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Rabbi Hershel Schachter
Loshon Hora in the Sukkah

The halacha requires that one dwell in the sukkah for the duration of the yom tov in the same way one would live in his own home: eating, sleeping, learning, etc. In the language of the Talmud (Sukkah 28b), "teishvu ke'ein toduru".

The Talmud (Shabbos 133b) speaks of fulfilling all mitzvos in an elegant fashion - an elegant talis, an elegant pair of tefillin, etc. The same certainly applies to the mitzvah of sukkah as well. In addition to that general halacha, making the sukkah fancy constitutes a particular enhancement of mitzvas sukkah because of teishvu ke'ein toduru. We all add drapes, wall paper, carpeting, etc. to our homes to beautify them and make them more comfortable, so the same ought to be supplied to the Sukkah.

In Yiddish folklore there was a common humorous saying that if one doesn't speak loshon hora at all in the sukkah, he hasn't fulfilled the mitzvah because it's lacking ke'ein toduru, since at home we always speak loshon hora. This is the historical background of the comment in the Mishan Brura (639, note 2) that one must certainly be careful not to talk any loshon hora in the sukkah. The Talmud (Sukkah 9a) derives a din doraysa from a passuk that just as a korban chagigah has kedusha, so too the sukkah has kedusha. According to the Ramban, this possuk is the source on the principal that all religious articles (eg. an esrog or tzitzis) become huktzah l'mitzvoson for the duration of the mitzvah. Because of the sanctity of the sukkah, one should avoid discussing divrei chol, and certainly loshon hora. The loshon hora belongs neither in our homes nor in our sukkos.

After one has finished eating it is considered disrespectful to the sanctity of the sukkah to leave around the dirty utensils which one no longer plans to use (Sukkah 29a). Some poskim write that is disrespectful to bring an infant into the sukkah who may dirty his diaper.

Towards the end of parshas Re'eh (Devarim 16:13) the chumash records the mitzvah to celebrate the yom tov of Sukkos for seven days during the ingathering season. All summer long it doesn't rain in Eretz Yisroel, and only after Sukkos, when we expect the rains to begin, do we gather in the produce from the fields. This is the literal meaning of the passuk's reference to the ingathering season.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 34a) has a tradition that Hashem dictated the Torah to Moshe rabbeinu in such a way that any given passuk may have more than one level of interpretation: "achas diber Elokim, shtaim zu shamati" (Tehillim 62:12). The Torah she'be'al peh has an additional level of interpretation on the aforementioned passuk in Re'eh, which is that we should construct our sukkos in such a way that they should be sturdy enough to last for the duration of the seven days of yom tov, and the se'chach we use as the roof should consist of the branches, leaves, and chaff that are separated from the produce (i.e. something that grew from the ground, is now detached, and is not edible for humans, hence not mekabel tumah). This additional level of interpretation fits in to all the words of the possuk except for "chag", which means "a holiday". How, then, can the Torah she'be'al peh interpret the possuk to refer to the construction of a sukkah?

The Talmud explains (Sukkah 9a) that only Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos are referred to in the chumash as "chag", because "chag" indicates an obligation to bring a korban chagigah, which exists only on these three yomim tovim. "Chag haSukkos", therefore, refers to the construction of the sukkah which is compared to a korban chagigah. Just as the korban Chagigah is sacred, so the sukkah is endowed with sanctity after we sit in it to fulfill our mitzvah. Because of that sanctity we must treat the sukkah with proper respect.

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The Fallen Sukka of David
based on a sicha by Harav Yehuda Amital zt"l
Adapted by Boaz Kallush
Translated by Rav Eliezer Kwass

"May the All-Merciful One establish for us the fallen sukka of David (sukkat David ha-nofalet)."

During the entire Sukkot holiday we are accustomed to say this prayer in the blessing after meals, based on the verse, "On that day I will establish the fallen sukka of David" (Amos 9:11).

Why is this image chosen to represent the people of Israel? Wasn't it possible to pick some more appropriate image? Why not, for instance, depict the Jewish people as a tower, in the verse, "Your neck is like an

ivory tower" (Shir Ha-shirim 7:5)? The Maharal offers a fascinating explanation:

The Davidic dynasty is referred to as "sukka," [even though] royalty in general is referred to as a "house"... because something that has a powerful existence in the world is referred to as a house, which is a permanent structure. Similarly, a royal dynasty is referred to as a house, because of its strength and permanence....

But when a house falls, its original essence is negated. When it is later rebuilt it becomes a totally new house. That rebuilt house is not referred to as the house that had fallen, for the original house has already been negated. Rather, it is as if a totally new house has now been built.

A sukka, though, is not a house, not a complete and permanent structure. If it falls, it can easily be put up again; if it falls, it is can appropriately be referred to as being reestablished. It returns to its original essence.

Thus, the Kingdom of the House of David, always ready to be reestablished after having fallen, is referred to as the Kingdom of "David's fallen sukka." Even after its fall it retains its identity as a "sukka." This is because a sukka is always ready to be put back up, and it is easy to do so. (Netzach Yisrael, Chapter 35)

A house's fall is complete and final, and putting it back up is impossible. A sukka, on the other hand, even though it can easily fall, can be put up again.

This is what typifies Israel and Israel's kingdom. A house is stable, and has the ability to withstand nature's violent storms; but once it falls, it is no longer possible for that house to be put up again. What is reconstructed is something new. A sukka, by contrast, isn't stable; any unusually strong wind will knock it down. The same is true for the Kingdom of Israel: it is fragile, falls easily, and doesn't resist storms and shocks. But it always rises back up and stands on its feet again.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Nitzavim 1) conveys a similar idea:

"You are all standing here today" (Devarim 29:9) – this is in line with what the verse says, "Turn over the evildoers and they are gone, but the house of the righteous will stand" (Mishlei 12:7). As long as the Holy One, blessed be He, looks at the acts of the evildoers and turns them over, they have no chance for revival... but Israel falls and gets back up, as it says, "Do not be joyous, my enemy, for just as I fell, I rose again" (Mikha 7:8). It also says, "For I, God, have not changed, and you, the sons of Ya'akov, have not been destroyed" (Malakhi 3:6).

Rabbi Chanina son of Pappa said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said, I never smote a nation more than once. But you, children of Ya'akov, were not destroyed, as it says, "I finish off My arrows on them" (Devarim 32:23). My arrows finish but they are not finished. Thus says Israel, "He drew his bow and stood me up as a target for an arrow" (Eikha 3:12). To what is this compared? It is like a mighty one who sets up a board and shoots arrows at it; the arrows are finished off but the board remains. Similarly Israel, as long as troubles befall them, the troubles end but they continue to stand....

(This sicha was delivered on Shemini Atzeret 5762 [2001].)

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Sukkot: Seeing Double

This weeks' dvar Torah is being sponsored by Gershon and Leah Vandenbrink in honour of Best wishes for a joyous Sukkot. Chag Sameach Jay

A Thought for the Week: Sukkot - Rabbi Jay Kelman

In rabbinic literature Sukkot is known simply as " Chag, " the holiday, par excellence. It is the most joyous of holidays both thematically and experientially. It is our zman simchateinu, the time of our happiness.

In Temple times it was marked by the simchat beit hashoeva , which one might call "all night parties" featuring a "sound and light show" with music, juggling, fire, food and even a parade, activities which are replicated today in one form or another. The festivities were such that the Talmud declares that "whomever did not see the simchat beit hashoeva has never seen joy in his days" (Sukkah 51a).

The extra joy of Sukkot is no doubt related to the fact that this chag marks the merging of two sets of holidays into one. It marks the end of the High Holiday period of personal introspection and reflection. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur focus on the seriousness and awesomeness of our encounter with G-d. With the books of life and death open before G-d we are unable to sing the songs of Hallel, songs of praise to the Almighty. It may Yom Tov but we fast—some early authorities ruled that it is most appropriate to fast during the days of Rosh Hashanah—and we might even cry as the dread of having failed in our Divine mission stares us in the face.

Yet this encounter with G-d can and must lead to great joy. It is meant to reassure us that—despite appearances to the contrary, and despite our inability to fathom His ways—G-d is Master of the Universe is just and compassionate. This is most comforting and reassuring. To truly and fully believe in G-d is a most difficult mitzvah; but the greater our faith the greater joy we will be able to attain.

On Sukkot we are confident that whatever may transpire we are protected by the sheltering wings of G-d. By leaving our homes and entering the Sukkah we assert that neither our homes nor our wealth can ultimately protect us. We may dwell in a flimsy hut lacking a roof, but G-d is above us. With our spiritual batteries recharged, enabling us to feel the presence and protection that G-d offer, Sukkot, just five days after Yom Kippur is truly a time of great joy.

But this is only one side of Sukkot. Sukkot is also the last of the shalosh regalim , the three pilgrim festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. These times of joy both commemorate great historical events in the formation of our people and celebrate the blessings of the land of Israel .

The exodus from Egypt was the necessary first step so that we could ultimately form a great nation in Israel . We were given the Torah on Shavuot, much of which can only be, and all which is meant to be, implemented specifically in the land of Israel. Our ancestors dwelled in huts in the desert as they journeyed to our permanent home in Israel .

History and agriculture, the people and the land, join together in joy three times a year. Personal introspection is superseded by national joy as a united people gather together to celebrate in Jerusalem . Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur focusing on the individual require no pilgrimage to our national capital.

This duality of Sukkot is reflected in the special Mussaf offerings that are brought on all festivals. Both on the Pesach and Shavuot, and on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur the Jewish people were to offer one ram and seven lambs (and either one or two bulls) as a elevation offering. Yet on Sukkot these numbers are doubled so that we must bring two rams and 14 lambs. With two holiday motifs, two sets of sacrifices are required. Interestingly instead of just doubling the number of bulls we bring a total of 70 bulls over the course of the holiday. The bull symbol of strength and power is most prominent on this most joyous of holidays.

It is not by chance that our rabbis appended the (relatively recent) holiday of Simchat Torah to that of Sukkot. What greater simcha , joy, can there be than the merging of our personal relationship with G-d and

our national identity. Chag Sameach.

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The War of Gog and Magog:
The Haftara of Shabbat Chol Ha-moed Sukkot

by Harav Mosheh Lichtenstein
Translated by David Strauss

The haftara for Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot (Yechezkel 38:18-39:16), which deals with the war of Gog and Magog, is one of the most famous prophecies in Scripture. It has succeeded in taking hold of the human imagination and penetrating deeply into our cultural and religious consciousness. The destruction of the existing and imperfect world, the ultimate war against evil, the heavy price of blood, and God's victory over men of flesh and blood are powerful images that leave a profound impression on the human soul. Thus, this prophecy has become part of the inalienable property of the Jewish and general world.

It is quite understandable, then, that this prophecy was included in the haftarot cycle. However, its relationship to the festival of Sukkot is not at all clear, and is even surprising, for what is the connection between a blood-drenched world war and the festival of Sukkot? How does the sukka of peace connect to war, and what is the relationship between the refuge and shelter of the sukka and the destruction and desolation described in this prophecy?

The reading of the haftara of Gog and Magog on Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot is not merely a custom, but an obligation of Talmudic law. The gemara in Megilla (31a) mentions it along with the other haftarot read on the various holidays to this very day; we thus see that Chazal already saw an essential connection between the prophecy and the festival.

In answer to this question, Rashi (Megilla 31a, s.v. be-yom) identifies the war of Gog and Magog with the war fought in the end of days that is mentioned at the end of the book of Zekharia in the chapter that serves as the haftara on the first day of Sukkot. As Rashi puts it, "'On that day, when Gog shall come' is the war mentioned in Zekharia in 'Behold, the day of the Lord comes.'" Indeed, there is significant correspondence between these two prophecies. Both deal with a future war of defense fought against nations oppressing Israel in which God Himself rises to fight against the enemies of Israel, making use of very similar methods of fighting. Both campaigns are decided by way of supernatural means introduced by God, the focus of which is a great earthquake that utterly overturns the regular natural order, as a result of which pandemonium breaks out, causing "every man's sword to be against each other." From this perspective, we can certainly speak of very similar accounts issuing from the mouths of Yechezkel and Zekharia, and conclude from this that we are dealing with the same war, as is argued by Rashi.

Based on this, we can explain why we read the story of Gog and Magog on Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot, for the prophecy in Zekharia makes explicit mention of the festival of Sukkot. According to Rashi, the two haftarot read on the festival of Sukkot deal with the terrible war that will take place in the future, "on that day," for they are one and the same war. On the first day of Sukkot, we read the account of that war as it appears at the end of the book of Zekharia, mentioning the festival of Sukkot at the conclusion, and on Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed, we read Yechezkel's account of the same war.

This, however, is not so simple, for a new question arises in the wake of Rashi's proposal - namely, why are there two prophecies for a single event? Wouldn't one account of this future war have sufficed? Similarly, it should be noted that the festival of Sukkot is not mentioned in Zekharia in connection to the war itself, but in connection to the reaction to that war. Thus, we must ask whether the reaction to the war is also common to both Yechezkel and to Zekharia. Perhaps they part company in their descriptions of what happens in the aftermath of the war, in which case Zekharia's prophecy about the festival of Sukkot is not connected to the response appearing in Yechezkel.

There is a simple answer to the first question regarding the need to write two prophecies relating to the same event. Chazal provided us with an answer in the form of the well-known maxim that "two prophets do not prophesy in the same style." In its most comprehensive sense, this means not only that different prophets make use of different linguistic styles, but also that they present different perspectives on the same events. This is based on the assumption that multiple factors are always at play and that the same event can have various different ramifications.

In fact, Zekharia and Yechezkel's accounts of the war to be fought at the end of days focus on different factors. Zekharia describes the war over Jerusalem as a war conducted against Israel by nations that oppose the Jewish People's national and religious aspirations. They do not want Israel to dwell securely in their land; rather, they covet it for themselves, and they therefore come to fight against Israel with imperialistic and aggressive geo-political objectives. Thus, his prophecy about their ultimate defeat fits in well with the overall aim of the book to prophesy about the process of Israel's redemption, starting with the redemption during the Second Temple period and the days of the Return to Zion and ending with the future redemption and the end of days. The emphasis that Zekharia gives to God's involvement in the nations' struggle against Israel is part of his overall approach and his focus on the topic of exile and redemption and its impact on Israel's circumstances during his own day and in the future.

Similarly, the end of the book continues the thread that runs throughout the book of directing the spotlight toward Jerusalem. The prophecies focus on Jerusalem and what will happen therein, and the redemption under discussion is the redemption of Jerusalem. Zekharia prophesies about the redemption of the Second Temple period, which was primarily the redemption of the Temple and Jerusalem, the division of the land into tribal territories having collapsed with the exile of the ten tribes. Therefore, the description of the end of days also revolves around the fate of Jerusalem (and the people of Yehuda connected to it), and it is Jerusalem that stands in the limelight. The war is a war over Jerusalem, the tumult occurs therein, and the repair undertaken by the nations will take place when they make pilgrimages to the city on the pilgrim festivals. Zekharia is Jerusalem's prophet, and this quality is well reflected in the haftara read on the first day of Sukkot, as in the rest of

the book.

We see, then, that Zekharia's prophecy concerning the end of days reflects the perspective adopted throughout the book and grows directly out of it. One point regarding the haftara for the first day of Sukkot should, however, be emphasized - its universal component. Following the description of Israel's victory over the nations who had conquered Jerusalem and destroyed it while oppressing its inhabitants, the prophet shifts his focus to the nations' response to Israel's redemption. I will not go into the details of his prophecy, as I already discussed it in my shiur on the haftara for the first day of Sukkot (http://vbm-torah.org/sukkot/suk69-rml.htm). I will merely note that when discussing redemption from man's perspective, a prophet will focus on the connection between God and Israel and the help that He extends to them as His chosen people. But this perspective can also bring a prophet to discuss the relationship between God and the other nations; if Israel is God's people, and the nations fight against Israel, the relationship between God and the warring nations will become severed. This is the subject of Zekharia's prophecy - the universalistic perspective on the nations' war against Jerusalem and the relationship between them and God in the wake of the battle.

Yechezkel, on the other hand, presents a different approach. According to him, the dramatic focus of the end of days is neither man's place in history, nor the people of Israel's redemption in and of itself, but rather the sanctification of God's name in the world. This approach characterizes many prophecies in the book and is especially prominent in chapter 36, which serves as the haftara for Parashat Para. Israel is God's people and the fact that they are in exile is a desecration of God's great name:

And when they came to the nations into which they came, they profaned My holy name, in that men said of them, "These are the people of the Lord, and they are gone out of His land." But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations into which they came. Therefore, say to the house of Israel: Thus says the Lord God; I do not do this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. (Yechezkel 36:20-23)

In light of this perception, the war against Gog and Magog is also understood as a war fought for the sanctification of God's name, and the battle against the nations who have assembled together for war against Jerusalem is a battle for the sanctification of God's name. What drives God to intervene in what is happening in this world is neither the redemption of man or the nation, nor Israel's deliverance from suffering and affliction, but rather the need to sanctify His name. This is not merely my interpretation; the prophet reports this explicitly from the mouth of God:

Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will make Myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the Lord… And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell securely in the coastlands; and they shall know that I am the Lord. So will I make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not allow My holy name to be profaned any more; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. (Yechezkel 38:23, 39:6-7)

The reason for the redemption is not compassion for the nation, but rather so that "they shall know that I am the Lord." Thus, Yechezkel continues the approach that runs throughout these chapters and presents a foundation for redemption different than the one found in the book of Zekharia.

In light of this, the warfare conducted by way of supernatural means becomes doubly significant. Since the focus of the struggle, according to this prophecy, is the sanctification of God's name, the use of supernatural forces is not only a powerful means to quickly subdue the nations. Rather, it has fundamental, theological significance in that it demonstrates the greatness of the Creator and His dominion over the world. If Israel's exile is regarded as a profanation of God's name, owing to the argument that the nations will say that God is unable to deliver His people, the proof of His mighty power and His control over nature comes to uproot this idea and establish God's greatness before Israel and the rest of the nations. The use of miracles and the ravishing of nature to defeat the nations is essential owing to the nature and objectives of this spiritual war.

The different ways in which Zekharia and Yechezkel present the war reflect two fundamental perspectives on the world that differ from each other in an essential way. On the one hand, the heavens belong to God, but the earth He gave to man; therefore, the created world and all that takes place therein should be seen as the place of man. The world was handed over to man, and what happens there reflects human enterprise for better or for worse. The development of the world, its physical and technological progress, the moral level of human society, and the historical process were given over to man as a mission and a challenge, and the world must be judged as expressing human achievement. Even the condition of the people of Israel and their place in history should be considered from this perspective. God, as ruler and overseer, worries about His people's needs and recompenses them in accordance with their deeds, but He does this as a father who worries about His children or as a king who is in charge of his subjects or as a master who takes care of his slaves. From this perspective, the world belongs to man.

On the other hand, the world can be seen as an expression of Divine will and wisdom. God created the world and continues to watch over it, and the world and its development can be viewed as God's project. Appropriate governance, a well-established world, and providence that is executed in accordance with clear rules of reward and punishment sanctify the name of God and leave a powerful impression. An abandoned and forsaken world, and providence that allows the wicked and evil to flourish, cast doubt on the Creator's enterprise. The world is not man's handiwork, but rather that of God. To illustrate this point, it might be argued that just as the nature of a product and the support with which it is provided reflect the quality of the company that produced it, so too with respect to God who created the world, the quality of the product and the way that it is handled after it was handed over to man reflect God's wisdom and will.

One prophetic perspective presents what happens in the world from a human angle and examines the processes of redemption and exile, repentance and rebellion, according to their ramifications on the standing of the individual or the nation. A second prophetic perspective examines the same processes from a Divine perspective, and sees everything through the prism of the sanctification and profanation of God's name. These two perspectives sometimes present contradictory operative conclusions, and in such cases providence must decide how to act. This is the case, for example, regarding redemption without repentance (Yechezkel chapter 36), which is rooted in Moshe's prayer following the sin involving the Golden Calf. Moshe's argument in favor of Israel's

pardon rests on the claim of profanation of God's name ("Why should Egypt say…") as the basis for forgiveness, even if by virtue of their deeds there is no justification for such a step. In other words, Moshe argues that Israel should be forgiven because the Divine perspective dictates their continued existence. He makes this argument despite the fact that the human perspective advocates punishment.

Regarding the destruction of the Temple, the Midrash presents a similar case with the opposite conclusion: God's decision to punish Israel overcomes the factor of the desecration of God's name, and the Temple is destroyed despite the profanation of God's name that this involves. The Mekhilta's comment, cited by the gemara (Gittin 56b), speaks of God acting as if He were "mute," because He allows His enemies to speak contemptuously about Him and does not answer. This points to the price exacted in terms of the desecration of God's name and to tension between the two perspectives. In this case, in order to realize His will regarding the world as man's place, God is ready to pay the price of impairing the world as His enterprise.

Most of the time, however, these two perspectives overlap and share the same interests. Therefore, the prophecies of Yechezkel and Zekharia with respect to the war to be fought at the end of days present a similar picture and foretell identical results, despite the fact that they approach the event from entirely different perspectives. Yechezkel presents God as examining the war from His own perspective and reaching the conclusion that a war must be fought against the nations, whereas Zekharia prophesies about the fall of the nations because of what they did to Israel and based on a calculation relating to human life. What is common to the two is the future war and the redemption that will arrive in its wake.

In light of this, let us go back and discuss the connection between the haftara and the festival of Sukkot. Just as the deliverance of Israel in the war to be fought in the end of days is presented in the two prophecies from two different perspectives, so too the sukka can be understood as protecting Israel from two different perspectives. On the one hand, the sukka provides an answer to the human problem of a person in need of protection and shelter from heat, cold, and rain. It provides shade and cover to one who needs them, and in this way it protects the person in need of protection. From the time of the exodus at the beginning of Jewish history and until the war to be fought in the end of days, God spreads His protection over His people and shields them by way of the sukka. "For in the day of evil He shall hide me in His sukka; in the covert of His tent He shall hide me" (Tehillim 27:5). Man is in need of protection and the sukka given to him by God provides him with the required shelter.

On the other hand, the sukka is the site of the Shekhina's presence in the world, whether as a place protected by God as His own space, like the clouds of Glory that shielded Israel by way of the Shekhina's presence within them, or by the very presence of God in this world, which finds expression in the sukka. "In Shalem also is His sukka, and His dwelling place is in Zion" (Tehillim 76:3). The Torah readings for Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed focus on the idea of God's appearance to man, just as the essence of the festivals lies in the idea of standing before God. For this reason, the prophecy dealing with the war to be fought against Gog and Magog, in which God will reveal Himself as He fights against the wicked, fits in well with this system and reflects another dimension of the war to be fought in the end of days that is connected to the festival of Sukkot.[1]

Now let us move on to the beginning of the haftara, which deals with the sin of Gog. The sin seems to be clear – Gog's oppression of the people of Israel and the war that he conducts to capture Eretz Yisrael, as is stated in the first verse of the haftara: "And it shall come to pass on that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, says the Lord God, that My fury shall glare out" (38:18). Just as Zekharia describes a nation that will come to Jerusalem and fight against the inhabitants of Zion, Yechezkel prophesies about a people that will come to attack the people of Israel in its land.

It seems, however, that there is another important motif in the prophet's attitude toward Gog, namely, the injury and damage that he inflicts upon the world. The war causes damage to the world, both in the simple sense of physical destruction and in the ethical sense of the moral decline stemming from the very fact of war and going out to battle. Gog causes injury not only to the people of Israel and their hold on their land; he inflicts general damage on a quiet and peaceful world that did not know war. Gog's attack carried out against the land of Israel is described by the prophet in the verses that precede our haftara as a violation of the tranquility of a quiet and peaceful land:

In the latter years, you shall come against the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many peoples against the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste; but it is brought out of the nations, and they dwell safely all of them. You shall ascend and come like a storm, you shall be like a cloud to cover the land… And you shall say: I will go up to the land of un-walled villages; I will go to them that are at quiet, that swell in safety, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil and to take a prey; to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and against a people that are gathered out of the nations, that have acquired cattle and goods, and that dwell at the center of the earth. (38:8-12)

Eretz Yisrael is described here as a demilitarized area, dwelling in safety and open to the many peoples moving about in its midst. We are presented with two situations – an open world, without walls or borders, in which nations freely come into contact with each other based on mutual trust, versus a world of conflict and conquest, full of suspicion, in which nations only come into contact with each other through the tips of their spears. In the world preceding the world war begun by Gog, the various nations live in peace and the land is settled and flourishing, whereas in the world in which Gog rules, ruin and destruction reign. Gog's arrival undermines the relaxed and optimistic world order that characterizes not only Israel, but all the other nations as well, and therefore it is the nations as a whole that react negatively to his arrival:

Sheva, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all its young lions, shall say to you: Are you come to take a spoil? Have you gathered your company to take a prey? To carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil? (38:13)

The aforementioned verses precede the haftara, but they constitute a single continuity with it and shed light on the haftara itself. As we see, the focus of the haftara is not the people of Israel, but the land of Israel. God's response to the wicked is not redemption of the people or a war against the nations in and of themselves, but an earthquake that impacts upon the entire natural world:

For in My jealousy and in the fire of My anger have I spoken saying: Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the sky, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at My presence, and the

mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. (38:19-20)

The prophecy focuses on the world and the land, and not on the people, because Gog's basic war and moral corruption is directed not against Israel itself, but rather against the natural harmony and world order. The tragedy of the war is based on the fact that this order is undermined and that even God's victory over Gog constitutes, to a certain degree, a victory for Gog. For even if he loses the battle for hegemony, the principles of ruin and destruction that he represents take control of the world. An earthquake is needed in order to erase the destroyed world, whose repair can only be effected after it is returned to its primordial chaotic state, its current civilization is totally destroyed, and it is replaced by a new world. To put it in modern terms, in the event of a nuclear war, even the winners will lose, and many years will pass before natural equilibrium and order are restored. This is why the haftara describes destruction of such great magnitude that there is no alternative but to destroy whatever is left and rebuild it from scratch. This destruction is directed at the entire world – fish, birds, beasts, creeping things, and people, and so too the natural mountains, as well as the walls built by man - because the world itself will be damaged by the war.[2]

It seems to me that this also explains why emphasis is placed on the burial. It is not because of his virtues that Gog merits burial, but because of the need to cleanse the land of all the signs of war and destruction and to restore the world to its earlier state. It is for this reason that Gog's weapons will be used for firewood, a fact that the prophet mentions not in order to emphasize the quantity of arms that Gog will possess, but rather as part of the process of purifying the land from the impurity of war that it had contracted. It is for this reason that emphasis is placed on the burial of the soldiers in order to purify the land and remove the reminders of war from its midst. Indeed, the haftara ends with the words, "thus shall they cleanse the land," which reflects the objective of the entire process which it describes.

In this context, it is important to note the meaning of "purification." Purity (tahara), as opposed to sanctity (kedusha), does not come to add anything new, but to restore an impaired situation to its earlier state. The world, in its original state, was pure. Impurity constitutes a ruination of and deviation from the original order of the world, a corruption and failure of the natural order, and the objective of purification is to restore matters to their original state. If there is no impurity, there is no need for purification, for the entire goal of purification is to restore things to the state that preceded their ruination. Yechezkel, therefore, prophesies about the purification of the land, because Gog destroyed the existing situation of peace and calm and contaminated the land with the impurity of war. Israel's mission in the wake of Gog's actions is to purify the land and undo the destruction that was caused to the world and to the land.

Here too there seems to be a connection to the festival of Sukkot. A sukka stands in contrast to a house, both in Scripture and according to the Halakha. Scripture presents these two concepts as different from and opposed to each other ("And he built himself a house (bayit), and made booths (sukkot) for his cattle"[3] [Bereishit 33:17]). Halakha established that a sukka must be a temporary dwelling, and therefore even if it is made of valid materials, if it has the qualities of a house, it is regarded as a house, rather than as a sukka, and is disqualified.[4] This means that a sukka belongs to the world of nature that was not yet touched by the hand of man, who alters and improves nature in accordance with his desires. It is supposed to be part of the natural scenery and to blend into it, "like a shelter [sukka] in a vineyard, like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers." Leaving one's house and permanent dwelling in order to enter the sukka means leaving a world that had been changed by man and going back to dwell in nature in its pure and original state. A sukka is not a process of building walls and creating sanctity, but rather a return to nature as it is, and therefore it corresponds to a haftara that speaks of the purification of the land and the restoration of the original natural state.

The haftara emphasizes this process of purification and return to nature in the wake of the destruction of the world by man. We, however, engage in this process once a year – not because of destruction, but as part of creating of a proper balance between a natural and an artificial world, and as an expression of the importance of nature in the framework of the world and religious life. Serving God in the framework of nature is, of course, most striking in the mitzva of taking the four species on Sukkot, but the same principle of serving God in the field is also expressed in the mitzva of sukka.

[1] Another possibility exists - to assume that there is no connection between Sukkot and the war of Gog and Magog, but because we read from the prophecy of Zekharia as the haftara of the first day of Sukkot, we want to fill in the picture by reading as haftara another prophecy dealing with the same war from another perspective on Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot. This is based on the assumption that the haftara is an autonomous enactment meant to address man's existential state, and its choice is not necessarily dependent on the Torah reading or on the date. After dealing with the war of Gog and Magog from the human perspective and reading a passage that mentions the festival of Sukkot, we fill in the metaphysical perspective and read another haftara that deals with this war in close proximity to the haftara taken from Zekharia. This is done out of a desire to deal with the war and set it as the focus of the haftara, and not as an expression of the special sanctity of the day.

This point, however, requires clarification. I believe the above perspective is correct regarding the haftarot in general, but not of those read on the festivals. They should be closely connected to the festival inasmuch as they constitute a fulfillment of mikra kodesh, and therefore they are the only haftarot ordained by Talmudic law. This appears in the framework of a passage dealing with the laws of the festivals.

There is room, however, to question this assertion with respect to Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed, for the status of Chol ha-Mo'ed with respect to this issue is somewhat unclear. For our purposes, mention should be made of the disagreement between the Magen Avraham and the Vilna Gaon whether to recite the blessing "who sanctifies Israel and the festivals" over the haftara reading on Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot. The Vilna Gaon's opinion that the sanctity of the day is not mentioned assumes that the haftara of Shabbat Chol ha-Mo'ed is not a fulfillment of mikra kodesh, whereas the Magen Avraham's position that the sanctity of the festival is mentioned in the blessing recited over the haftara can be understood as assuming that it does constitute a fulfillment of mikra kodesh.

[2] The fall of Gog is described in the haftara in two consecutive closed parshiyot. There is room to suggest that the first focuses more on the destruction of the land and the world, whereas the second deals with a war against Gog because of what he did to Israel as a nation (this apparently is the way it was understood by those who divided the book into chapters, putting the first parasha into chapter 38 and the second into chapter 39). The validity of this distinction is, however, open to discussion.

[3] See also II Shemuel 11:11 and Yona 4:5.

[4] See Rashi, Sukka 14a, s.v. R. Meir: "What is the difference between using these as sekhakh and sitting under the rafters of my house… and that is certainly disqualified, for the Torah speaks of a 'sukka,' and not a person's house used all year long."

from Shabbat Shalom: **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Parsha List** <parshat_hashavua@ots.org.il>
reply-to parshat_hashavua@ots.org.il
to internetparshasheet@gmail.com
date Wed, Sep 22, 2010 at 1:00 AM
subject Sukkot 5771

This week's Shabbat Shalom is dedicated in loving memory of Leib Ben WolfLouis H. Laufer by his children

If you would like to dedicate a parsha in honor or in memory of a loved one, email parshat_hashavua@ots.org.il

"But on the 15th day of the seventh month, when you harvest the grain of the land, you shall celebrate a festival to the Lord for seven days [Succot], with the first day being a day of rest and the eighth day being a day of rest" (23:39).

Efrat, Israel - What is the true symbolism of the succa? The Talmud (B.T. Succa 11b) cites a difference of opinion between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer as to whether the succa commemorates the actual huts in which the Israelites dwelt in the desert, or the "clouds of glory" which encompassed us as a sign of Divine protection.

Leviticus chapter 23 catalogs all the holy days of the Hebrew calendar, beginning with the Sabbath and concluding with Succot. The 33rd verse begins a description of Succot:

"The 15th day of the seventh month shall be the festival of Succot, seven days for the Lord; the first day shall be a holy convocation, when you may not perform creative work..."

The text goes on to mention the festival of the Eighth Day of Assembly (Shmini Atzeret), and then seemingly concludes the entire calendar sequence with the words:

"These are the special appointed times of the Lord" (23:37).

But just as we thought the description of the festivals was complete, the narrative inexplicably reverts to Succot. This time, however, the Bible stresses the connection to the Land of Israel, and the agricultural cycle:

"But on the 15th day of the seventh month, when you harvest the grain of the land, you shall celebrate a festival to the Lord for seven days (Succot), with the first day being a day of rest and the eighth day being a day of rest" (23:39).

Another curious feature of this second account is that having repeated the command to observe Succot in the context of the farmers' work, the Bible now introduces other crucial themes of the festival, including the command to take up four species of plant indigenous to Israel (citron, palm frond, myrtle branch and willow), and rejoice on our holy days, wrapping up its description with a repetition of the command to dwell in booths, this time stressing the historical aspects of the festival:

"You shall dwell in booths for seven days, so that your generations shall know that I caused the Israelites to live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your G-d" (23: 42-43).

It seems that the Bible is making a clear distinction between the significance of Succot before the Israelites entered the Land and the nature of the festival once we were living in Israel. Why is that?

Outside Israel, the hut-like booths symbolized our temporary dwellings while we wandered across the desert and, by extension, throughout our long exile. Once we entered the country, "when they harvested the grain of the land," we could celebrate the harvest with special blessings and rituals involving the four species - vegetation unavailable in the desert. In the Promised Land, the entire experience of the succa assumed a heightened significance. Now, the shabby, makeshift desert huts came to represent the sheltering wings of the Divine Presence, the clouds of glory with which G-d protected us so that we'd be able to fulfill our mission as His divine ambassadors. When we are living in the Diaspora, the succa can only teach us to be grateful to the Lord who preserves us under difficult and dangerous conditions; whereas living in Israel, we understand that as the people of G-d's covenant, no matter how flimsy the walls of our temporary homes may seem, we constantly live under His protective grace.

This essential difference in the significance of the succa prior to our inhabiting the Land of Israel and afterwards could also be seen when we returned to the Land after our Babylonian exile. Then, Ezra exhorted us to dwell in booths during the Festival of the Seventh Month, and to make our booths with "olive leaves and olive branches, with myrtles, psalms and willows" (Nehemiah 8:15). In the Land of Israel, the succa is adorned and uplifted by the local vegetation, the special fragrance of which symbolizes G-d's shelter and fulfillment of the Divine covenant. Seen in this light, as the Vilna Gaon noted, Succot is the festival which celebrates our entry into the Land!

G-d's revelation and gift took place on the 10th of Tishrei, Yom Kippur. The following day, He commanded the building of the Sanctuary; and the Israelites collected materials for the next two days. Then, on the 15th of Tishrei, the work of building the Sanctuary began, marking the restoration of the relationship between G-d and the Jews. This is noted by the Ramban, who explains that this is why the Book of Exodus is indeed the Book of Redemption.

"Then the Holy One Blessed be He returned and rested His Divine Presence among them and they returned to the exalted level of the patriarchs, which was the secret of G-d, with Clouds of Glory upon their tents, and they were considered to be redeemed. And so the Book of Exodus ends with the completion of the Sanctuary and with the Glory of G-d filling it always." (Ramban - Introduction to Book of Exodus).

Hence the succa, clouds of divine glory, symbolize the Sanctuary and the Holy Temple in Jerusalem - which will eventually bring the entire world to peace and redemption. "May the Merciful One restore the fallen succa of David, speedily and in our time."

Shabbat Shalom
and Chag Sameach

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from **Rabbi Dovid Horwitz** <yutorah@yutorah.org>
reply-to yutorah@yutorah.org
to internetparshasheet@gmail.com
date Tue, Sep 21, 2010 at 12:10 PM
subject Philosophy in the Parsha

Sukkot: The 70 bulls that are sacrificed on Sukkot

The Thought of R. Solomon Ephraim Luntshitz (the author of the 'Keli Yaqar')

(This year, with God's help, we hope to focus on this Bible commentator and darshan in our weekly email. His dates are 1550-1619)

Rashi in Parashat Pinchas (Numbers, 29:18) notes the fact that a decreasing number of bulls that are sacrificed in the Temple each day as the holiday of Sukkot goes on. He writes that the 70 bulls (the sum total of bulls sacrificed throughout the seven days) correspond to the 70

nations of the world, and just as the number of bulls diminishes with every passing day, these nations themselves will eventually become extinguished.

In his work 'Olelot Ephraim (Ma'amar Gimel), R. Solomon Ephraim Luntshitz gives a different, striking interpretation. His point of departure is a passage in Massekhet Shabbat (152a), which reads as follows:

R. Ishmael son of R. Jose said: As for scholars, the older they grow the more wisdom they acquire, for it is said, With aged men is wisdom, and in length of days understanding (Job 12:12). But the ignorant, as they wax older, become more foolish, for it is said, He removes the speech of the trusty, and takes away the understanding of the elders (Ibid., 12:20).

The Keli Yaqar contrasts the wise and the ignorant as follows: the wise develop their form, that is, the intellect (cf. Rambam in Guide to the Perplexed, Part I, Chapter 1), which gains strength as they age. The ignorant, however, develop their matter, that is, the body, which is ultimately worthless and which diminishes with age. He further makes an interesting contrast between Bet Hillel's shitah regarding the manner in which we light Hanukkah candles: according to this view, we add a candle every night. On the other hand, with respect to the seventy bulls that are sacrificed on Sukkot, we diminish the number of bulls every day. Why the contrast?

(Of course, it must be noted that according Bet Shammai, the pattern of Hanukkah, in which we decrease the number of candles lit, fits exactly the biblical pattern of Sukkot. (keneged parei ha-hag). Indeed, for over a hundred years, scholars have pointed out that Bet Shammai's reason also matches the description of Hanukkah in the apocryphal Book of Maccabees, where the rededication of the Temple was presented as a substitution for Hag Ha-Sukkot. In any, event, as the Halakhah follows Bet Hillel, the question of the resultant distinction between Hanukkah and Sukkot must be addressed.)

Keli Yaqar suggests that the bulls represent the physical component of man. The number seventy represents the average length of a man's years (see Psalm 90). From the time a person is born, the time his physical being has on this earth gradually decreases, until he dies and is no more. This is the point of the decreasing sacrifices offered on Sukkot.

On the other hand, the candles of Hanukkah represent the intellectual/ spiritual component of man "The spirit of man is the candle of the L-rd" (Proverbs 20:27). The older one becomes, if he spends his life in the world of Torah/Hokmah, his intellect gets stronger and stronger. And from a spiritual point of view, as man approaches death, his soul draws ever closer to its Divine source, and gains in

intensity. This is the point of the increasing lights of Hanukkah.

And this is the point, concludes Keli Yaqar of the Gemara in Massekhet Shabbat contrasting the elderly talmid hakham and the elderly am ha-aretz. The difference between the two is itself the difference between finite, perishable, ever-decreasing matter and spiritual, ever increasing light.

Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future
500 W 185th St. New York, New York 10033