



Divrei Torah

Shemini Azeret/Simchat Torah

Moadim L'simcha

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Weekly Dvar Torah

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Wishing Klal Yisrael a Chag V'samayach

Eighth Day

Rabbi Yehoshua Weber

Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis

"The eighth day shall be a time you are held back from work [Bamidbar 29:30]"

Names, at least in the Torah's lexicon, are certainly more than ceremonious titles, haphazardly appended to designated items. Torah titles define that which they are naming. For example, the Torah calls Pesach "Chag HaMatzot," an appellation that highlights the matzot, an essential, definitive aspect of the festival. "Chag HaSukkot," a term the Torah uses for Sukkot, stresses the crux of the Yom Tov, the Sukkah and its recollection of the clouds and huts of protection that HaShem extended to us during our desert sojourn — protection we receive throughout our lives. Name relevance must, of course, be true of all our Yomim Tovim; nothing in our Torah is cursory.

How then do we interpret "Shemini Atzeret?" A simplistic translation of the phrase would be "Shemini," the eighth — Shemini Atzeret being an eighth day addendum to the Sukkot holiday; "Atzeret," held back (from doing work, according to the Ibn Ezra, Vayikra 23).

Do these two words adequately convey the true essence of Shmini Atzeret? Is Shemini Atzeret merely an eighth day addendum to the week-long Sukkot Yom Tov with no clearly discernible identity of its own? The word "Atzeret" (held back) is also troubling. Atzeret seems to lay undue stress on the restrictive, non-productive aspects of the Yom Tov. Should we not, instead, accentuate the active/productive lessons this Yom Tov contains? What really is the message of Shemini Atzeret?

A glance at two very important numbers should help to illuminate this confusing issue. Sheva (seven), more than any other number, seven is the protoplasm, the very building block of Jewish time. The Jewish week is known as shavuah (seventh) and is composed of seven days. The Kuzari notes that it did not have to be that way. Society could have structured weeks composed of sequences of eight, ten, or any other number of days. Our twelve-month calendar all heeds the cycle of seven. Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch, in his *Collected Writings*, notes that our two festive months, Nissan and Tishrei, are at seven-month intervals from each other. Some other manifestations of this maxim are the seven year (Shmittah) sabbatical of the land cycle, the seven day duration (in Israel) of the festivals of Pesach and Sukkot, and the seven day cycle of ritual purification.

The Vilna Gaon in *Divrei Eliyahu*, Parshat Emor, even compiles a list of seven days in which the Torah forbade work: the first and last days of Pesach and Sukkot, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana, and Yom HaKippurim. On a somewhat less tangible note, the Rabbeinu B'chaya, Parshat Bo, quotes the Midrash in stating: "whoever has tefillin on his head and arm, tzitzit on the four corners of his garment, and a mezuzah on his door (for a total of seven) is assumed not to be a sinner." It is not by chance that the seven aspects of these mitzvot combine to form some sort of protecting aura.

Even our lineage is based on the combined accomplishments of seven great people: our three patriarchs and four matriarchs, or alternatively, the seven Ushpizin — all great leaders of our people — Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon, and Dovid. The Midrash Raba Vayikra 29, encapsulates this concept by stating that kol hashviim chavivim (all sevenths are beloved). The Midrash then provides historical proof to this axiom by listing a surprising array of generations and sequences that peaked on the seventh; the seventh of a cycle or sequence is its climax and completion.

The very etymology of sheva (seven) relays the aforementioned idea. The Maharal, *Ohr Chadash* page 93, correlates sheva to sova (satisfaction); after seven, we have completed whatever we have set out to do. Hence, we are satisfied.

Seven is distinct, even from a mathematical standpoint. Of all the basic numbers — one through ten — only seven is both non-divisible (in contrast to six, for example which can be divided by two or by three) and yet neither can it be multiplied and still remain within the realm of basic numbers (one through ten). Seven cannot be fragmented into equal whole numbers (unlike four, six, eight, nine, or ten) and it is a number so perfect that it doesn't have to duplicate itself to achieve greatness (e.g.: if we multiply seven, we leave the realm of basic numbers, unlike one, two three, four, and five). Seven symbolizes the fulfillment of our potential; being completely developed; being fully able to stand on our own two feet without any assistance. Our mundane day-to-day lives are therefore structured in sequences of seven.

Nevertheless, seven is not always the right number. There are moments in our lives that are more ethereal than others, moments that are neither mundane nor day-to-day. These moments do not fit the usual structure of our day-to-day lives. These situations cannot be accommodated with the normal cycles of seven; they work within the context of the level beyond seven — eight.

Eight was the definitive number of the Beit Hamikdash, the Holy Temple — our bastion of most extraordinary spirituality. The Rabbeinu B'chaya, *Vayikra* 9,1 states

that most aspects of the Temple came in multiples of eight: the High Priest's eight articles of clothing, the eight spices of the anointing oil and incense, the eight carrying poles (two each for the ark, the table, the golden and the copper altars). The Maharal, Ner Mitzvah, makes this concrete by associating shimini (eight) with shemen (excess fat) e.g. above and beyond the usual, more than what is necessary.

Millah (circumcision) is another mitzvah oriented around the number eight. It is performed on the eighth day of a baby boy's life. Eight might figure prominently here because the purpose of circumcision is to differentiate us from, and raise us above, the level of our surroundings. Tefillin and tzitzit might be other examples. It is entirely possible that the eight strands of tzitzit and the eight Torah portions contained in our two tefillin allude to the same point. Tefillin and tzitzit are supposed to be graphic reminders to prevent Acharya l'vovchoh v'lo sa'suru (straying after our hearts) — reminders to rise above the immorality around us.

Might not Shemini Atzeret belong to the aforementioned "other worldly" category of mitzvot — mitzvot that don't fit into the usual structure of our day-to-day lives? After all, Shemini Atzeret comes at the very end of our yearly festival series. It might very well be seen as the year's finale. First we encounter the seven days of Pesach, with the seven Seder mitzvot: Pesach, matzah and maror (for Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov), and the four cups of wine (for the four matriarchs, see Maharal on the Haggadah). Then, on we progress through the seven weeks of counting that culminate in Shavuot; on to Rosh HaShanah and Yom HaKippurim, and the seven penitential days between them. Finally, we celebrate the seven days of Sukkot in which we grip an etrog, lulav, two aravot and three Haddasim — the seven parts of the four species. Only after all this are we capable of moving beyond the normal structure of our day-to-day lives and on to Shemini Atzeret, on to the special world of eights. Indeed, the Sforno on Vayikra 23, 36 notes that Shemini Atzeret— "is the Yom Tov asher ba shlamu kol smachot haRegalim, in which all Yom Tov festivities are completed."

Shemini Atzeret, a Yom Tov whose name highlights the fact that it is an eighth day festival, is so much more than an eighth day addendum. It is a shemen (excess) as the Maharal explains, a holiday of extra and excess potential, and one whose capacity goes far beyond that of other holidays. Being called Shemini (eighth) then, is an attribute rather than detraction.

Another singular aspect of Shemini Atzeret is its peculiar lack of structure. Pesach and Sukkot have their own particular regimens of positive (matzah, sukkah) and negative mitzvot. Shemini Atzeret on the other hand, doesn't have a legion of distinctive mitzvot. The Vilna Gaon (Divrei Eliyahu) concludes from the phrase v'hot on s'mach — "and you should only be joyous," (Devarim 16) that joy is the only mitzvah endemic to Shemini Atzeret. There is nothing else unique about it.

Our earlier idea might help to clarify why "Atzeret" (held back) is part of this Yom Tov's title. Shemini Atzeret does not focus on particular details. We have already absorbed the myriad details of the previous Yomim Tovim. We are now ready for the unlimited, as yet undefined, world beyond that. It is a day to focus simply on being "held back" as Rashi in Emor explains, that HaShem tells us Banai, Ikvu Imi Od M'at Yom Echad. Kasheh Alai Pridatchem — "my sons, please remain with me another day; our parting is difficult." We revel in the fact that we have another day to spend in Yerushalayim, refining the lessons absorbed from all the previous Yomim Tovim. Being

"azeret" unclear, and therefore open to all spiritual possibilities, is part of the greatness of the day.

The ideas espoused flow beautifully with an extraordinary essay by Rabbi Gedaliah Schorr, zt"l, who parallels each Yom Tov with one of our founding fathers (see Tur O.C. 417): Pesach for Avraham, Shavuot for Yitzchok, and Sukkot for Yaakov. Shemini Atzeret is unclear. He attempts to correlate it with Yosef and expounds the connections by exploring the dual meaning of Yosef's name. Asof Elokim et cherpati, upon Yosef's birth, Rachel (who no longer felt unfulfilled as a wife/mother) cried "HaShem gathered my shame" [B'reishit 30:23] and Yosef chai li ben achar, "HaShem should grant me another son" [B'reishit 30:24]. Rabbi Schorr beautifully connects the two reasons for Yosef's name: only because Rachel had dealt with and gathered all the outstanding issues of her life ("HaShem gathered my shame") could she move on and ask for yet another son.

The message is so very relevant for us, too; we can, and should, grow. But first, we must fully absorb and understand that which we already have. Only then do we have the right to ask HaShem for more. This is Yosef's attribute: maximizing all that our ancestors gave us to enable us to move on and go further. The parallel to Shemini Atzeret is scintillating; only after we have internalized the message of all the previous seven days of holiday can we expand our horizons and progress to the special world of Shemoneh (eight) — Shemini Atzeret. Chag Samayach.

Simchat Torah/V'zos Habracha

"The Uniqueness of Yisrael"

Rabbi Moshe Greebel Z"L

This last Sidra of the Torah is not designated for a particular Shabbos, but rather, for the Torah reading on the Yom Tov of Simchas Torah, when it is coupled to the beginning of the Sidra B'raishis. Nonetheless, due to the many noble concepts contained therein, a weekly Sidra mailing of V'Zos HaBracha is made available to our readers.

In this Sidra we are told the following:

"Yisroel then shall dwell solitary in safety; the fountain of Ya'akov shall be upon a land of grain and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew." (D'varim 33:28)

Now, the term for solitary in LaShon HaKodesh (holy tongue) in this Passuk (verse) is 'Badad,' which denotes something unique and special. Nevertheless, turning to M'gillas Aicha, which speaks of the destruction of Y'rushalayim after Yisroel grievously sinned, we find that the term 'Badad' signifies something punitive and degrading:

"How solitary sits the city, that was full of people; she has become like a widow; she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, has become a vassal." (Aicha 1:1)

The Gemarah in Sanhedrin 104a explains the disparity in this manner:

"Rabbah said in Rabbi Yochanan's name, 'HaKadosh Baruch Hu exclaimed, "Yisroel then shall reside solitary in safety; the fountain of Ya'akov shall be upon a land of

grain and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. But now (that they have sinned), they shall sit (degraded in) solitary.””

Throughout Mikra (Scripture) we find the term 'Badad' used in both senses. In the more distinctive we have:

"For from the top of the rocks I see it (nation of Yisroel), and from the hills I behold it; lo, the people shall dwell solitary, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." (Bamidbar 23:9)

Concerning the ostracized M'tzora (one suffering from the skin affliction of Tzoras), the language of 'Badad' is undignified:

"All the days when the disease shall be in him he shall be unclean; he is unclean; he shall sit solitary; outside the camp shall his habitation be." (Vayikra 13:46)

On this theme of multiple meanings for the word 'Badad,' in the text *Mai'Ain Bais HaSho'Aiva* by Rav Shimon Schwab (1908- 1993) of blessed memory, who cited the celebrated Rav Shamshon R'fa'el Hirsch (1808- 1888) of blessed memory, we find the following observations.

There is a great difference between the expressions of dwelling solitary (Sh'chaina- which denotes among neighbors), and sitting (Yeshiva) solitary. Now, 'sitting solitary', explained Rav Hirsch, in LaShon HaKodesh signifies that which is desolate and inconsolable, whereby no one else wishes to affiliate with such a person (or nation) and none wish him any good. This is the meaning of 'How solitary sits the city' and 'He shall sit solitary.'

However, the expression 'Dwell solitary,' which implies among good neighbors, means the opposite, whereby all nations wish to affiliate with him, as is written:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of HaShem's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it." (Y'shaya 2:2)

Yet, even though the other nations will desire to affiliate with Yisroel, Yisroel, the Am HaNivchar (chosen people), will still remain unique and special, as HaKadosh Baruch Hu designated:

"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of Kohanim, and a holy nation; these are the words which you shall speak to the B'nai Yisroel." (Sh'mos 19:6)

Additionally, we witness this uniqueness and special status when it comes to the neighbors of Avraham Avinu:

"And there came one who had escaped, and told Avram (his name at the time) the Ivri; for he (Avram) lived in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshkol, and brother of Aner; and these were confederate with Avram." (B'raishis 14:13)

Rav Hirsch explained that even though Mamre, Eshkol, and Aner were confederates of Avraham, and wished to partner with him, he did not necessarily wish to partner with them. For, in the eyes of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the unique standing of Avraham was

of a much higher spiritual level.

This then, concluded Rav Hirsch, is the meaning of 'Yisroel then shall dwell solitary in safety,' which is a lofty and extraordinary level above all other nations of the earth. Regrettably though, through the sins of our ancestors, we read in Aicha, 'How solitary sits the city, that was full of people.'

Here conclude the words of Rav Hirsch as cited by Rav Shimon Schwab. One way or the other, we must at all times be cognizant that we stem from a great lineage which, through the merit of Torah, stands well above any other culture of this earth. The proof to such a claim can easily be seen by the simple fact that despite vicious persecutions in every generation against us, Jews not only still exist, but flourish as well. May HaKadosh Baruch Hu be with us throughout eternity.

May we soon see the G'ulah Sh'laimah in its complete resplendence- speedily, and in our times. A G'mar Tov.

The Simcha of Torah Study

Rabbi Chaim Lobel

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If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasurers, then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of G-d (Proverbs 2: 4-5).

This verse is in reference to the study of Torah. The Medrash Rabba (Shir Hashirim Rabba 1:9) explains the verse through a parable. If a man loses a valuable gemstone within his house, he would make sure the house is well lit while continuing his search until the precious gem is found. If he would go to such lengths for an object that could be enjoyed only in this world, it stands to reason that he would exert himself all the more for the study of Torah which would benefit him in both this world and the world to come. The Medrash is not saying here that a person searches for Torah the same way in which he would search for a lost object. Rather, the parable compares a person's outlook between finding a valuable object and studying Torah.

When someone loses a priceless object in his house, he feels certain he will find it if he just looks longer and harder. That certainty is bound to lead him to continue looking until he finds the precious item. So too, when studying Torah, a person should have the mindset that, with time and effort, he will acquire the Torah's riches. But to develop that mindset, person must learn to value the Torah and have faith that the Torah will yield its riches to anyone who perseveres.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai says: "If you studied Torah, do not take personal credit because this is the reason for which you were created" (Avot 2:8). Rabeinu Yona adds that a person cannot take personal credit for Torah study because the Torah is infinite – no one can fully grasp even a single aspect.

The Alter of Slobodka (Ohr Hatzaphoon; Chelek 1, pp 63-64) quotes the Talmud (Succah 42a): "As soon as a child learns to speak, he is taught Shema Yisrael and the Torah." The Talmud asks: "Which section of the Torah is the child taught first?" Rav Hamnuna says it is the verse "The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4). The Alter explains that no

prerequisites are required to study Torah. As soon as the child learns to speak, he can begin to learn the Torah, even if only on a very simple level.

The Alter then cites the verse: "Educate the child based on his ability, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The Alter explains there is no beginning or end to the study of Torah. Each person has the capability to expand his knowledge and continue to grow.

The Medrash Rabba (Devarim Rabba 8:3) relates an incident in which a fool entered a house of Torah study and asked to be instructed as to how he could also study and master the Torah and its laws. The students answered that he must start with the basic foundations – the Five Books of the Torah, the Prophets, and the General Writings (*Tanach*), and then move on to the Mishna and the Talmud. The fool, realizing the daunting task ahead of him, gave up and walked out. Rabbi Yanai explains that the fool thought there was no time and no way to master so much information, so why try. A reasonable person, however, would have said: "I will start slowly and do as much as I can day by day so that, over time, I will have amassed a wealth of information that will allow me to persevere towards my final goal."

One may feel that Torah is distant and concealed from him because it contains too much detail and information. But through perseverance and consistence, one can be successful in any endeavor. Every small step towards understanding and observing Torah is a giant leap towards consistency; and consistency is the key to success.

Just like that precious gemstone in the house, the Torah is a treasure waiting to be found by those who search for it. As the Torah teaches: "This commandment which I (G-d) command you today, it is not too hard for you, neither is it distant" (Deuteronomy 30:11). *Chag Samayach*.

Meafar Kumi

Rabbi Ronen Shaharabany

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בראשית ה,) "ספר תולדת אדם" איתא בגמרא (סנהדרין לה): אמר ריש לקיש, מאי דכתיב זה ה לאדם הראשון דור דור ודורשיו, דור דור וחכמיו. כיון שהגיע לדורו (א), מלמד שהראהו הקב (להרב יוסף דוד), מדוע) "צמח דוד" כ. הקשה ה"ל של רבי עקיבא שמח בתורתו ונתעצב במיתתו, ע אדם הראשון נתעצב דווקא במיתתו של רבי עקיבא, ולא במיתת צדיק אחר?

אדם הראשון חטא באכילת עץ הדעת, ולמעשה עשה תשובה על חטאו. וכדברי הגמרא (עירובין יח): היה רבי מאיר אומר, אדם הראשון חסיד גדול היה, כיון שראה שנקנסה מיתה על ידו ישב בתענית מאה ושלושים שנה, ופירש מן האשה מאה ושלושים שנה, והעלה זרזי תאנים על בשרו ל"מאה ושלושים שנה, עכ

רבי חמא בשם רבי חנינא בר רבי, "ויצא קין מלפני ה": (כתוב במדרש (בראשית רבה כב, יג יצחק אמר, יצא שמח. פגע בו אדם הראשון, אמר לו מה נעשה בדינך, אמר לו קין עשיתי תשובה ונתפשרתי. התחיל אדם הראשון מטפח על פניו, אמר כך היא כחה של תשובה ואני לא הייתי כ"תהלים צב), ע) "מזמור שיר ליום השבת" יודע, מיד עמד אדם הראשון ואמר

ונראה שפירושו על פי הגמרא ביומא (פו): "עשיתי תשובה ונתפשרתי" למה התכוון קין שאמר

דהיינו שחטאו, "נתפשרתי" שעל ידי תשובה מיראה, זדונות נעשות לו כשגגות. וזה שאמר קין ונהפך לשוגג. נמצא שתשובתו של, "פשרה" לא נשאר בגדר זדון אך לא נמחק, אלא נעשה בו קין הייתה תשובה מיראה. וממילא, אדם הראשון, שלמד לעשות תשובה מקין, גם כן עשה תשובה מיראה.

כתוב בגמרא (ברכות סא:): בשעה שהוציאו את רבי עקיבא להריגה זמן קריאת שמע היה, והיו סורקים את בשרו במסרקות של ברזל, והיה מקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים. אמרו לו תלמידיו, - "ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל נפשך" רבינו, עד כאן? אמר להם, כל ימי הייתי מצטער על פסוק זה אפילו נוטל את נשמתך. אמרת, מתי יבוא לידי ואקיימנו, ועכשיו שבא לידי לא אקיימנו? היה מאריך באחד עד שיצאה נשמתו באחד. יצאה בת קול ואמרה, אשריך רבי עקיבא שיצאה נשמתך ע"כ באחד, ע

רבי עקיבא הוא סמל לאהבת ה'. כל ימיו הצטער מתי יוכל למסור את נפשו מרוב אהבתו העזה ה. וכידוע, יום המיתה הוא יום של תשובה, שהמיתה היא מזבח כפרה לחטאי האדם, "להקב ואפילו מכפר על חילול ה'. ומשמעות הדברים, שרבי עקיבא מת מתוך אהבת ה', מתוך תשובה מאהבה. ורבי שמשון מאוסטרופוליא כתב (ניצוצי שמשון עמ' כד), מה שאמרו שנשמתו יצאה ראשי תיבות אהבה חפיצה דביקות, שהם ג' לשונות של חיבה (בראשית רבה פ, "אחד", "אחד" ב עולה "אחד"), להורות שמיתתו של רבי עקיבא הייתה מתוך אהבה עזה שאין כדוגמתה. וכן 'להורות שנשמתו יצאה מרוב אהבתו לה, "אהבה" בגימטריא

ידועה הסתירה (יומא פו:): אמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות, והאמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכויות. והתירוץ, כאן מיראה וכאן מאהבה. על ידי תשובה מיראה זדונות נעשות כשגגות, ועל ידי תשובה מאהבה זדונות נעשות כזכויות

עתה נבין מדוע אדם הראשון נתעצב דווקא במיתתו של רבי עקיבא. איתא בגמרא (בבא בתרא ש. דהיינו, "עה.) אמר רבי חנינא, מלמד שכל אחד ואחד נכוה מחופתו (חלקו) של חבירו, ע בעולם הבא, כשצדיק רואה שחלקו של חבירו בגן עדן גדול יותר משלו, הוא מתעצב שהוא לא זכה להשיג חלק כה גדול כחבירו. וזה שאדם הראשון נתעצב כשראה את מיתתו של רבי עקיבא, כי מיתתו הייתה מתוך תשובה מאהבה. ולרבי עקיבא חלק כה גדול בגן עדן, שהרי כל הזדונות נעשו לו כזכויות. אבל אדם הראשון, שחטא חטא כה גדול, ורק שב בתשובה מיראה, חטאו נשאר כשוגג, ונתעצב שחופתו כל כך קטנה לעומת חופתו של רבי עקיבא. אילו היה שב מאהבה, היה חלקו בגן עדן יותר גדול לאין שיעור

עולה 603, "רבי עקיבא בן יוסף". עם האותיות (עולה 616) "אדם הראשון", ויש לרמוז רמז שההבדל בין רבי עקיבא לאדם הראשון. "אהבה", "אחד" וההבדל ביניהם הוא 13, גימטריא ובעבור אותה אהבה נתעצב אדם הראשון – "יצאה נשמתו באחד" היה מידת האהבה – בבחינת

ומתוקים הדברים מדבש, שהרי התנא שאמר מימרא זו, שאדם הראשון נתעצב כשראה את מיתתו של רבי עקיבא, הוא ריש לקיש. וריש לקיש הוא התנא שחידש שתשובה מיראה זדונות נעשות לו גם כשגגות, ותשובה מאהבה זדונות נעשות לו כזכויות

מאמר החכם

יראה בלי אהבה אינה שלמות.
אהבה בלי יראה – לא כלום.
רבי מאיר אהרן מקרלין