chazal* forbade certain activities on *Chol HaMoed* so that we can be free to rejoice in festivity and have time to learn Torah.⁴

Having free time on *Chol HaMoed* is not simply meant to have free time – although that is certainly true in the simple sense; it is really because having this extra time on our hands give us the opportunity to have a calm and relaxed soul, so we can focus on more on serving the Creator and learning the Torah.

When a person is busy with various matters other than *Avodas Hashem* and learning Torah, his soul is less open to receive matters of holiness. But on Yom Tov, a person is able to learn how to acquire spirituality, *Avodas Hashem* and learning Torah – and all of this is because on Yom Tov we are disconnected from materialism. (It is not a total disconnection from materialism, only partial; as we see that certain labors are permitted on *Chol HaMoed*, in certain situations).

Yom Tov can show us that even after Yom Tov, our *Avodas Hashem* and our learning of the Torah should be from a disconnection from the material world, a disconnection from how the rest of the world thinks – and from this, we come to truly learn the Torah and have true *Avodas Hashem*.

Accessing the State of Yom Tov Even During The Year

Yom Tov is supposed to affect us and fuel us up with spiritual energy to last until the next Yom Tov. We need this burst of spirituality to keep us going. The days of Yom Tov are few, in

¹ This chapter is adapted from *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh: Sukkos*, chap. 1.

<http://www.bilvavi.net/english/droshos-after-holydays>

² *Bad Kodesh on Moadim* (Rav Baruch Dov Povarski), p.416. See also *Birchas Moadecha* (of Rav Margolin) on *Tishrei*.

³ See *Rabbeinu Bachye*, *Parshas Eikev*, 8:10.

⁴ *Yerushalmi Moed Kattan*, 9a.

comparison to the rest of the year which is much longer; if a person doesn't get affected by Yom Tov, he won't be able to acquire any matter of holiness during the rest of the year.

Let us think into how Yom Tov can affect our soul for the rest of the year.

On Yom Tov, a person is calm and relaxed from the busyness of the world. His mind is settled and he is a bit calmer than he is normally; each to his own level. On *Chol HaMoed*, we buy only food that we will need for Yom Tov, and not more than that. We are frugal and satisfied just with that amount of shopping. We also don't do any work on *Chol HaMoed* unless it will cause us to have a loss. Most stores are closed. Of course, a person might use the relaxation of *Chol HaMoed* for the wrong purposes and waste his time, *chas v'shalom*; but that is a different problem which we are not currently discussing.

It is impossible to live in Yom Tov during the year – that is, in the external sense. But in our inner world of the soul, we can live in a state of calmness that we have on Yom Tov, even when it's not Yom Tov – if we gain the proper kind of mind to do so.

When Yom Tov ends, we go back to our prospective jobs. Even a *Kolel avreich* has his jobs; life is full of responsibilities that surround us all day. Anyone who is married and has children has responsibilities to his family. He has to make sure that his wife and kids have a roof over their heads; that they have food, clothing, doctor visits, etc. That is one side of our life. But there is another side going on in our life – the fact that we are in between one Yom Tov and the next.

The Ramban writes that *Sefiras HaOmer* is like *Chol HaMoed*, and that Shavuot is like the *Shemini Atzeres* (of Pesach). By the same token, perhaps we can say also that the days in between Shavuot and Sukkos – and from Sukkos to Pesach – are like one big *Chol HaMoed*, the bridge that connects one Yom to another. There is a holiness we can gain from our “*Chol HaMoed*” year-round.

In Between Yomim Tovim

Perhaps we can say also that Yom Tov is like a Shabbos, while the rest of the year is like the six days of the week. We find that Pesach is called “Shabbos”,⁵ and Yom Kippur is called “*Shabbos Shabboson*.”⁶ This is because our whole essence is that we were redeemed from Egypt so that we could become a nation to receive the Torah, and we also know that every Yom Tov is *zecher l'yetzias mitzrayim* – to remember our redemption from Egypt. Shabbos is also *zecher l'yetzias mitzrayim*. If so, Yom Tov and Shabbos can be compared to each other. The rest of the year, by contrast, is like the six days of the week.

The six days of the week are blessed by Shabbos.⁷ Perhaps we can also say that the days in between each Yom Tov are sustained by the blessings of the Yom Tov. Just like we have a concept of

⁵ *Menachos 65b*

⁶ *Vayikra 16: 31*

⁷ *Zohar II, Yisro, 88a*

the afternoon⁸ and a concept of “*bein hashemashos*” (twilight) – times “in between” that serve to connect different times – so can we say that the days in between Yomim Tovim are what connect the previous Yom Tov to the next Yom Tov. If so, the rest of the year is in a sense like a Yom Tov of its own; it is a certain time, a bridge between the Yomim Tovim.

What are the days of the rest of the year like? They are not like Yom Tov itself, but they resemble *Chol HaMoed* – the time which connects one part of Yom Tov to the next. *Chol HaMoed* is the lower level of Yom Tov, and so can we say that the rest of the year is a lower level of Yom Tov, serving to connect Yom Tov to another.

The *Gemara*¹⁰ says that when Haman wanted to get the Jews in trouble, he pointed out to Achashveirosh that the Jews are always busy keeping Yom Tov; “today is Shabbos, today is Pesach.” This hints to the fact that the Jewish people are always in a “Yom Tov” – because the whole year is really like a Yom Tov! (Just that it is on a lower level than the actual Yom Tov.)

What We Learn From Yom Tov For The Rest of the Year

The Yomim Tovim given to us are not simply defined by their individual concepts they represent, but they are more than that: they reflect the level we are at during the time that the Yom Tov sets in. That is why we daven in *Shemoneh Esrei* of Yom Tov, “*You chose us from all the nations*”, and we also mention in the davening how Yom Tov is *zecher l’yetzias mitzrayim* – that only we, the Jewish people, merited to leave Egypt, while the other nations did not merit this special event. Yom Tov expresses how the Jewish people were formed into a nation, and how Hashem chose us as His nation.

The world stands on three pillars¹¹, and so does the Jewish people stand on three things – the three Yomim Tovim¹². The Yomim Tovim help the Jewish people survive for the rest of the year. There is much to learn from each aspect of Yom Tov.

For example, on *Chol HaMoed*, one is only allowed to purchase items that are necessary for Yom Tov.¹³ We can learn two things from this. Firstly, we see that you only need to buy things for your house that you need right now, and not to shop for things you’ll only need in the future. Secondly, you have to be frugal and only buy things that you really need, not luxuries.

This is how someone lives throughout the rest of the year as well, when he has a deep connection in his soul with the Creator – he takes the lessons of Yom Tov with him for the rest of the year as well.

⁸ *Rashi, Shemos 12: 6*

⁹ *Avos 5: 6*

¹⁰ *Rashi, Megillah 13b*

¹¹ *Avos 1:2 and 1:17*

¹² *These are called Shalosh Regalim, the “Three Festivals”: Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos.*

¹³ *Tur, Orach Chaim, 130.*

Yom Tov – Our Meeting With Hashem

Yom Tov is called *moed*, which comes from the word *vaad* (meeting). The place where we would meet with Hashem was the *Beis Hamikdash*, and from it a Jew would derive vitality from it for the rest of the year by visiting it three times a year. The *Shechinah* was there. Now that it is gone, we express our loss in the *Shemoneh Esrei* of Yom Tov, “*And because of our sins, we have been exiled from our land, and we have been distanced from our earth.*”

What do we mean that we have been exiled from our land? We are able to stand in Eretz Yisrael today. How are we exiled from it?

Simply, it is because the incredible holiness of Eretz Yisrael, the holiness of the *Beis Hamikdash*, has gone away. There is a discussion if the land of Eretz Yisrael still maintains its sanctity even though we have no *Beis Hamikdash*.¹⁴

But there is a deeper meaning behind the *tefillah* we are saying. We have been exiled and distanced from our land, in the sense that we are far from the great spiritual revelations that one would experience on Yom Tov by the *Beis Hamikdash*. That spiritual light would illuminate the entire Eretz Yisrael. Although this reality still continues to exist in our inner world, it isn't revealed out in the open in the world we see, and thus we are “exiled” from our land. So although a person can be in Eretz Yisrael today, he is still exiled from it – he is missing what Eretz Yisrael used to be like.

When a person went up to the *Beis Hamikdash* three times a year, he saw the *Shechinah*. What does this mean? It means that he revealed in his heart a deep connection with Hashem, an utter awareness of His existence. It was called “*aliyah l'regel*,” (ascending on Yom Tov) – going up to the *Beis Hamikdash*. It was an ascension in the sense that one who ascended spiritually from Yom Tov would stay at that high level, and he was able to maintain it and not to fall from it back to routine. This is the meaning of the possuk, “*Who will ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who will stand in His holy place*”¹⁵ – in other words, the possuk is praising the one who would gain from the holy spiritual elevation of Yom Tov and maintain his level throughout the rest of the year.

Yom Tov- The Shechinah Within

The Torah is eternal, and thus whatever it imparts is eternal. If there is such a concept of Yom Tov in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash* – when the *Shechinah* was revealed out in the open – then that concept, that point, continues to exist. We have no *Beis Hamikdash* today, but we still have Yom Tov, and we can have *aliyah l'regel* every Yom Tov, even nowadays. This is what we ask for in the *Shemoneh Esrei* of Yom Tov: “*V'hasieinu es birkas moedecha*” – (“And carry over the blessings of Your festivals...”). Our avodah on Yom Tov is that we ask Hashem to let the holiness of Yom Tov

¹⁴ See *Megillah 6a* and *Rambam Hilchos Beis HaBechirah 6: 16*

¹⁵ *Tehillim 24:3*

carry into the rest of the year, in spite of the fact that our level of revelation isn't the same as it used to be.

It is written, *"And I will dwell amongst them."*¹⁶ The *Alshich* explains that the possuk is saying that Hashem dwells in the heart of each Jew! In our own heart within us, we can still have *aliyah l'regel* three times a year, on Yom Tov¹⁷ – and see Hashem, so to speak; on our own level. We can access the *Shechinah* in our hearts, three times a year – each Yom Tov – and extend it to the rest of the year. But in order for this to happen, we need to know what Yom Tov really is.

If a person came to a stronger recognition of Hashem's existence on Yom Tov, then the Torah he learns during the rest of the year will become more internalized in his mind and heart, as a result. If someone is truly searching for Hashem, the Torah he learns will become the real Torah – *"For from Zion comes forth Torah, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem."*¹⁸ The true Torah of Hashem becomes revealed to a person, in his heart, when he earnestly pursues Hashem.

Thus, the inner implication of Yom Tov is for one to connect to Hashem in his heart. What will result from this? *"For Hashem gives wisdom, from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding."*¹⁹

Experience the Elation of Yom Tov and Then Seek To Maintain It

If someone reaches this on Yom Tov, he has gained immensely; now it is his avodah to continue that growth into the rest of the year. This will fulfill the meaning of what we daven for on Yom Tov – *"And carry over the blessings of Your festivals..."*

But if a person didn't try to grow from Yom Tov in the way described here, and he didn't come to have a new feeling of a relationship with Hashem from the Yom Tov – then there is no point for him to wait to see if he will be inspired for the rest of the year. He hasn't invested in anything over Yom Tov, so he won't see any of the profits during the rest of the year. Only if a person is clear what he has gained from Yom Tov can he hope to maintain his inspiration for the rest of the year.

So first, a person has to make sure that he has gained from Yom Tov in the first place – before he seeks to let Yom Tov carry over into the rest of the year. Even if he has felt a small amount of recognition of Hashem over Yom Tov, at least he has gained somewhat, and he has now what to grow upon for the rest of the year.

On *Simchas Torah*, a person has to have at least felt a minimal amount of closeness towards the Torah. One has to feel the Yom Tov, to feel the *Simchas Torah*, to feel *Shemini Atzeres* – of which Hashem said, *"Remain with me one more day."*²⁰ He has to feel that it was hard to part from Hashem after such a period of closeness, just as Hashem finds it hard to leave us at the end of

¹⁶ *Shemos* 25: 8

¹⁷ *Yom Tov* here refers uniquely to the Three Festivals of *Pesach*, *Shavuot* and *Sukkos*.

¹⁸ *Yeshayahu* 2:3

¹⁹ *Mishlei* 2:6

²⁰ See *Rashi*, *Vayikra* 23: 36

Sukkos. He has to have felt that he has the opportunity to feel the reality of Hashem for at least one more day.

The Custom In Kelm of “Asiri Kodesh”

Let us think into how we can hold onto our gains from Yom Tov for the rest of the year.

In Kelm, there was a custom called “*Asiri Kodesh*.”²¹ Every ten days following Yom Kippur, people who lived in Kelm would make for themselves a mini Yom Kippur and check to see if they had kept to the resolutions they made last Yom Kippur.

They started this custom because they realized that most people are only able to hold onto their inspiration during *Yomim Noraim*, and a few are able to keep the inspiration going until after Sukkos, but not beyond that; *Asiri Kodesh* made a person do some introspection every ten days and ask himself if he was still keeping to his level he reached on *Yomim Noraim*.

We can learn from this something very important: how to hold onto our gains from Yom Tov. If we really want to have a good year, we need to see after *Yomim Noraim* and *Sukkos* if we are still feeling that closeness to Hashem we felt during these holy times. For every ten days that go by – or once a week, for those who are able to – we should set aside time and see if we’re keeping to the level we were on during those days.

“*Who will ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who will stand in His holy place.*” This is not just a possuk, it is telling us the avodah we need to do throughout the year: we need to see where we are holding. We all know that Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos and Simchas Torah will once again be here next year, and that we will once again return to making resolutions, developing our will for spirituality, to have yearnings for spirituality, to dance again on *Simchas Torah*. We will do it all again next year – with the help of Hashem.

But are we losing all of this, *chas v’shalom*, as the year goes on – and then we are just beginning again from scratch next year? Are we going to start over again next year simply because we have lost all those yearnings?

The truth is that the reason why many people can’t keep their resolutions for the new year is because they don’t believe in themselves enough. They didn’t believe to begin with that they were able to keep to what they took upon themselves. But this is really a denial of the words of Chazal. If Chazal established that we daven in *Shemoneh Esrei* the *tefillah* of “*V’hasieinu*”,

it must be that it is definitely possible for us to keep to what we took upon ourselves for the coming year; even if we can’t keep to them as perfectly as we had hoped to, we can still keep to them on our own level.

²¹ lit. “*Tenth Day Is Holy*”.

The Advice of the Ramchal

If someone doesn't seek advice on how he can keep to his resolutions, we all know that it will be pointless for him to try to keep to them. There is one single advice we have for this, from the *Ramchal*, (author of *Mesillas Yesharim*) in sefer *Derech Eitz Chaim*. He writes as follows²²:

“It is therefore a duty upon each person to reflect with himself. If he doesn't reflect and think, wisdom will not come after him...a person, for many years of his life, thinks a lot about his various responsibilities, which are only his temporary responsibilities. Why can't he think for an hour about the things that really matter, such as: Who am I? Why did I come onto this world? What does Hashem want from me? What will be with my end?

“This (an hour of self-introspection every day) is the greatest remedy once can have against his evil inclination. It is easy, yet it does so much. It bears much results. Every day, a person should reflect for at least an hour a day, and empty himself from the rest of his thoughts so that he can only think about just this (what he have said).

“And he should ask himself in his heart: “What did the forefathers do, whom Hashem found desirable? What did Moshe Rabbeinu do? What did Dovid HaMelech do? What did all the great leaders before me do?

“And he should realize in his mind how good it is to do this for all his life.”

What the Ramchal is saying is not just inspiration for Elul. It is something to think about the entire year. If we are really truthful with ourselves, and if we really want to gain from *Yomim Noraim* for the rest of the year – then we have to learn how we can protect what we have gained from *Yomim Noraim*.²³

Make A Self Accounting

The Ramchal has taught us that that the essential tool we need is to set aside time for self-introspection. It can be every ten days; once a week is even better, and if one can do it every day, that's the most preferable. During the time you set aside, make the following self-accounting: “On Rosh Hashanah, I reached a certain level. Have I succeeded in keeping to it? How much have I kept to it? If I haven't kept to it, what can I do to make sure I keep to it?”

Hashem has decreed on each person on Rosh Hashanah whatever has been decreed upon him. But it is upon us to make sure that we aren't among those who don't keep to their words. We all know that the coming year will have its full amount of responsibilities, challenges, and difficulties. It will definitely not be that simple to keep to the level we reached *Yomim Noraim* during the year. But we at least need to have a hope that we *can* succeed; of course, we cannot blindly trust ourselves that we will for sure see success, but we must try to at least be *eligible* for success.

²² This has been loosely translated and is fairly literal to the text.

²³ See also *Kedushas Levi: Shavuos*, and also *Ramban: Emunah UBitachon*, chap. 19

What a person has to do is designate for himself times of quiet in which he can make a self-accounting. We must bring our life to a halt and think about the purpose of life. We must be truthful with ourselves, and remember what we said to Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. You can write down what you said this way you don't forget it; take out the paper and read it during this time of quiet you set aside for yourself. One has to see if he's really keeping to what he took upon himself, and if he sees that he isn't, he has to ask himself: "How will I face Hashem next Rosh Hashanah...?"

One should be aware that he has free will to decide if he will be among those who merit the blessings of Yom Tov for the rest of the year, or if *chas v'shalom* he will not be among those who merit it.

How To Avoid The Sleepiness of the Winter

Anyone who doesn't follow the *Ramchal's* advice can testify that he has never succeeding in keeping to his resolutions he made during *Yomim Noraim*. But if someone follows the *Ramchal's* advice and he sets aside time to think about what's important, he will definitely see results.

If someone sees a different piece of advice in another *sefer*, that's wonderful. But in Kelm, and in other places, they followed the *Ramchal's* advice, which is that one should set aside time to bring his life to a halt and see if he is keeping to his *Yomim Noraim* level.

We hope that those who are reading this feel that this advice is simple and true; it is the words of our great teachers, and nothing has been added here to their words. Anyone who is truthful with himself knows how necessary it is to make this self-accounting.

These words are not meant to be an inspiring lecture. Inspiration is for Elul and *Yomim Noraim*, and it doesn't last for the winter, when people get sleepy and lethargic. If we want to avoid becoming sleep-like to our spiritual situation during the winter, we need to make sure we are keeping to our level throughout the rest of the year. During *Aseres Y'mei Teshuvah*, a person is supposed to act above his normal level.²⁴ The rest of the year, however, we go back to our normal level. The high level of spirituality of *Yomim Noraim* has ended – each person, on whatever level he is at. But if we want to at least be on the true level we are supposed to be on, than we must take with us a point that we will have from the beginning of the year until its end.

May Hashem merit us that we should be able to set aside time to think about the purpose of life²⁵, and that we should maintain our level for the rest of the year – and that we shouldn't be among those who only wait for the next Elul to become inspired.

²⁴ *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim: 203*

²⁵ For more specific guidance on how to make a *cheshbon hanefesh*, see *Bilvavi Vol. IV, chapters 3-5*.

1.2 | *Drawing Menuchas Hanefesh From Consistency*²⁶

Don't Wait For Yom Tov

When Yom Tov comes many people feel *chiyus* (vitality) from it which they do not usually feel during the rest of the year. A person looks forward to Yom Tov so he can feel more alive from it, while the rest of the year seems boring; our *sefarim hakedoshim* call the winter (when there is no Yom Tov) a “time for sleep”.

It is nice to look forward to Yom Tov, but we must realize that there is a different attitude we can have. There is a way for us to derive even more vitality from the ordinary days of the year than from Yom Tov!

Of course, Yom Tov is the holiest time of the year, both from a halachic viewpoint and from an emotional viewpoint. Yet, there is a rule, which our *sefarim hakedoshim* teach, that states everything is contained in its opposite. This means that if Yom Tov is holier than the rest of the year, then there is way to see how the rest of the year can be holier than Yom Tov.

If a person only feels vitality from Yom Tov, he is full of vitality sometimes. He feels elated on Shabbos and Yom Tov, but daily life is boring to him. However, if a person learns how to derive vitality from the rest of the year, he can always feel alive.

After Yom Tov Ends

There is a concept that a person can extend the holiness of Yom Tov to the rest of the year. This is what we ask for in the Yom Tov prayer, “*and lift us up, Hashem our G-d, with the blessings of Your festivals.*” We are asking that Hashem should prolong the holiness of Yom Tov into the rest of the year. However, the reality is that most people do not succeed in doing this except for a short amount of time.

The holiness of Yom Tov can actually be an impediment to one’s growth in his *avodas* Hashem. All changes, even changes for the good, are somewhat harmful. Even when a person becomes more spiritual, he is in danger, because he has gone through a change. All changes are dangerous to a person!

For example, the sons of Yaakov were afraid that if their father found out that Yosef was still alive he would die from the good news. Why were they afraid of this? Could anything have been better for their father to hear? It is because an extreme emotion is harmful, even if it is about something good.

²⁶ <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/discovering-your-inner-peace-011-menucha-consistency>

When Yom Tov comes, a non-feeling person doesn't feel any changes from the Yom Tov, whereas, a person who takes Yom Tov seriously and prepares for it, receives vitality and elation from it. When Yom Tov is over, he is apt to fall from his plateau.

If a person falls from a chair, it hurts. If a person falls from a table, it hurts even more, and if he falls from a higher place than this, the pain increases. The same goes for spirituality. When a person reaches a spiritual high, his fall will be more painful. Although Yom Tov is holy, a person's soul cannot always handle the holiness and he falls soon after.

If we want to gain from Yom Tov, we first need to feel alive from the ordinary days of the year and see what is contained in them. Then, we will be able to receive the holiness of Yom Tov without losing it afterwards.

Two Different Abilities In The Soul

Every person's soul has two abilities: the ability to become inspired and grow, and the ability to stabilize and remain still. These are two opposite forces in one's soul. Usually, when a person uses one of these abilities he loses the other. For example, when a person feels spiritual growth, he is apt to lose his inner peace. Whereas, when a person feels at peace with himself, he becomes complacent and doesn't strive for growth.

What should a person do – strive for more growth, or stay still?

It's a challenge. When a person has growth, he often loses his calmness. He might be happy, but he isn't calm. On the other hand, if a person feels calm, he often becomes lethargic and doesn't seek to improve himself.

A person has the power of inner calm, but if it doesn't come from a deep place in his soul, this power just makes him sleepy and lethargic. (If one doesn't know how to calm himself down, there are solutions for this such as thinking about the ocean waves or something else relaxing).

There is a story about Rav Shmuel Vosner shlit"א, that depicts calmness. One time he went to the Chazon Ish to ask him something. When he came, he found the Chazon Ish with closed eyes. He seemed to be sleeping.

Rav Vosner stood there and waited. Suddenly, the Chazon Ish opened his eyes and asked, "Why didn't you ask your question?"

Rav Vosner responded, "I saw the Rov was sleeping..."

The Chazon Ish answered, "No. I was not sleeping".

Why did the Chazon Ish look like he was sleeping?

The Chazon Ish seemed to be sleeping because of the great connection he felt with Hashem. However, a simpler understanding of his behavior is that his soul was very calm and this did not make him sleepy.

The Calm Place In The Soul

When a person is only calm in a superficial way, he becomes lethargic. From a superficial perspective, a person is able to fall asleep when he is less busy, thus calmer. The inner perspective of this power is that a person is calm when he reaches an inner silence. Just like all of creation was silent during the giving of the Torah, so also a person has the power to experience this deep place in his own soul. This is not describing fatigue, but a quietness that calms down one's excitement.

Usually, one is only excited by something he doesn't often have. When a person sees a new kind of food he has never tasted before, he gets excited. If he is a more materialistic kind of person, he is even more excited. Yet, if he eats it again and again, he loses passion for it. When one has something on a constant basis, he doesn't get excited from it. If we have something pleasurable consistently, we wouldn't need new things to get us excited.

Consistency And Renewal

Hashem is unchanging. He "was, is, and will be". He is constant. Hashem renews creation every day, but He Himself is never renewed. We need to learn how to connect to a power in our soul that is constantly in existence and doesn't require us to change. The depth of life is to live in a silence that stays the same and doesn't get renewed.

A more internal kind of person knows how to derive vitality from the regular days of the year, no less than what he gets from Yom Tov. It's like eating and drinking; we need both in order to survive. Our soul needs Yom Tov and it also needs the rest of the year.

There are people who misuse this power of the soul and become lethargic. However, others know how to connect to this power from an inner silence in their soul.

We have two forces in our soul. One is the ability to find renewal. The other force is the ability to live without renewal. If a person only gets his vitality from renewal, he needs new things to feel alive. He feels alive from Yom Tov and from buying new clothes, because now he has something he didn't have yesterday—vitality. There is, however, another source of vitality a person can have. This foundation is Hashem, who is unchanging – the very source of life.

The Need for Renewal Comes From Being Superficial

A superficial person constantly seeks new things. There are people who are always exchanging their items for a new one, because they need new things to live. If a person is only connected to renewal, this shows a lack of connection to Hashem, Who is consistent and never changes.

The Jewish people are compared to the moon, which renews itself every thirty days. However, this was a curse that came to the moon after it was created. Before Creation, the plan was for the moon to remain consistently of equal size to the sun. When a person derives vitality from

consistency, and doesn't need renewal to survive, he is connected to the state that existed before Creation, which is the more desirable state to be in.

The Dangers to Both Ways

Each Yom Tov, a person derives new vitality. However, there is another source of vitality. When a person feels vitality from consistency it does not involve anything new. Without this kind of vitality, a person might gain from Yom Tov, only to fall from his level after Yom Tov is over; in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, he grows spiritually, but after Yom Kippur, he stops growing.

However, when one accesses the inner silence in his soul, he is able to derive vitality from the consistent reality of Hashem. Yom Tov becomes another kind of vitality to him, but he doesn't depend on it, because he already has vitality. This person feels alive during the year, so he doesn't need Yom Tov to revive him. Whereas, when someone doesn't feel alive during the year, but feels kind of dead, he needs Yom Tov to bring him back to life.

Yet, there is also a danger to someone who gets his vitality from consistency. When Yom Tov comes it is possible that he might derive so much vitality from the renewed feeling of Yom Tov that he will lose his vitality from consistency. Therefore, a person must learn how to balance these two abilities which takes a lot of wisdom.

Feeling The Constant Changes

Practically speaking, we always live with renewal. Every person goes through changes in life, some big and some small. The entire Creation is moving every second as well. We are always changing to some extent. All of Creation is like one big tumult.

If a person doesn't know how to connect to the power of consistency, he will suffer from changes. This can be compared to a tree that gets blown by the wind. If there is a firm root, the tree will be able to withstand strong winds. If we have consistency and we don't need renewal in order to live, we are connected to a firm root that can withstand changes.

We usually only feel changes when something extreme occurs, for instance a happy or sad occasion. When a person gets vitality from changes, his life becomes extreme. These types of people aren't satisfied with just having food. Rather, they need something exotic in their food and they need new things to make them feel alive. Such people seek changes that become more and more extreme, because the regular things that they are used to become boring. They seek new things and look for a change in their routine. The more they look for vitality, the more extreme the things become that they seek.

Others have the opposite problem: they are too grounded. They never seek anything new, not because they feel alive from a consistent lifestyle, but because they are lethargic and devoid of life. If one is balanced, he derives vitality from consistency and from changes that are small or big. A person can only derive vitality from changes when he mainly derives his vitality from the ordinary days of the year, which are without renewal. A person, who isn't balanced and never derives vitality from changes, has lost his sense of feeling alive. He slowly begins to become lethargic and disconnected from everything around him.

Sometimes one may become so lethargic that he begins to feel an inner emptiness and he is filled with all kinds of terrible thoughts that he can't escape. He might try to find himself by traveling to strange places in the world. This is all because he doesn't understand how life works. As soon as he encounters a problem, he is full of inner turmoil.

See Life As One Continuous Path

One needs to be aware that life is one continuous path! If he falls asleep in middle of a *shiuur* that he cannot understand, it is because he doesn't see how all the details connect. A person can't wake up in the middle of his life and try to understand where he went wrong. One needs to see how every experience in his life up until this very moment is all part of a big picture.

If one would know himself and understand that all his experiences in life are all part of one big picture, many of his problems would be avoided. For example, there are people who complain that their children misbehave. Such people think that if not for this problem, everything else is good. But when you think about it, a child who misbehaves is not simply having a behavior problem. If the parent looks deeper, he will see that there is more behind the problem. The problem isn't that the child is misbehaving. That's a small part of the picture.

Since he doesn't know what causes the child to want to misbehave, he cannot solve his child's misbehavior. A person needs to become aware of what's going around him in his life in order to deal with any problem. He needs to look what happened before the problem and see what caused it. Otherwise, he will be very shocked every time he has a problem.

In order to understand life, one needs to see how life is one continuous path. To do this, he needs to pay attention to what's happening. One can only pay attention to his life when he is living life, when he is experiencing it. A waiter pays attention to those seated at the table, because his job depends on this. If a person realizes that his life depends on this, he will pay attention to what's going on.

When one experiences life and pays attention to everything that's going on, he won't fall apart as soon as he encounters a problem, because he will know how to deal with it. If one isn't paying attention to what's going on his life, he will never know how to deal with problems. He needs to remember that there is a larger picture, and that every part of life is interconnected.

1.3 | *The Joy of Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah* ²⁷

Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah: Two Different Aspects of Joy

Shemini Atzeres is called by two names: *Shemini Atzeres*, and *Simchas Torah*. They represent two different kinds of joy. One kind of joy is the joy of “*Atzeres*”. “*Atzeres*” means to “remain”. This is hinting to the *Midrash* that says that Hashem desired to remain with the Jewish people even after Sukkos ends, saying to them, “Remain with me one more day.”

What exactly is this joy? It is the joy that one can have just in being attached to Hashem, to simply feel with Him a sense of companionship.

Simchas Torah offers a different kind of joy. It is the joy one has in being attached to the Torah, and thus we make a celebration that we have completed the Torah.

Joy Within Nature and Joy Above Nature

A *chossan* and *kallah*²⁸ have a certain joy; and it lasts for seven days. The joy of *Shemini Atzeres* is a joy found on the “eighth day”, hinting to the fact that it is a joy that has to do with “eight.” In other words, the regular kind of joy is represented by the number seven, while the higher joy is represented by the number eight. We always find how “seven” corresponds with nature, such as that there are seven days of the week. The joy of a *chossan* and *kallah*, which lasts for seven days, represents the natural joy; the joy is that two natures are fusing together. Such joy is a joy within the bounds of nature.

But there is a higher kind of joy, the joy of *Shemini Atzeres*. It is a joy that is above nature – “eight” is above “seven.” Let us explain what it is.

Above Nature

It is the custom that when we finish the Torah, we immediately begin with *Beraishis*. The reason behind this is because the Torah is unlimited and endless, and we want to show that it has no end. The last letter of the Torah is *lamed*, and the first letter of the Torah is *beis*, which forms the word *lev* (heart). The heart is king of the body; a king is above his people. A king is allowed to break

²⁷ This chapter is adapted from *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Vol. V, p.284-286.

<http://www.bilvavi.net/english/bilvavi-part-5-284-joy-shemini-atzeres-simchas-torah>

²⁸ groom and bride

fences, and no one can protest him.²⁹ A king – or the heart of a person – is not bound to the regular rules.

This is the joy of *Simchas Torah*; it represents the heart of a person, which is above the regular limits, for it is king over the body. The joy of *Simchas Torah* is thus a joy that is above the natural kind of joy. It is the unlimited joy one can have in the Torah.

The same is true for the joy of *Shemini Atzeres*. Our Avodah during the seven days of Sukkos is to realize how all of the world and nature is futile, to erase our attachment to this world (see the chapter before)³⁰. After a person has hopefully nullified his attachment to this world – and there are seven traits inherent in nature for one to overcome³¹ – he is now able to connect totally to Hashem, a state of being that is essentially above nature; that is the joy of *Shemini Atzeres*.

Within The Struggles, and Above the Struggles

The word *simcha* (joy) comes from word *someach*, and if we rearrange the letters, we get the word *chamesh*. *Chamesh* can mean two different things:

The number “five.”

From the word “*chamushim*”, which means “armies”; we find this when the Jewish people left Egypt, that they left in “armies.”³² Rashi states that these armies were unarmed with any weapons. From here we see that the word “*chamesh*” normally refers to weapons of war. *Simcha* and *chamesh* have the same root letters (*shin, mem* and *ches*); there is a rule in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that whenever there is a root word³³, there are two opposite meanings to it. In our case, this will apply as follows.

Simcha is when a person ends his wars, representing a level that is above nature. He has left the level of “*Seven times a righteous person falls and gets up*”, and he is above the regular ups and downs. He is above “seven” – and he is now on the level of “eight”. He no longer has the normal, natural struggles he used to deal with.

Chamesh represents the lower kind of joy – when one is happy upon overcoming challenges. He wages war with the seven “nations” inside him – the seven primary bad *middos*. He still hasn’t completely overcome them yet – he’s still within the normal fights of nature, fighting with his natural abilities.

²⁹ *Pesachim 110a*

³⁰ Hence, we read *Kobeles* on Sukkos, which talks about how futile this physical world is.

³¹ the seven *middos*: *chessed, gevurah, tiferes, etc.*

³² *Shemos 13: 18*

³³ *shoresh*

After Yom Tov Is Over

When *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* is over, what does a person remain with? The higher joy of “eight” reached on *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* is gone; what does a person have left from Yom Tov?

Simcha is when a person is happy with something that got added onto my essence. People don't find happiness in the fact that they merely exist; people are naturally unhappy. (There is a kind of happiness that a person can have in just being happy with what he has, but no one is happy with their mere existence.) *Simcha* is only present when a person gets something. If a person would take something he gets and make it a part of his essence, he would no longer be happy with what he has gotten, because now it's part of who he is – and he needs something *more* than what he is in order to be happy.

Yet, this is actually our avodah: we need to take what we have gained and make it a part of our essence. Our avodah on *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* is to find joy in Hashem and in His Torah – a joy that is above nature. After a person merits this joy, he has to take it and make it a part of who he is. One needs to feel a total connection with Hashem that transcends nature, and an attachment with Torah that transcends nature. When a person takes the happiness of being attached to Hashem and the Torah (and this happiness can be reached on the Yom Tov) and he makes into a part of himself, the *simcha* goes away with this, because now there is nothing “more” to be happy about, for it is now part of the person.

For this reason, there is no *simcha* after Yom Tov ends. There can't be. It is not because the great spirituality of Yom Tov has gone, but rather – it is the opposite! If we have succeeded in our avodah on Yom Tov, that means we have transformed the spirituality of Yom Tov into a part of our essence. It has gone from being something great that surrounded us into something that has been absorbed into our being.³⁴ With this attainment, our *simcha* has to go away, but the gain is far worth it.

What is the avodah now as we start the rest of the year? It is now upon us to aspire for an even higher level than what we gained until now – and from there we will derive our next upgrade to our *simcha*.

³⁴ In the Hebrew sefer, the author calls this “going from the *“ohr makif”* (“surrounding light”) to an *“ohr penimi”* (inner light).