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IN THE LIGHT

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13 | In The Light¹

The Inner Point of Succos: “Praiseworthy Is The One Who Did Not Sin”

“Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin, and one who sinned, shall repent and be atoned.”²

Yom Kippur is a time of atonement for all sin, and then comes Succos, which reveals that the concept of “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin”. On a deeper level, “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin” is a point that is even in one who did sin, because in the innermost depths of the soul, there is a part of the soul which does not sin.

Thus, the depth of Succos is to reach this inner place in the soul of “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin.”

Succos and The Keruvim: “Giluy Panim” – The Revelation of the “Face” of Hashem

The *Aron* (Ark) had a *kapores* (covering) on top of it, which served as an atonement (*kaparah*); thus the *kapores* symbolizes Yom Kippur, which atones. The *keruvim* (cherubim) atop the *kapores* had their wings spread in an upwards manner, thus the *keruvim* symbolize Succos, which we hint to in the prayer, *ופרוס עלינו סוכת שלומיך*, “*And spread upon us, the succah of Your perfection.*”³

Succos comes after Yom Kippur, so it is like the *keruvim* atop the *kapores*. By the *keruvim*, each face was turned to the other, “like a man facing his brother”. Thus, Succos, which is symbolized by the *keruvim*, is about the concept of *giluy panim*, the “revelation of the “Face” (Countenance) of Hashem”.

The Depth of The Completion of Torah on Succos

“On the festival [of Succos], the world is judged on water.”⁴ Besides for the simple meaning of this matter, that it is the time of the year when the world is judged for its water, the depth of this matter is because it is the time where the world goes back to being destroyed, as the world was destroyed by the waters of the Flood, when the world was judged with water. *Chazal* state, “He

1 סוכות_051_גילוי פנים.דופן.דו.פנים.תשעזו

2 Succos 53a; for more about “the point in the soul where there is no sin”, see Purim #032 – *Understanding The Mitzvos of Purim*

3 *Tefillas Maariv*

4 *Rosh HaShanah 15b*

builds worlds, and destroys them” – and it is explained that the concept of destruction is always recurring throughout Creation, since Hashem is constantly building worlds and destroying them. Even after the world was destroyed through a Flood, there was the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, and there were the ten holy martyrs, which were all examples of the destruction that makes its appearance throughout the history of Creation. On Succos, where the world is judged on water, the depth of this matter is that it is a time where the world is supposed to return to being destroyed.

Thus at the end of Succos we celebrate “the completion of the Torah”, because if the Jewish people wouldn’t have received the Torah, the world would have returned to *tohu u’vohu*, nothingness; on Succos, the world should go back to being destroyed, it is being “judged with water” – but this destruction does not take place in the end, so we can then celebrate the completion of the Torah.

The Torah is therefore “completed” on Succos, for on Succos the Torah has then fully descended onto this world, from the higher realms that it comes from.

Sitting In The Succah: Dwelling In The Holiness (Ain Od Milvado) That Fills Creation

There is a statement of Chazal, “*Ain Od Milvado*” (There is nothing besides Hashem) – even in the *chalal* (empty space) of the world”.⁵ Thus, in the *chalal*, in the entire space of this world, in between the higher and lower realms, there is *Ain Od Milvado*. Therefore, there is holiness that fills the entire *chalal* (space) of Creation. This idea is the depth of Succos: When one is in the *succah*, he is in the holiness of the *chalal*, in the very airspace that is in between the *succah*.

In a *succah*, there are the *defanos*/walls, *s’bach*, the *chalal*space in between, and the ground. Chazal say that “The name of Hashem dwells on the *succah*”⁶ – the holiness in the *succah* is that there is “*Ain Od Milvado*”, even in the *chalal*space of the world.” On Succos the world returns to destruction, where there is nothing but the *chalal*, empty space – and in the *chalal*, there is *Ain Od Milvado*.

Even the *chalal*/airspace within the *succah* is holy. That is the novel concept that the *succah* reveals. It shows that there is no such thing as *hester panim* (concealment of Hashem’s radiance). It is like the *keruvim*, where there was *panim b’panim* (face-to-face), for the *keruvim* were face-to-face with each other; this reflects the concept that there is *giluy panim* (the revelation of the “Face”, or “Countenance” of Hashem) everywhere.

After we have gone through the atonement of Yom Kippur, there can now be the revelation of *Ain Od Milvado* even where it seems like there is *hester panim* - and that is the revelation on Succos.

⁵ *Devarim Rabbah* 2, *Yalkut Shimeoni*: *Yisro* 270

⁶ *Yalkut Shimeoni*: *Re’ah*: 905

The Holiness Extends Into Even The Ground of The Succah

The holiness of the *succah* is not just in the *s'chach*/roof and in the *defanos*/walls, but even in the *chalal*/airspace of the *succah*. Even more so, it extends into even the very ground of the *succah*. The *Gemara* says that it is possible for the ground to be part of the walls of the *succah*. Thus, the *giluy panim* of Hashem extends into even the ground of the *succah*. Therefore, on the festival of Succos, it is revealed that even the ground itself can have the *panim* of Hashem.

The *mitzvah* of sitting in the *succah* is depicted as an extension of the holiness in *Eretz Yisrael*, according to the *sefarim hakedoshim*. The *Gemara* says that Adam's head was taken from *Eretz Yisrael* and the rest of his body came from the rest of the world.⁷ The head, which houses the face, the "*panim*", is from *Eretz Yisrael*. The holiness of the *succah*, which is the holiness of *Eretz Yisrael*, is thus the revelation of the level of "*panim*". Adam's sin caused death, which makes man go into the earth, which became ruined after the sin; but *Eretz Yisrael* is the rectified form of earth, for even the ground of *Eretz Yisrael* is holy; it is "the land which has the eyes of Hashem in it". That shows that even the ground itself can have the revelation of the *panim* of Hashem, and this is in the holiness of the *succah*, which the ground is a part of.

This is similar to the level of the giving of the Torah. For this reason, on Succos, there is a celebration in honor of completing the Torah (because Succos is connected to the giving of the Torah). By Har Sinai, Hashem spoke to the nation *panim b'panim*, face-to-face, and the impurity of the Serpent was removed from upon them at that time, so there was no death then, hence no more curse of man going back into the earth, and the depth of this is because at that time, it was revealed that even the ground can receive the *panim* of Hashem.

This is the depth of Succos. In earlier times, they used to kiss the dirt on the ground of the *succah*, and the depth behind this matter is because even the dirt of the *succah* has the revelation of the *panim* of Hashem in it. Such earth is not merely "*adamah*" which earth is normally called, but *adamah*/earth that becomes *adameh l'elyon*, "I will resemble the One Above".

It is the idea of *panim b'panim*, face-to-face with Hashem, the idea that the *giluy panim* (revelation of the "Face") of Hashem fills every possible place. There is a verse, "*Hashem is your shadow*", and the *Nefesh HaChaim* explains in the name of *Chazal* that just as a shadow is everywhere you go, so is Hashem everywhere you go. That is the "*tzeila d'mehemenusa*" (the "shade" or "shadow" of faith) that is Succos – it is a hint to how Hashem is the *tzeil*/shadow", which refers to the level of "*panim b'panim*", a return to the original plan of Creation, where the entire Creation is turned to face the *panim* of Hashem.

When such a dimension is revealed, a person is *medameh* ("resembling" and thereby emulating) to Hashem, and he becomes *domeh* (in the likeness of Hashem) to Hashem [elevated from the earth/*adamah* to *adameh l'elyon*].

⁷ *Sanhedrin 37b*

“In The Shadow” of Hashem – On Succos A Person Can Feel Especially “Near” Hashem

The festival of Succos is called “*tzeila d’mehemenusa*” (in the shade/shadow of faith)⁸, a term similar to the word “Betzael”, which is from the words, “*b’tzeil Keil*” – “in the shadow of the Almighty.” Thus, Succos is a time where a person can especially feel the “*tzeila d’mehemenusa*”, how he is in the “shade” of Hashem, how Hashem is near him like his own shadow. The time and place of Succos (the *succah* itself) has the power to bring a person to be near Hashem [“*etzlo Yisborach*”, “near” Hashem – from the word *aitzel*, “near”, and from the word “*atzilus*”, the highest spiritual dimension].

There are three festivals – Pesach, Shavuos, and Succos. On Pesach, the concept of *korban pesach* was how a person could become especially near Hashem, for the *korbon pesach* had to be *tzli* (roasted), which is from the word *aitzel*, near, a hint to being near Hashem. On Shavuos, we received the Torah, which is near Hashem. On Succos, we have the *succah*, which is called *tzeila d’mehemenusa*, a time and place where we can be especially near Hashem. We explained that the depth of this is for a person to feel the “*panim b’panim*” of Hashem, where the *panim* of Hashem is revealed, through the *s’chach* and four *defanos*/walls of the *succah*, as well as through the airspace (*chahal*) in between the *succah*, and even in the ground of the *succah*. Thus, in all six directions of the *succah*, there is the *panim* of Hashem. That means that the revelation of the *panim* of Hashem is everywhere, in every place.

Even The Worst Sinners Can Feel Hashem On Succos

Even more so, the *succah* is called “*Succas Dovid HaNofeles*”, the “fallen *succah* of David.” This shows us that there is an aspect of *nefilas panim* (“fallen face”) in the *succah*. What is this *nefilas panim*? We find that Kayin had *nefilas panim*, when he was sad that Hashem didn’t accept his *korbon*, and Hashem said to him, “*Lamah naflu panecha*”, “Why has your face fallen”? *Chazal* say that on Succos, “the entire *Klal Yisrael* is able to sit in one *succah*”, which includes even the souls who have *nefilas panim*, the souls who have fallen into “*She’ol*” (the most depraved depths of sin). That means that the revelation of the *panim* of Hashem can extend even into lowest level, which is called “*She’ol*”.

Why The Seven Ushpizin Come Down To The Succah

On Succos, the seven “shepherds”, the *Ushpizin*⁹, descend into the earth.¹⁰ Why do they come down?

⁸ *Zohar parshas Emor, 103a*

⁹ “*Ushpizin*” – lit. “Guests” – the seven righteous individuals who come to the *succah* (on alternating nights) are: Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid.

In Heaven, there is Gan Eden and Gehinnom, which are separated from each other by a hairsbreadth. But on Succos, where even the wicked are atoned for by the four species, (for the *aravah* atones for those who do *aveiros*), there is a unique revelation taking place on this lowly world we dwell on, which does not take place in Heaven, which the seven *Ushpizin* are willing to descend to this earth for, in order to witness.

In Heaven, there is *giluy panim* (revelation of Hashem's radiance), but only in Gan Eden, and not in Gehinnom. In Gehinnom, there is *hester panim* (concealment of Hashem's radiance), which is called "*She'ol*". But on Succos, there is a revelation that even on this lowly realm, there can be *giluy panim* even in the ground, the lowliest plane of earth. This is a higher revelation than anything found in Heaven!

In Heaven there is a differentiation between the souls of the righteous and wicked, with Gan Eden and Gehinnom. But the seven "shepherds", the *Ushpizin*, desire for the righteous and wicked to be unified, because they want the entire Klal Yisrael to be unified. They come down here to this earth on Succos, because their deep desire is to see the entire Klal Yisrael unified.

Chazal say, "One shepherd, to all of them." On Succos, when "all of *Yisrael* can sit in one *succah*", when even the wicked are atoned for by the *aravos* in the *lulav*, the seven shepherds come here to this world not only to see the *tzaddikim*, but even the wicked. They come down here to this world even though there is a *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) here, which makes it painful for them to come down here. *Chazal* say that the souls have difficulty coming down here to this world, where there is an evil inclination – and this is referring to Succos, where the *tzaddikim* descend to this world, to the *succah*, in order to see the unified level of *Klal Yisrael*, where the righteous and the wicked are all united through the concept of the *succah*.

Furthermore, all of the souls in the world are all together on Succos, because Succos is a time of judgment over water, and this connects all souls together, because the rain is needed by everyone.

During the rest of the year, there is "*nefilas apayim*", which is also known as *tachanun* (supplication, where we cover our faces), which is a prayer that rectifies the souls who have fallen into the depths of sin, "*She'ol*" [However, this rectification does not connect everyone together all at once, because is *nefilas apayim*, the opposite of *giluy panim*].

But of Succos, where there is the revelation that there is *giluy panim* everywhere, it is said, "Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin, and if one sinned, he shall repent and be atoned." It is explained in many *sefarim hakedoshim* that Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur is the time of *teshuvah m'yirah* (repenting out of fear) and Succos is *teshuvah m'ahavah* (repenting out of love)¹¹, which is the higher level that returns everyone [and through the *teshuvah m'ahavah* on Succos, one can reach the point of "Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin".

10 *Zohar parshas Emor, 103b*

11 *Imrei HaRim (Chiddushei HaRim): Succos*

Thus, on Succos, everyone is returned, and this is what is meant by the “*giluy panim*” of Hashem - which connects everyone together, all at once. For this revelation, the seven shepherds are willing to descend from Heaven onto this earth.

Seventy “Faces” To Torah – The Revelation of Hashem In All Possible Angles

There are “70 faces” (facets of understanding) in Torah. The “70 faces” of Torah are parallel to the 70 *korbonos* brought on Succos. The end of Succos celebrates the “completion of Torah”, which includes both the Written Torah and Oral Torah; the depth of completing the Written Torah is to celebrate the “70 faces” to the Torah. The root of these 70 is in the 7 *Ushpizin*, which connects all Jews together, where all possibilities of all faces are all revealed, in the Torah; all “70 faces” to the Torah. There is then “*giluy panim*” in all possible angles. This awakens the light of the giving of the Torah, where there was “*giluy panim*”.

The Spiritual Light on Succos

Based upon the above, we can now understand the following deep, awesome insight.

Succos is called “*ohr makif*”, “enveloping light”.¹² Since *ohr makif* is so great that we cannot reach it and comprehend it, we need a *succah* to “shade” us from its powerful spiritual light, just like we need shade from the afternoon sun, when it is at its zenith. That is another reason why the *succah* is called “*tzeila d’mehemenusa*”, “in the shade, of faith”.

But there is also a deeper understanding to this, as follows.

Usually when light comes in from the outside, the light outside is bigger, and the light that comes inside is less. Only a little bit of light enters inside. But in the *sefarim hakedoshim*, there is totally opposite approach, a more inner understanding: The part of the light that enters inside is the “bigger” amount of light (and hence more important), whereas the part of the light that remains outside is “smaller” (and less important).

On Succos, where there is “*ohr makif*” (enveloping light), this is not like light that comes from the outside, where only a small part of light enters inside and the greater part of the light remains outside. Rather, since the depth of Succos is the point of “Praiseworthy is the one who did not sin”, which is a point that is in the depths of the *neshamah* - when this light found in the *pnim* (inside) of the *neshamah* is revealed, the light is so great that it extends outward.

¹² Arizal: *Shaar HaKavanos: derushei Chag HaSuccos, derush 3; further explained in Sfas Emes: Likutim: Succos, p.105*

That is the inner meaning of the “*tzeila d’mehemenusa*” of the *succah*. Paralleling this concept, the 7 *Ushpizin* are also not coming “in” to the *succah* from the “outside” - rather; they are on the inside of the *succah*, and their illumination extends outward from the *succah*.

That is also why the “70 faces” to the Torah (revealed on Succos, as explained earlier) are called 70 “*panim*”; the word “*panim*” is from the word “*poneh*”, to turn, and also from the word “*pnim*”, “inside” – which means that whatever is in the *pnim*/inside, can be revealed outward.

That is Succos: The festival of Succos is the “*pnim*”, the inner dimension, which is being revealed outward. Succos contains the “*pnim*” (innerness) or the *panim* (face), which is revealed outward - like someone smiling at his friend, from deep within. That is the depth of Succos, and it is for this revelation that the seven *Ushpizin* are willing to descend from Heaven to!

In the upper realms, there is less inner light (*ohr penimi*) but more enveloping light (*ohr makif*). But since “truth sprouts from earth”, the perfected man can only come from this earth, there is light that comes from within man, and it can spread outward to those around oneself, where it becomes enveloping light.

This is the meaning of the concept of *tzeila d’mehemenusa*, and to this level, the seven *Ushpizin* come down from Heaven for, on Succos, which is like a crack in our dimension that allows all the heavenly light to shine.

The *succah* shields us from the light coming from within ourselves, not from the outside. It is not like the difficulty in looking at the sun. We make a *succah*, a *tzeila d’mehemenusa*, so that the light shouldn’t spread past the *succah* into the surroundings and burn everyone from its high level of spiritual radiation. There can be so much spiritual “light” coming from within, that it spreads outward. On Rosh HaShanah, this light is covered, but on Succos, the moon is full, so the light is full, and it spreads outward. So that the light shouldn’t spread too far and burn everyone in its surroundings, we have the *succah* which contains it and thereby restricts this light into the *succah*.

The light of Succos reveals the level of “*panim*” [the *giluy panim*/revealed Countenance of Hashem] in all angles – above (represented by the *s’chach*), in all sides (represented by the walls of the *succah*), in between (the airspace of the *succah*), and below, (represented by the ground of the *succah*). When there is *giluy panim*, the spiritual light is coming from the inside. The light is not coming from the outside into the inside – rather, the light is coming from the inside, and spreading outward. This revealed light in all six directions of the *succah* represents the concept that the *he’aras panim* (the radiant countenance) of Hashem can be found everywhere, in every possible angle of every dimension.

Hashem’s Light Is Everywhere

In clearer and simpler terms, when a person sees Hashem in everything, he sees the *panim* (“Face”) of Hashem in everything, whether in light or in darkness, as it is written, “*To speak in the*

morning of your kindnesses, and of your faith at nights". It is to see Hashem in every place, even where there is darkness [difficulty].

Yaakov made *succos* (huts) to camp in, and *Chazal* teach that he made one *succah* for day and one *succah* for night. The *succah* he made at night represents "*your faith at nights*", that even at nighttime, in darkness, there is the light of the *succah*.

The light of the *succah* is not light coming from the outside into the *succah*, but a light that comes from within the space of the *succah*. The *succah* itself is filled with light, its ground has *giluy panim* in it, and this light spreads outward.

The Depth of "Stay With Me, One More Day"

One can also return to this light on Simchas Torah, where we make a celebration in honor of "the completion of the Torah".

Of the last day of Succos, Hashem says, "Stay with Me, one more day".¹³ The depth of this matter is that it is a day where when one can see that Hashem is found in all six directions – above, on all sides, in the space between, and even in the ground; when one realizes that there is nowhere else to go other than being near Hashem.

This is the meaning of "Stay with Me" – it does not mean simply that we will leave Hashem afterwards, but that we can reach the very depths of the festival of Succos, which is to be near Hashem and with Him; to be enveloped by Hashem (the concept of *ohr makif*, the "enveloping light), to feel surrounded by His *panim*/Face, so to speak.

The word "*succah*" is from the word *Yiskah* (the other name of Sarah), from the term "*sochob b'ruach hakodesh*", "enveloped by the holy spirit", which sees in all six directions. Succos reveals the idea that when we see nothing else around us in all six directions other than the Presence of Hashem, we are "staying" with Hashem Himself.

The Enveloping Light On Succos

That is the inner essence of Succos.

Just as we can understand that man wears clothing, and he is above his clothing, even though his clothing surrounds him, so too on Succos, if we reach the inner essence of Succos, we can reach the understanding that although the *succah* envelopes man, it is really the inner light which can spread outward from man and envelope him. Every day, we have the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*, which surrounds a person, and this can remind us of this concept.

13 Rashi to Vayikra 23:36

The root of this concept is when we stood by Har Sinai, where the mountain was suspended in the air above us and it surrounded us, where we were forced to accept the Torah. The Maharal explains that it was not simply that we were forced to accept the Torah. Rather, when the mountain was suspended in the air above us, the entire people had such clarity then, when they were trapped under the mountain, and this clarity enveloped them and enabled them to receive the light of Hashem's Torah. That is Succos.

Throughout the year, especially on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, there is *kabalas ol malchus shomayim*, accepting the yoke of Heaven, upon us. On Succos, there is a different level: we are surrounded by the *succah*, which resembles being surrounded and enveloped by Har Sinai, when the mountain was suspended above us. Succos is an extension of this concept, where the mountain of Har Sinai is suspended above us – which, as it is clear to any sensible person, is really referring to the light of Torah, a light that constricts us to its place. The *succah* also constricts the light to its place, so that it shouldn't spread outward.

“Ain Od Milvado – Even In The Emptiest Space In The World”

When one reaches a palpable sense of *Ain Od Milvado* (“There is nothing besides for Him”), that Hashem is everywhere, even in the *“chalalo shel olam”*, “even in emptiest space in the world” – one can then reveal the truest level of *“panim”*, which is the *ohr panim* (the light of the Face/Countenance) of Hashem, which we express in the words, **כי באור פניך נתת לנו**, *“For in the light of Your Face, You gave to us, Hashem our G-d”*. That is the light of Succos!

The root of Succos is in the act of Creation, when Hashem made the heavens and the earth. We have Yom Kippur as a time of atonement, and afterwards we have Succos, where we return to a semblance of Hashem creating the world, which consists of the heavens and the earth. Succos is *“tzeila d'mehemenusa”*, similar to the word “Betzalet”, who knew the secret of how to combine the letters of the heavens and earth. Building a *succah* is therefore a semblance of building the heavens and earth which Hashem made.

The Serpent told Adam and Chavah that man is a builder of universes. Although it was using this argument in order to convince them to sin, there was a kernel of truth to this argument, in that man has the power to build words, to build heaven and earth together - through building the *succah*.

The essence of Succos is that there is *Ain Od Milvado* within all of *chalal*space; as in the teaching of the Sages, *“Ain Od Milvado, even in the empty space of the world”*. There is *“Ain Od Milvado”* [or *giluy panim* of Hashem] even in the *chalal*space of the *succah*.

Therefore, the entire world is nothing but a giant amount of concealment (*hester*) that hides Hashem's light.¹⁴ The *succah* conceals and constricts the light of Hashem; the *succah* itself is not the light of Hashem, it is just the "*tzeila d'mehemenusa*", "the shadow of faith", because, from a deep understanding, it is but a "shadow" of the light of Hashem, and not the light itself.

The *succah* conceals the *ohr*/light of Hashem, by keeping it contained in that space and not letting it spread past the walls of the *succah*. In that sense, it conceals Hashem's light, keeping it within the *succah* alone. In the future, the light will be allowed to spread everywhere.

In Conclusion

The more we merit, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to contemplate and recognize the meaning of "*Ain Od Milvado*" (There is nothing besides Him), we will merit the light of Succos to come from within our own inner light, and not from the outside. It will then spread outward, and then the spiritual light of Succos will become a light that envelopes all of the surroundings.

In the future, this light will extend into the rest of the world. That is the depth of why the gentiles in the future will kick the *succah*, because Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath then, which means on a deeper level that the light will spread into all of the surroundings, and it will be unrestrained [as the *Gemara* there says, the righteous will be healed by this light, whereas the wicked will suffer from it; hence, the gentiles will kick the *succah* in the future, because they will not want this light]. This will be the "new light of Zion" that will illuminate the world.¹⁵

¹⁴ For further insight into this matter (and how to go beyond the view of "*hester panim*"), see Tefillah #0120 – Finding The Shechinah

¹⁵ For more on the topic of the "*ohr panim*" of Hashem, see Tefillah #0166 – Leaving The Disparate View