HAAZINU – BETWEEN YOM KIPPUR AND SUKKOT
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After Yom Kippur my wife said she feels different this year. Usually, after Yom Kippur she feels a joy following the long tense day of tefillot – tefillot, as you know, for our very lives. Usually she feels the release of the tension (shhirur ha metach) and the confidence (bitachon) that we will now start a new year of life. This feeling is one that the Midrash Kohelelet actually justifies and even extols:

Our prayers have been heard. Nevertheless, this past year was particularly difficult in terms of the people that were taken from our world. Of course people pass away every year, but this year our community was hit hard by the loss of Nachshon Cohen, z”l – a young man in his prime who died the night of his engagement party. So my wife came home after Yom Kippur without the joyous feeling that “your prayer has been heard”:

decr murhul miflachem
without the ability to “go eat your bread in joy”:
אוכל布莱만 הלומך
This dilemma becomes more acute with the upcoming holiday of Sukkot wherein we are commanded:

Not simply “eat your bread in joy,” but be “ONLY JOYOUS.”

Part of that joy is due to the very fact that we feel that, indeed, a bat kol has gone out declaring that God has accepted our prayers. The Midrash explains that the Lulav we wave on Sukkot is like a sword being waved as a symbol of our victory in judgment:

Be that as it may, REALITY tells us that we cannot really be so sure what the coming year will bring. So, again, how can we “eat our bread in joy,” how can we be “only joyful – ach samayach”?

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The answer, I suggest, can be found in parshat Haazinu. In this concise song that we are commanded to ever remember, and according to some, read every day(!), we are told about our history.

- It is a history that begins with our people in the desert – a howling desert:

  דביכים פרק

  : יִמְצָׂאֵוּ בְאֶרֶץ וּבְתֹהוּ יְלֵל יְשִמֹן יְסֹבְנֵהוּ יְבוֹנְנֵהוּ יִצְרֶנֵהוּ כְאִישוֹ עֵינוֹ:

- It is a history that reminds us of that we don’t always fulfill the obligations incumbent upon us, “rousing Him to jealousy” (32:16).

  (טז) יַקְנִאֻוּ בְזָרִים בְתֹעֵּבֹת יַכְעִיסֻהוּ:

- It is a history that teaches that are consequences for such abandonment of our obligations: “I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be” (32:20).

  (כ) וַיֹאמֶר אַסְתִירָה פָּנַי מֵהֶּם אֶרְאֶה מָּה אַחֲרִיתם כִּי דוֹר תַהְפֻכֹת הֵמָּה בָּנִים לֹא אֵּמֻן בָּם:

- But it is a history that teaches that there will be redemption: … Sing aloud, O ye nations, of His people; for He doth avenge the blood of His servants, and doth render vengeance to His adversaries, and doth make expiation for the land of His people.

  (למ) הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עַמוֹ כִי דַם עֲבָדָּיו יִקּוֹמ יָנָּקָם יָשִיב לְצָרָּיו וְכִפֶר אַדְמָּתוֹ עַמוֹ:

How is this to answer our existential dilemma? How is this to help us make that leap of faith from Judgment to Joy?

The answer is purpose (mashmaut, tachlit).

We must all realize that we are not here forever. We must all realize that there will be some Rosh Hashana/Yom Kippur that our names will be on the list. Some Rosh Hashana/Yom Kippur following which we will be called to the heavens. Our life here is TEMPORARY (zmaniim/arayim). We will not forever be granted yet another year of life.

The reason we are told to go and rejoice in our bread, to rejoice in our Sukkot, is NOT because we have been guaranteed another year of life! It is because we are guaranteed to live a PURPOSEFUL life if we live by God’s will.

This is precisely what Moshe teaches is the upshot of Haazinu:

44 And Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun. 45 And when Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel, 46 he said unto them: 'Set your heart unto all the words wherewith I testify against you this day; that ye may charge your children therewith to observe to do all the words of this law. 47 For it is no vain thing for you; because it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days upon the land, whither ye go over the Jordan to possess it.' {P}
It is not an empty thing this keeping of the Torah, in fact, it is your very life!

In so doing we take part in history - the history of creation, the history of a purposeful creation that is demonstrated, first and foremost by God taking us out of Egypt. Our life as a people, as witnesses to God's purposeful creation, begins in that howling wilderness – the wilderness of a PURPOSELESS existence.

What is the howling of this wilderness? It is OUR howling that life has no purpose – we are in the desert of life, empty of all content. It is there that God found us, it is there that God said, no, you are mistaken, there is a purpose; and he put us in Sukkot:

These Sukkot remind us that God put his hand into history when he took us out of Egypt (Sukkot Mamash – R. Akiva). And they remind us of his continuous involvement, protecting us with his clouds of glory (anna’ei hakavod – R. Eliezer) – a protection that is both physical and spiritual.

But even more importantly, the Sukkot bring us to realize the truth – that we are TEMPORARY as these huts (tzrifim). We live under the illusion that we are eternal (nitzchiim) and the greatest symbol of this denial in our house. Of all our possessions, our home is by far the most expensive. We invest everything into our homes to say: “I am here to stay. Look at this permanent house. I am the Master of the Home. I am not going anywhere.”

To this the holiday of Sukkot comes and says: Leave your houses! Leave you ILLUSIONS (ashlayot)! Realize that you have no permanence in this world.

We are TEMPORARY, as TEMPORARY as these huts (tzrifim). The ONLY way we have any value, any “permanence” (nitzhiyut), is by aligning with the purpose of history, of Creation, of God's will.

It is in this realization, and only in this realization, that we can “eat our bread in joy” after Yom Kippur. It is only in this realization that we can be “ach smayach” on Sukkot.

Shabbat Shalom and Hag Samayach!
קהלת רבה (וילנא) פרשה ט

לך אכול בשמחה לחמך, א"ר הונא בריה דר' אחא בשעה שהתינוקות נפטרין מבית רבן

בת קול יוצאת ואומרת לך לך אכול בשמחה לחמך נתקבל البل פיכם לפני כריח ניחוח,
ובשעה שישראל נפטרין מבתי כנסיות ומבתי מדרשות, בת קול יוצאת ואומרת לך לך אכול בשמחה לחמך
כבר נשמעה תפלתכם לפני כריח ניחוח, ד"א לך לך אכול בשמחה לחמך זו פרשת חלה, ושתה בלב טוב
יינך זו פרשת נסכים, כי כבר רצת האלהים את מעשיך זו הכנסת ישראל לארץ שנאמר (במדבר ט"ו)

דברים פרק לא (יט)

וְעַתָּה כִּתְבוּ לָכֶּם את הַשִּׁירָּה וְלַמְדָּהּ את בְּנֵי יִשְרָּאֵּל שִימָּהּ בְפִיהֶּם לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶּּה לִי הַשִּׁירָּה הַזֹּאת לְעֵּד בְּנֵי ישראל:

אברבנאל

דברים פרק לא: יט

השירה הזאת תהיה שגורה בפי כל אדם...

רמב"ם הלכות תפילה ו נשיאת כפים פרק ז

ברק שמכות שמעה בחזות כל עוד יש ראייה, והם שמעו שמעון בכורות שלראה לי היה בָּכָה כָּל מֵרָכִּים.

רמב"ם הלכות תמיד ונשיאת כפים פרק ז

שכון העם הוא בכל מקום, והם שמעו שמעון בכורות שלראה לי היה בָּכָה כָּל מֵרָכִּים.

 zamów

רב חפר פרק בל פסוק מ

ךכ הוחזר תемые (אהו啟 מסלול), דודו שירוה והשישה והשישה והשישה והשישה להמתין לברק שמכות שמעה, והם שמעו שמעון בכורות שלראה לי היה בָּכָה כָּל מֵרָכִּים.

קונן דבָּבר, כי ביאר להם עזינה ההרכוב

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