

Deeper Ideas Behind the Ushpizin

On Sukkot, we commemorate Israel's dwelling in the desert in sukkahs with G-d's protection. There is a custom to welcome the seven Ushpizin (spiritual guests) into our Sukkah. These great Biblical leaders each match up with a kabbalistic middah/sefirah (attribute/concept). I believe that we do not literally welcome these great guests into our Sukkahs, but that each one and his respective sefirah remind us of a specific way in which G-d helped us to develop into a nation in the desert.



Below is a list of the concepts that match up with events in Israel's trek through the desert, with the Hebrew prayers that one says on each night of Sukkot at the very bottom. You can print out this page and use it on sukkot to say the Ushpizin Prayer and share words of Torah that will, hopefully, spark fruitful conversation.

Avraham/Sarah & Chesed: This famous word does not solely mean kindness, it means 'to sustain life and promote life's existence'. It relates to how G-d sustained us in the desert through different means: the manna, a mobile water well, clouds of protection against enemies, and more.



Those who elucidate kabbalah have portrayed this middah as the growth stage of a rose bush's cyclical development. Water is frequently described as a



chesed item, because of its basic life-giving properties. On Sukkot, we have a water-drawing ceremony and offering, and pray quite a bit for rain.

Yitzchak/Avigail & Gevurah: Gevurah is a middah that is related to judgment (*din*). It works as a mechanism to zero in on negative components and weed them out. As such, this idea parallels, among other things, the phenomenon that when people do incorrect deeds, they receive negative consequences. This can be conceptualized as a rose bush being trimmed. If one does not trim a rose bush, it will die from having too much growth to support and too much dead matter still imbedded in the plant. Israel, as we read about the nation in the Torah, has many incidences when it, or, more accurately, parts of it, do incorrect deeds. These specific perpetrators are weeded out to preserve the healthy parts of Israel. As difficult as it is to hear about, it is necessary for the healthy survival of the nation.



In addition, Israel needs physical borders and boundaries to survive. Any group of persons that joins together inevitably makes rules to maintain their connectedness. This may sound quite paradoxical, as groups often form to engage in pure recreation (*chesed*), as with social clubs, or to commit crimes (*anti-gevurah*), as with gangs. However, there is no escaping the need for rules to maintain the essential connectedness of an organization - however oxymoronic that sounds. All lasting groups have rules.

The walls of the Sukkah must be steady boundaries, so as to create a personal, isolated booth.



Ya'akov/Esther & Tiferet: This sefirah relates the most to Sukkot, for several reasons. First of all, we have a tradition that the holiday of sukkot corresponds to the forefather Ya'akov (Tur), who is related to the middah of *tiferet*. Also, the Sukkah is one of the most symbolic mitzvah items that we have. It *represents* the fact that we lived in huts in the desert, that G-d protected us there, a stroll in the Garden of Eden and more. *Tiferet* is understood to be a blending of *chesed* and *gevurah*, a “klall that comes forth from in a prat”, a broad concept

that is connected, by way of metaphor or allusion, to a particular item or image. For example, a painting may portray, through one isolated image or scene, an entire era in history or struggle that a person may feel.

In the desert, G-d commanded Israel to use religious items of representational significance, and the concept that we must find deep meaning (*chesed*) within our commandments and customs, but that we can never abrogate the technical requirement to do the law (*gevurah/din*). Actions that are based on items that have symbolic meaning are called rituals by psychologists, and are extremely important to the ongoing connectedness and health of a family or organization.

Moshe/Devorah & Netzach: Israel was given morals, values, and religious commandments to live by, in the desert. These relate to the middah *netzach*, which means eternal - as in



eternal values - and relates to morals. As these concepts relate to Moshe and his contribution and facilitation of these important components, he is identified with this middah. These morals were given through the authority of the Torah, with certain laws being given before or after the theophany at Mt Sinai by Israel's leaders, but the authority still stemming from G-d's decision that the Torah and Moshe's words that relate to it are the



root of binding law. This middah also teaches that education is important and that people need to study, teach others and develop their intellect.

Interestingly, most groups that humans form end up agreeing on adding a higher purpose to their union. A seemingly recreational men's club feels it important to donate and raise money for a particular charitable cause. A series of connected Midrashim mention connections between the Sukkah and Mt. Sinai, and this is one reason we decorate the Sukkah. Also, one is supposed to live a higher level of existence in the Sukkah, speaking constructive or Torah-based speech, and not leaving empty dirty pots inside needlessly.

Aharon/Miriam & Hod: *Hod*, as personified by Aharon, teaches us that each individual has importance, even within a large group. The individual's achievement is not competition, but the glory of one person's accomplishment, which, in reality, is good for the group. There were many individuals who contributed to Israel in the desert, such as Pinchas, Yehoshua, the daughters of Tzlofchad, and Calev. These people used their free will to contribute to Israel's success, but we must knowledge G-d's facilitation of these achievements, as well.



As a related concept, *hod* brings us the importance of interpersonal harmony and the importance of caring for others. This caring, as demonstrated by Aharon, the *hod* archetype, is rooted in our emotion of empathy, and reminds us that we need to take into consideration others' feelings. We must assist others with their emotional health and support and empathize with them, as Aharon does in the Midrash. The clouds that G-d uses to protect Israel in the desert relate not only to *chesed* but to this sefirah, as well. This is due to the fact that the clouds took preventative measures to ensure that Israel would be safe, have an easy trek, and that their clothing was in order. Many commandments that Israel receives at Sinai are related to the interpersonal realm. If we do these actions we will mirror Aharon, G-d through the command of imitating Him, *imitatio dei*, and quite clearly help our fellow man.

Yosef/Chulda & Yesod: Yosef's contribution in his life and to Israel is the middah of *yesod*, which involves connecting disparate components together. Israel, as a nation, must be organized and have its parts interconnected. The whole Book of Bamidbar reflects the national middah of *yesod* developing from non-existent to fully connected and organized. Israel can be understood to have been more susceptible to the troublesome incidences that occurred in the desert (Korach, the spies, Bilam) due to the fact that it had breakdowns in its *yesod* sefirah order in Bamidbar. It was not fully organized and led with *yesod*-type assertiveness, and certain perpetrators took advantage of that. During Sukkot, Israel united in Jerusalem.



David/Chana & Malchut: Once Israel is organized and its parts are working from the *yesod* middah, it becomes a connected, systematic group that needs little direction to function, similar to an anthill. Things appear to happen automatically. The direction it needs is given by its king, who totally commits to serving the people and is the sole executor of their will. Though Moshe and Yehoshua are understood by many midrashim and commentaries to have the status of king and function as such, this sefirah is not fully achieved in its purest form in the desert.

Many more years pass until Israel is led by David, and the lack of full connectedness and synergy is palpable in the books of Joshua, Judges, and much of Samuel. Though the nation of Israel is in the Land of Israel, they do not become fully connected until King David is coronated.



We do not live in a perfect world, nor have we ever; it is up to us to do what we can: to do tikkun (significant, profound improvement) to improve ourselves, families and communities and hope that this compounds and ripples forth, with Divine Assistance, to push Israel and the world in the right direction. Ultimately, *malchut* teaches us that we must recognize that G-d is the true king, with complete dominion over all, which is an important message during this season. May we see, speedily in our days, proper *malchut* with all components of Israel functioning properly together.

Ushpizin Prayer in Hebrew with Vowels-The Underlined Lines are the Essential Ones

דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל חוֹלְקִיהוּן וְצָאָה, דְּמַהֲיִמְנוּתָא פִּיזִין אוּשְׁפִיזִין תִּיבּוּ תִיבּוּ, עֵילָאִין אוּשְׁפִיזִין תִּיבּוּ תִיבּוּ וְתַפְרוּס בִּינֵינוּ שְׂכִינְתָּהּ שְׂתַשְׁרָה אַבוּתִי וְאַלְהֵי אֱלֹהֵי יְדוּד מְלַפְנֵיהּ רְצוּן יְהִי: נִחְלָתוּ חֻבֵּל יַעֲקֹב עִמּוֹ יְדוּד חֵלֶק פִּי דְכַתִּיב לִיחְדָּא וְרַחֲמֵי בְדַחֲלֵי וְשְׂכִינְתָּהּ הוּא בְּרִיךְ דְּקוּדְשָׁא שְׁמָא לִיחְדָּא מְקַיְמִין שְׁאַנְחֵנוּ סְפָה מְצוֹת בְּזָכוֹת שְׁלוּמָה סַכַּת עֲלֵינוּ מְלַמְעָלָה רְאִשֵׁיהֶם עַל נְטוּי הוֹרְהֵט הַקְדוּשׁ כְּבוֹדָהּ מִזֵּי אוֹתָם וְלִהְיִיף, יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל בְּשֵׁם שְׁלִים בְּיַחְדָּא ה"בּו ה"י שֵׁם אַרְוֶצָה מְצוּתֵיהּ וְדָרָה הַחוּצָה מִבֵּיתִי וּבְזָכוֹת. (אַמְתָּהּ פ"פב) לְעַבְדָּהּ הַחַיִּים שְׂפַע יוֹשְׁפַע וּמִשָּׁם, קִבּוּ יַעִיר כְּנֶשֶׁר תִּהְיֶינָה דְּמַהֲיִמְנוּתָא אוּשְׁפִיזִין עֵילָאִין וּמְאוּשְׁפִיזִין, טְהַרְנֵי וּמַחְטָאֵי מַעֲוֵנֵי כְּבִסְנֵי וְהָרַב, נְדוּד הַרְחַקְתִּי כְּאֵלּוּ זֹאת לִי יַחֲשֹב כְּנֶפֶד צַל בְּסִמָּר וְלַחֲסוֹת תִּלְשָׁב זְכוֹת לִי וְתַתֵּן, הַנְּצַמְנִים וּמִימָם לַחֲמֵם תֵּן צְמָאִים גַּם וְלָרַעֲבִים, בְּרַכּוֹת רַב קְשׁוּבוֹת אֲזַנְיָהּ מְקַיֵּם שְׁאַנֵּי זֹו סְפָה מְצוֹת חֲשׁוּבָה וְתִהְיֶה, פְּחִים רְשָׁעִים עַל תַּמְטִיר כִּי, וּמִמְטֵר מְזַרֵּם וְלַחֲסוֹת, הַעוֹלָם מִן פְּטִירְתִּי בְּעַת עַל רַבִּים יָמִים לִישָׁב וְתִזְכְּנוּ, הַחֲתִימָה לְנוּ וְתִיטִיב. בְּהַ תְּהִלּוּיִם מְצוֹת וְכָל וְתִנְאַיָּהּ וְדְקוּדִיקָיָהּ פְּרִטְיָהּ בְּכָל קִימְתִּיהּ כְּאֵלּוּ: וְאַמֵּן אֲמֵן לְעוֹלָם יְדוּד בְּרִיךְ. וּבִיְרֵאֲתָהּ בְּעַבְדָּתָהּ קִדְשׁ אֲדַמַּת הָאֲדָמָה

Each night, (preferably before you eat) say the following phrase before each Ushpizin guest :

נדוד יוסף אהרן משה יעקב יצחק אברהם עילאין אושפיזין לסעודתי אזמין

then..

On the first day אומר הראשון ביום

נדוד יוסף אהרן משה יעקב יצחק עילאי אושפיזי כל ועמך עמי דיתבי עילאי אושפיזי אברהם מינה במטו

On the second day אומר השני ביום

נדוד יוסף אהרן משה יעקב אברהם עילאי אושפיזי כל ועמך עמי דיתבי עילאי אושפיזי יצחק מינה במטו

On the third day אומר השלישי ביום

נדוד יוסף אהרן משה יצחק אברהם עילאי אושפיזי כל ועמך עמי דיתבי עילאי אושפיזי יעקב מינה במטו

On the fourth day אומר הרביעי ביום

נדוד יוסף אהרן יעקב יצחק אברהם עילאי אושפיזי כל ועמך עמי דיתבי עילאי אושפיזי משה מינה במטו

On the fifth day אומר החמישי ביום

נדוד יוסף משה יעקב יצחק אברהם עילאי אושפיזי כל ועמך עמי דיתבי עילאי אושפיזי אהרן מינה במטו

On the sixth day אומר הששי ביום

נדוד אהרן משה יעקב יצחק אברהם עילאי אושפיזי כל ועמך מיע דיתבי עילאי אושפיזי יוסף מינה במטו

On the seventh day אומר השביעי ביום

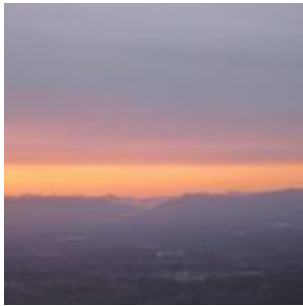
יעקב יצחק אברהם עילאי אושפיזי כל ועמה עמי דיתבי עילאי אושפיזי דוד מינה במטו
ויוסף אהרן משה



Prayer for when you leave the Sukkah: הסוכה מן כשיוצאין תפלה

אזכה פו זו בסוכה וישבתי שקימתי בשם אבותינו ואלהי אלהינו ידוד מלפניה רצון יהי

לוינתו של סוכה לישיב הבאה לשנה



זו תפלה אז להתפלל כתב יוסף יסוד בספר

A special prayer-if you have the time

סכה למצות השייכים הקדושים מלאכים שאותן קדמה מן רעוא יהא. דעלמא רבונא לכתינו עמנו ויפנסו. הסכה מן בצאתנו עמנו יתלוו הם הספות בחג הנוהגים. וערכה הדס ואתרוג לולב מינים ד' ולמצות ומכל. רעים פגעים ומפל ועון חטא למכ ולהצילנו. קדשה ממעון עליונה שמירה עלינו תמיד ולהיות. וישלום לחיים ונתמיד. וביראה באהבה באמת לעבדה כליותנו וחדש. ממרום רוח עלינו ותערה. לעולם לבא המתרגשות רעות שעות אליה שובינו עד אפה שתאריה יעמוד סכה ומצות מינים ארבעה וזכות. וללמד ללמוד ההקדוש תורתה בתלמוד מאד ונהיה. חלצי ויוצאי ביתי אני ויגון צער בלי שלחנות לשני ונזכה. פגמנו אשר כל ונתקן. לפניה שלימה בתשובה ישראל בני כל בכלל הטוב כרצונה לאמתו השם ועובדי. ורעננים דשנים ושלום שקטים כלנו

וגואלי צורי היהן לפניה לבי והגיון פי אמרי לרצון יהיו



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