

Shabbat Chol HaMoed Succot 5783, 2022:

Salvation Unto the Ends of the Earth

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, Shayndel bat Mordechai Yehudah, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

If we paraphrase the first of the Four Questions of the Pesach *seder* and apply it to Succot, it would probably look something like this: “How is this *chag* different from all other *chagim*?” Our answer might well be: “While other *chagim* also have physical *mitzvot* objects, Succot is the only *chag* with a *mitzvah* that literally surrounds around us, namely, the *succah*.”

There is another unique *mitzvah* of Succot that we unfortunately cannot perform at this time—the *musfei korbanot* (Mussaf Offerings) of Succot. At first glance, we might be tempted to question this *mitzvah*’s singularity. After all, Shabbat, Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh also have their own *Mussaf* offerings. If this is so, how are the *musfei korbanot* of Succot different from these other days? This matter is directly addressed in *Talmud Bavli, Succah 55b*:

Rabbi Elazar said: “For whom were these 70 bullock *korbanot* [of Succot] offered? On behalf of the 70 nations of the world...” Rabbi Yochanan said: “Woe unto the non-Jews who have lost [so very much] and know not what they have lost. When the *Beit HaMikdash* was standing, the *Mizbeach* (Altar) effectuated *kapparah* (expiation) on their behalf, and now [after the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*], who will bring about their *kapparah*?” (Translation and brackets my own)

According to Rabbi Elazar, Succot was the sole *chag* when *korbanot* were offered in the *Beit HaMikdash* on behalf of the 70 nations of the world. In his *Commentary on the Talmud* on our passage, Rashi *zatzal* (1040-1105) explains the purpose of these *korbanot*:

[The offerings that were brought on behalf of] the 70 nations of the world were to bring them *kapparah* in order for the rain to fall throughout the [entire] world. [They were brought at this time,] since humankind is judged on Succot regarding the water [that is, the rain, that will fall upon the earth in the upcoming year]. (Translation and brackets my own)

As the requisite amount of rainfall is a universal human need, the 70 *korbanot* were brought on behalf of the nations of the world to ensure that they, too, would not suffer the ravages of drought and starvation. In many ways, this act is reminiscent of a famous *pasuk* in *Sefer Yeshayahu*: “I will bring them [the nations of the world] to My holy mount, and I will cause them to rejoice in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples—ki vati beit tefilah yi’kareh l’kol ha’amim.” (56:7) This singularly important principle of Judaism is given powerful voice in the *Selichot* and throughout the *tefilot* of the *Yamim Noraim*.

My rebbe and mentor, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik *zatzal* (1903-1993), known as the “Rav” by his followers and disciples, incorporates this idea in his thought emphasizing, that in addition to our particularistic Jewish identity, we are “a part of the larger family of mankind,” and, hence, have a distinct universalistic identity:

As a citizen of a pluralistic society, the Jew assumes the social and political obligation to contribute to the general welfare and to combat such common dangers as famine, corruption, disease, and foreign enemies. Where the freedom, dignity, and security of human life are at stake, all people—irrespective of ethnic diversity—are expected to join as brothers in shouldering their responsibilities. These are concerns which transcend all boundaries of difference. (*Reflections of the Rav: Lessons in Jewish Thought Adapted from Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, Rabbi Abraham R. Besdin editor, page 170)

In line with this approach of the Rav, I believe the *Aleinu* is the *tefilah* that best captures the dual identity of our people. The first paragraph focuses upon our unique obligations to the Almighty:

It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to ascribe greatness to the Molder of primeval creation, for He has not made us like the nations of the lands and has not emplaced us like the families of the earth; for He has not assigned our portion like theirs nor our lot like all the multitudes. But we bend

our knees, bow, and acknowledge our thanks before the King Who reigns over kings, the Holy One Blessed is He...

In stark contrast, the second paragraph of *Aleinu* presents a powerful universalistic theme:

Therefore, we put our hope in You, Hashem our G-d, that we may soon see Your mighty splendor...to perfect the universe through the Almighty's sovereignty (*l'takane olam b'malchut Sha-dai*). Then all humanity will call upon Your Name, to turn all the earth's wicked toward You... And it is said [*Sefer Zechariah* 14:9]: "Hashem will be King over all the world—on that day Hashem will be One and his Name will be One." (Translation, *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur*, pages 159 and 161, brackets my own)

As Yeshayahu the prophet proclaimed: "...I will make you a light unto nations, so that My salvation shall be unto the end of the earth." (49:6) May the time come soon and, in our days, when these stirring words will be realized, and we will lead all humankind in recognizing Hashem's ultimate kingship. *V'chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

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Please contact me at rdb718@gmail.com to be added to my weekly email list.

*** My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

*** I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)