



Succos: Salt & Water, the Simchas Beis HaShoeva

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In the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*, there was an incredible celebration during *Chol HaMoed Succos* called the *Simchas Beis HaShoeva*. The focus was on the service of *nisuch hamayim* (pouring of the water.) Throughout the year, there are many libations and sacrifices, but this specific service is unique to Succos. It sounds like a simple act, pouring water, and yet, the Gemara states, “Whoever has not seen the joy of the *Simchas Beis HaShoeva* has not seen true *simcha* (joy) in his lifetime.”

What is so celebratory about this service? The *Shem MiShmuel* (Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain, the second Sochatchover Rebbe) gives an incredible explanation. He says that when Hashem created the sky, He separated between the celestial waters and the earthly waters. The earthly waters complained that they would no longer be close to God. Hashem said, “Don’t be upset. You will have two opportunities to connect with Me. The first will be the service of *nisuch hamayim* during the *Simchas Beis HaShoeva* on Succos, and the second will be that all sacrifices will have to be salted (salt comes from sea water).”

So why, asks the Sochatchover Rebbe, do we make such a celebration over the pouring of the waters, but not when we apply salt to the daily sacrificial offerings? He answers that in order to extract salt, part of the water must evaporate, which means it has already ascended. On Succos, we take the earthbound water in its entirety, and all of it rises to Hashem.

This is a metaphor for the Yomim Noraim. There are those who have been diligently working on themselves since the beginning of Elul, and so the process of their elevation happens over time. But for some of us, we are still stuck. Rosh Hashanah didn’t work, Aseres Yimei Teshuva didn’t work, Yom Kippur didn’t work. Finally, come Succos, we pour all the waters. It is never too late to begin the work of perfecting ourselves, address that which is broken, and fix that which has been in disrepair. *Nisuch HaMayim* represents those of us who could not complete the process during Elul and the Yomim Noraim, coming before Hashem saying - we still want to try.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov says that the Sukkah has a special quality like Eretz Yisrael. When we walk into the Sukkah, we have a unique connection to Hashem. We come before God and tell Him that even if we still have work to do, our greatest desire is to have a relationship with Him. On Chol HaMoed, we put ourselves on the alter, and we resolve to build that relationship and commit to a life of service of God.