



Sermon Tidbits

OCTOBER 2, 2017

Sukkot

The Ties that Bind

And you shall take for yourselves (Leviticus 23:40)

ולקחתם לכם (ויקרא כג:מ)

In a small ceremony late last month, just before Rosh Hashanah, the United States opened its first permanent military installation on Israeli soil, the [Jerusalem Post reported](#). “Due to the close cooperation between us and the American forces in the field of air defense, as well as the extensive experience accumulated by the Aerial Defense Division, it was decided that the first permanent base of the American army would be established at the School of Air Defense... This is the first time that we have an American flag flying in an IDF base,” said Brig.-Gen. Zvika Haimovich, head of the Aerial Defense Division. He noted that the base, “represents the long-standing partnership, the strategic commitment between the armies and the militaries of our countries,” and “adds another layer to the security of the state of Israel in defending [against] the threats of rocket or missile fire.” In his speech, United States Major General John Gronski, deputy commander of the U.S. Army National Guard in Europe, [said](#) that the base, “symbolizes the strong bond that exists between the United States and Israel.” We find this very same notion of strong bonds in the four species that we’re waving today on Sukkot.

Over the holiday of Sukkot, Jews around the world wave the “four species”—the *lulav*, *etrog*, *hadasim* and *aravot*—following the commandment, “And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.” (Leviticus 23:40) Three elements comprised of branches—the *lulav*, *hadasim*, and *aravot*—are all bound together, traditionally with a small strip of palm frond. This small band is actually the subject of a dispute in the Mishnah between Rabbi Yehudah who ruled that the *lulav* must be bound to be valid, while the Sages disagreed that a tie was obligatory.

What is the difference whether the species are tied together or not? What is the deeper meaning behind this tie that binds the three types of branches together? The Talmud (*Menachot 27a*) teaches us that this tie carries critical symbolism. “It was taught: Of the four kinds used for the *lulav*, two are fruit-bearing and two are not; those which bear fruits must be joined to those which bear no fruits and those which bear no fruits must be joined to those which bear fruits... And so it is with Israel’s conciliation with God, [which is achieved] only when they are all in one band, as it is said, ‘That builds His chambers in the heaven, and has founded His band upon the earth...’” The tie banding the branches together symbolizes the need to combine elements having different qualities and abilities together to achieve their true purpose. Although we could, in fact, wave the elements together without tying them, we bind them together to highlight how their combined strengths enhance and improve upon each other.

This “binding” rings true within the Jewish community, where different communities bring different strengths and values together to create a stronger people. In addition, the importance of a strong bond also instructs the strong bond connecting the United States to Israel, represented by our strategic alliance as we work together to protect each other and our common interests around the world. Our two countries train together, share intelligence and security information, and partner to develop systems that protect both countries. In his talk at the base-opening ceremony, Major General Gronski noted that “The United States and Israel have long planned together, exercised together and trained together. And now, with the opening of this site, these crucial interactions will happen every day.” While we applaud this important bond, we must continue to work to ensure the tying of *new* bonds, which will not only ensure

the strength and security of Israel but also greatly enhance the safety of American troops as they battle the forces of terror and radicalism around the world. ■

The Joy of Chessed on Sukkot

And you shall rejoice in your feast (Deuteronomy 16:14)

ושמחת בהגך (דברים טז:יד)

“Anglo IDF Parents” is a private, closed Facebook group where English speaking parents of IDF soldiers from around the world share questions, comments, advice, and support as their sons and daughters serve in the various branches of the Israeli military. Last week, Batya Silva of Mexico City posted the following (which is shared, as posted, with her explicit permission): “Who saves a life, saves the whole world” (Talmud) This is the Jewish people, these are our jayalim of the IDF. There are no words fair enough for these our heroes, in Rosh Hashana’s celebration, they left everything to come and offer their help to the Mexican people, where I live. As the mother of an IDF soldier, I only can tell, that the training that they have is gold, the lives of others above their own. I feel doubly proud!!! May G-d always protect them. Thanks for all the support!!!” Silva’s comments referred to an elite team of IDF search and rescue soldiers who, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, [flew to Mexico City](#) to work throughout the holiday in the rubble following a devastating earthquake that rocked Mexico’s capital.

Joy plays an important role on Sukkot. The Torah refers to joyous celebration several times with reference to Sukkot. In Leviticus (23:40) we read, “And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.” In Deuteronomy (16:14-15), joy and rejoicing appear twice in two separate verses: “And you shall rejoice in your feast—you, and your son, and your daughter, and your man-servant, and your maid-servant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within your gates...and you shall be altogether joyful.” What is the source of this great joy? First and foremost, Sukkot in ancient times represented the celebration of a successful harvest. Sitting with one’s entire family and giving thanks for a bountiful crop represented a great source of satisfaction and happiness.

Professor Moshe Arend [notes](#) that the verse adds another cause for joy. The presence of the “stranger, fatherless and the widow” in one’s Sukkah emphasize the importance of not only celebrating one’s blessings but sharing them as well. The Sages in the Midrash (*Agadah Deuteronomy* 16:11) teach, “[Said the Holy One:] If you bring joy to those belonging to me, I will bring joy to yours.” Arend writes, “This is a second type [of joy]—not just family rejoicing, but the joy accompanied by acts of kindness and the welcoming of guests. And we know the sharp words of Maimonides: ‘A person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, is [not indulging in] rejoicing associated with a mitzvah, but rather the rejoicing of his gut.’” (*Laws of Holidays* 6:18)

This was precisely the sentiment in the Jewish state, as Rosh Hashanah approached. Israel could not celebrate the Jewish New Year without coming to the aid of others in great need. Speaking from Mexico City during the rescue operation, Colonel (res.) Gili Shenhar [told the Algemeiner Journal](#) that it was only natural for Israel to send a delegation to assist the Mexican government after the 7.1 magnitude earthquake killed more than 300 and injured thousands more. While the team was unable to locate survivors, it did uncover the bodies of several victims who were returned to their families. “This is something that is in our hearts—helping people when they are in need,” he said.

We share in the suffering of the Mexican people, who are reeling from this terrible event. But we also take a great sense of pride and happiness that the state of Israel and her citizens rush to help people in need around the world. As we celebrate Sukkot as a holiday of joy connected to acts of kindness, we do so with a sense of happiness that giving to others is embedded not only in our religious DNA, but in the nature of the Jewish state as well. ■

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