

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXXI: Emor (Lev. 21:1–24:23)

Essay 11. The esoteric secret of the Sukkah

מדרש ילקוט "בסכת תשביו", אָמַר ר' לוי פֿל מי שְׁמַקְיִים מִצְוֹת סוּכָה בְּעוֹלָם הִנֵּה אָמַר הַקַּב"ה הוּא קַיִים מִצְוֹת סוּכָה אֲנִי מְסִיף עָלָיו מִחֲמַתּוֹ שֶׁל יוֹם הַבָּא עַכ"ל.

Midrash Yalkut (Shimoni parshat Emor, remez 653): “**You shall dwell in booths.**”¹
Rabbi Levy said: [Regarding] **everyone who fulfills the commandment of Sukkah in this world, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: he fulfilled the commandment of Sukkah.** [Just as the Sukkah is covered with *s'chach* {סכך}], so **I will cover him** [*mei'sich*] [מְסִיף] **from the anger of the coming day.**”

קִשָּׁה מֵהוּ הַלְשׁוֹן הִנֵּה אָמַר הַקַּב"ה הוּא קַיִים מִצְוֹת סוּכָה וְכו', הִנֵּה לוֹ לֹמַר פֿל הַמְקַיִים וְכו' הַקַּב"ה מְסִיף עָלָיו וְכו'. וְעוֹד לְמַה לֹא אָמַר פֿל הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּסוּכָה. וְעוֹד מֵהוּ בְּעוֹלָם הִנֵּה, דְּהָא פְּשִׁיטָא דְּבִכְל הַמִּצְוֹת נֶאֱמַר "הַיּוֹם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם" — וְלֹא לְמַחֵר לַעֲשׂוֹתָם.

Question 1: **It is difficult** to understand **what this language is**, “[Regarding] everyone who fulfills the commandment of Sukkah in this world, **the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: he fulfilled the commandment of Sukkah**, I will cover him from the anger of the coming day.” Why did Rabbi Levy quote G-d as repeating that which we were already told? **For he should have said**, “[Regarding] **everyone who fulfills** the commandment of Sukkah, **the Holy One, Blessed be He, covers him** from the anger of the coming day.”

Question 2: **Also**, instead of saying “who fulfilled the commandment,” **why doesn’t he say**, “[Regarding] **everyone who dwells in a Sukkah**”? That would have been one word shorter, and would have specified what the commandment is.

Question 3: **Also**, what is this reference to “**in this world**,” for this is obvious, as **regarding all of the commandments, it is said**, “**Today** [is the time] **to do them**, [in this world,] **and tomorrow is not** [the time] **to do them** [as there is no obligation or opportunity to fulfill mitzvot in the World-to-Come].”²

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¹ Lev. 23:42.

² Eruvin 22a; Avoda Zarah 3a, 4b.

וַיֵּשׁ לְדוֹמֵר שְׂסוּד הַסּוּפָה הוּא לְהַכְנִיעַ וּלְהַחֲלִישׁ כַּח הַסִּטְרָא אַחֲרָא וְלִילִית כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָאֲרַכְנּוּ לְעֵיל בְּפִרְשַׁת וַיֵּרָא עַל פְּסוּק "וַיִּשְׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ" וְעֵי"ש.

It can be said that the esoteric secret of the Sukkah is to subdue and weaken the power of the Sitra Achra, the side of impurity,³ and Lilith,⁴ as we discussed at length above in parshat Vayeira (essay 3) on the verse, “Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree.”⁵

וְעוֹד יְדוּעַ אֲצַלְנוּ שְׂסוּגוּלַת יְמֵי הַחַג הִיא לְהַכְנִיעַ הַרְשָׁעִים דְּכַתִּיב בָּהוּ "סָבִיב רְשָׁעִים יִתְהַלְכוּן", כְּמוֹ שֶׁבְּשִׁבִיל זֶה אָנוּ עוֹשִׂים הַהֲקָפוֹת בְּלוּלָב, וּבְשַׁעַת הַמְּקַדָּשׁ הָיוּ מְקַרְיָבִים שְׂבָעִים פָּרִים, וְנִסְוּדָה הַמַּיִם הָרְמוּזָה בְּ"בו"ז יְבוּזוּ לוֹ", וְעַיִן בְּזוֹהַר סוּף פִּרְשַׁת פְּנִיחָס.

It’s also known among us that the remedy of the days of the holiday of Sukkot is to subdue the wicked people, as it is written about them: “The wicked will walk around,”⁶ as for this reason we perform the *hakafot* with the lulav,⁷ and at the time of the Temple, seventy bulls were sacrificed,⁸ and the water libation⁹ that is hinted at by the verse, “Vast floods cannot quench love, nor rivers drown it; if a man offered all his wealth for love, scorned [בו"ז] [*boz*], scorned would he be.”¹⁰ See the Zohar at the end of parshat Pinchas.

The word *boz* is presented here with *gershayim*, indicating that the word is intended as an acronym. The Zohar quotes Prov. 25:21, “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.” The Zohar says that “give him bread to eat” refers to the sacrifice of the seventy bulls. These bulls correspond to the seventy idolatrous nations of the world, and their sacrifice weakens the power of the ministering angels of these nations. “Give him water to drink” refers to the water libation, with the “many waters” also corresponding to the seventy nations, and the libation also weakening the power of the idolatrous nations. The *gershayim* are added to the word *boz* to point out its letters, i.e., the second, sixth, and seventh letters of the alphabet, which refer to the corresponding days of Sukkot, when wine was added to the water libation.^{11,12}

³ Literally, “the other side,” as opposed to the side of holiness.

⁴ Lilith was a harmful spirit. See Isaiah 34:14; the Arizal identified Lilith as a partner of Satan who seeks to bring immorality to man.

⁵ Gen. 18:4.

⁶ Ps. 12:9.

⁷ The ritual circling of the reader’s platform.

⁸ Num. 29:12–34.

⁹ Mishnah Sukkah 4:9; Sukkah 48a.

¹⁰ Song of Songs 8:7.

¹¹ Zohar III:256a, 259a.

¹² The translator notes that the word *boz* has a Gematria value of 15. During Sukkot, the Levites would stand on the 15 steps of the Gate of Nicanor, where they would sing the 15 “songs of ascent,” Psalms 120–134.

ומעתה לא אֵמר "כל היושב בסוכה" לפי שְׂכַל יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹשְׁבִים בְּסוּכָה, אֲבָל אֵינָם מְכוּוֹנִים לְסוּד הַסוּכָה בְּמֵה שְׂצָרִיד לְכוּיִן בְּאוֹתָן הַיָּמִים.

Now, we understand the answer to the second question, that [Rabbi Levy] didn't say "all who sit in the Sukkah," because all Israel sit in the Sukkah on Sukkot, but they don't direct their actions at the esoteric secret of the Sukkah, which is what they need to intend during these days.

וְלָכֵן אָמַר ר' לוי "כל מי שְׂמַקְיִים מְצַנֵּת סוּכָה" דְּהֵינּוּ שְׂמַכוּיִן בְּהַ לְהַתְּלִישׁ פֶּחַ הַסִּטְרָא אַחְרָא וּלְהַגְבִּיר חֶלֶק הַקְּדוּשָׁה בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁהוּא זְמַן שְׁלִיטָה לְחִיצוֹנִים, כְּמוֹ שְׂפִירוּנָה זֹו הִיא בְּאַמַּת שְׁלִימוֹת מְצַנֵּת הַסוּכָה, אָמַר הַקַּב"ה הוּא קַיִים מְצַנֵּת סוּכָה כְּלוּמַר הוּא כִּינּוֹן לְהַתְּלִישׁ פֶּחַ הַמְּקַטְרָגִים וְהַחִיצוֹנִים מִשּׁוּם הִכִּי מִדָּה כְּנִגְדַּ מִדָּה אֲנִי מְסִיד עָלָיו וְכוּ', דְּהֵינּוּ הַקְּדוּשָׁה תְּהִיָּה סוּכָתָ עָלָיו שֶׁהַחִיצוֹנִים לֹא יִקְטְרוּגוּהוּ. וְעַיִן עוֹד לְקַמֵּן בְּסוּפֵי הַפָּרָשָׁה.

Therefore, Rabbi Levy said "everyone who fulfills the commandment of Sukkah," that is, referring to everyone who intends to weaken the power of the Sitra Achra and increase the share of holiness in this world. The answer to the third question, why Rabbi Levy referenced "in this world," is because this world is a time of control for the external material forces that act as a spiritual barrier between us and G-d.

As this intent is actually the fulfillment of the commandment of the Sukkah, we also have the answer to the first question, viz, **the Holy One, Blessed be He, said, "he fulfilled the commandment of the Sukkah," as if to say, "he intended to weaken the power of the prosecuting forces and the external forces, and because of this, as a measure-for-measure reward, I am covering him from the anger of the coming day." That is, the holiness will cover him, so that the external forces won't prosecute him. See further, at the end of this parsha (essay 18).**

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