

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

"The Multiculturalism Debate"

September 24-30, 2023

9-15 Elul, 5784

Yom Kippur: 24-25 September, 9-10 Tishrei

Yom Kippur Torah Reading:

Yom Kippur: Leviticus 16:1-34

Yom Kippur: Numbers 29:7-11

Yom Kippur Shacharit: Isaiah 57:14 - 58:14

Torah Reading Shabbat Day 1

Sukkot: Leviticus 22:26 - 23:44

Numbers 29:12-16

Haftarah: Zachariah 14:1-21

SUKKOT

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

An ongoing debate in many Western societies today revolves around the value of multiculturalism versus the importance of assimilating the various groups and segments which constitute a society into a homogeneous entity. As is the case with the majority of widely debated issues, both sides of this particular polemic bring valid points and convincing arguments to the discussion table.

On one hand, a society is enriched by diversity and exposure to a variety of cultures, languages and value systems. Coercing elements of society to conform to a particular mold—no matter how splendid that mold may be—is an attempt to stifle the soul of that element, and anathema to a culture that prides itself in allowing freedom of expression.

As Kabbalah teaches, true beauty results from the harmonization of diverse colors and flavors.

On the other hand, the smooth functionality of a nation depends largely on a united population that feels a strong kinship with one another. **We, too, struggle with the issue of forging a multicultural population into a singular Jewish nation.** Diverse segments of a population

which are constantly competing with each other make for an unhealthy society. Globally, much violence and strife, and many civil wars, result from tensions between co-citizens of rivaling religions, values or ethnicities. Thus, the acculturation of a nation's citizens might sound harsh and nationalistic, but is actually the key to a unified society, and ultimately a stable one. The Jewish nation is also demographically

diverse: Ashkenazim, Sephardim, chassidim, observant, not-so-observant, scholars, laymen, men, women, etc. We, too, struggle with the issue of forging a multicultural population into a singular

nation. Sociologists attempting to resolve the "melting pot issue" would perhaps be well-advised to examine the Torah's perspective on *e pluribus unum*.

We are now ushering in the holiday of Sukkot. The two primary mitzvot of this holiday are dwelling in the *sukkah* and the taking of the Four Kinds. Jewish unity is one of the primary themes of this holiday, and these two mitzvot are symbolic of two approaches to Jewish unity; the *sukkah* champions the cause of Jewish nationalism and focuses on our nation as a homogeneous unit, while the Four Kinds symbolize the importance of "Jewish multiculturalism."

We sit in a *sukkah* in commemoration of the clouds of glory which miraculously encircled the Jewish people while they traveled in the desert. The clouds did not differentiate between one Jew and another—all were equal beneficiaries of their shade and protection. We, too, sit together in a *sukkah* as a symbol of our unity. We focus on that which unites us—our common values, mission, and souls—rather than that which divides us. We leave behind our differences and unite behind one flag.

The Four Kinds, however, tell a different story. According to the Midrash, the four different species represent different sorts of Jews, spanning the spectrum from the most observant and scholarly to the simplest of our people. Nevertheless, we take the Four Kinds and hold them together, because we are one people despite the differences. But as opposed to the *sukkah*, this mitzvah doesn't attempt to achieve unity by ignoring our differences; rather it points out the differences, embraces them and secures our unity in spite of them.

This is because unity achieved at the expense of disregarding our unique personalities and strengths is a flawed unity. **Unity achieved at the expense of disregarding our unique personalities and strengths is a flawed unity.** It means that the unity is very limited, limited to our shared goals and souls. Our daily lives which are so colored by our unique personalities remain unaffected by the *sukkah*-style unity.

But without the type of unity advocated by the *sukkah*, the multicultural approach of the Four Kinds would not succeed. For without an underlying unifying factor, diverse people have nothing to rally around. The Four Kinds is an endeavor to build on the unity of the *sukkah* by injecting our individual personalities with our pervading unity; by devoting our assorted strengths, talents and natures to perpetuating the ideals that unite us; by recognizing that the different pieces of the puzzle may look dissimilar but are all there to complete one picture.

By Naftali Silberberg

Three Dimensions of Torah

In the 20th chapter of Numbers, the Torah tells us of the death of Aaron, Moses' brother, in whose merit the miraculous clouds of glory used to accompany the Jews in their journey through the desert. When Aaron died the clouds disappeared, later reappearing in the merit of Moses.¹ Two other outstanding miracles that accompanied the Israelites were the manna that fell daily, and the well of Miriam which supplied them with water.

What were the essential characteristics of the three miracles: the well, the manna and the clouds of glory?

The clouds of glory protected the people externally. They protected them from harsh winds, they exterminated the snakes and serpents that infested the wilderness, they smoothed out the mountains, and they cleaned and "pressed" the Israelites' clothes—as the Torah relates, "Your clothes did not wear out upon you." All of these are external functions.

The manna was a wonderful food in which one could experience any taste one desired. Food is something that is absorbed internally and provides nourishment and sustenance.

The well of Miriam was a source of water—which does not, in itself, nourish the body. The principal function of water is to act as a medium to carry food to all parts of the body.

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Three different aspects, or dimensions, of Torah are signified and paralleled by the clouds, the manna and the well. There is an aspect of Torah which is absorbed internally, like manna; there is an aspect that provides external protection, like the clouds of glory; and there is that aspect of Torah that carries both the "external protection" and the "nourishment" to all Jews — like the water of Miriam's well.

"Manna in Torah"

Torah comes from the Hebrew word *hora'ah*, teaching, signifying that Torah provides a code and guide for our conduct in life. This guidance must be thoroughly understood and absorbed, so that each person may know exactly how to guide his own conduct as well as that of his family and household. Just as the manna was presented in different ways to those of different spiritual levels — the righteous finding it ready to eat while others had to grind it, etc. — so is Torah "ingested" in different ways according to the absorptive capacity of the individual. There are some who fulfill their obligation of Torah-study by reading the *Sh'ma* prayer, if more is impossible for them,⁴ whereas others have the obligation to study Torah all day!⁵

"Clouds of Glory" in Torah

When we step out into the parched wilderness of the everyday world, where evil forces abound⁶ like the snakes and scorpions in the Sinai desert of old, we are protected by the force of self-sacrifice which each

and every Jew possesses by virtue of his intrinsic connection and link with Torah. Just as a Torah-scroll is complete and wholly sacred only when all its letters are complete, so all Jews together form the totality of holiness of Israel and the Torah, and even the Jew who is on the very lowest spiritual level has the "Torah-common-denominator" of self-sacrifice, the potential to give his life for G-d.

This dimension is the "clouds of glory" of the Torah. The clouds encompassed and protected all the Jews — even those few who still clung to idolatry — from the crossing of the Red Sea till their entry into Israel. In a similar way this aspect of Torah encompasses each and every one of our people from the greatest to the smallest; it gives us the strength to go through the awful wilderness, not to fear the snakes and serpents, and to be constantly imbued with a spirit of self-sacrifice.

"Water of Miriam's Well" in Torah

Water has the essential characteristic that it descends from high places to low places. The Torah, too, descends from the heights of lofty, Divine, profound wisdom to become clothed in the actual letters and words of the Written Torah and Oral Torah, thereby becoming available to everyone. Whoever recites the words of the Written Torah (even if he does not understand what the words mean) or learns the Oral Torah (the *Mishna*, Talmud, commentaries, etc., even if he understands no more than the simple explanation) receives the nourishment (manna) and protection (clouds of glory) of Torah.⁷

By Yitschak Meir Kagan

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, September 24, 2023-9 Tishrei, 5784

Burial of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

The great Talmudic sage Rabbi Elazar, son of the famed Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, was buried near his father in Meron. (*Bava Metzia* 84b)

Monday, September 25, 2023-10 Tishrei, 5784

Rebecca Born (1677 BCE)

Birth of Rebecca (1677-1556 BCE), wife of Isaac, mother of Jacob and Esau, and one of the Four Matriarchs of Israel.

2nd Tablets (1313 BCE)

On the 10th of Tishrei of the year 2449 from creation, 82 days after the people of Israel betrayed their newly entered covenant with G-d by worshipping a Golden Calf and after Moses twice spent 40 days atop Mount Sinai pleading on their behalf, "G-d restored His goodwill with the Jewish people gladly and wholeheartedly, saying to Moses 'I have forgiven, as you ask', and gave him the Second Tablets" -- thereby establishing the day as a time for atonement, forgiveness and teshuvah for all generations.

Ezekiel's Vision of the Third Temple (410 BCE)

The prophet Ezekiel saw a vision in which he was transported to the Temple Mount, where an angel holding a measuring rod gave him a detailed tour of the Third Temple. (Ezekiel 40:1)

Start of Yom Kippur War (1973)

A coalition of Arab forces led by Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel in what became known as the Yom Kippur War. Although Israel suffered tremendous casualties, the war ultimately resulted in a miraculous Israeli victory.

Tuesday, September 26, 2023-11 Tishrei, 5784

Jethro Advises Moses (1313 BCE)

The day after Moses' descent from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur, his father-in-law Jethro encountered him attempting to singlehandedly judge the Jewish nation.

Donations Brought for the Mishkan (Tabernacle) (1313 BCE)

The day after Moses' descent from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur, he gathered the nation of Israel and instructed them to construct a Mishkan so that G-d's presence would dwell among them. The Jews eagerly brought all of the necessary materials, exceeding what was needed for the task (Exodus ch. 35. Rashi to ibid. 35:1).

Wednesday, September 27, 2023-12 Tishrei, 5784

Passing of R. Abraham "The Angel" (1776)

The 12th of Tishrei is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Abraham (1740-1776) the son of Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch and study partner of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi; known as "Rabbi Abraham the Angel" for his saintliness and asceticism.

Thursday, September 28, 2023-13 Tishrei, 5784

Passing of R. Akiva Eiger (1837)

Passing of Rabbi Akiva Eiger (1761-1837), outstanding Talmudist and Halachic authority.

Passing of Rebbe Maharash (1882)

Tishrei 13 is the yahrtzeit of the fourth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, known as "Maharash" (a Hebrew acronym for "our master Rabbi Shmuel").

Friday, September 29, 2023-14 Tishrei, 5784

Passing of R. Israel Hopstein, the Maggid of Kosnitz (1814)

R. Israel of Kosnitz was a disciple of a number of great chassidic Rebbes, including R. DovBer of Mezeritch. A famed miracle worker, he authored the work *Avodat Yisrael* and was one of the disseminators of Chassidism in Poland.

Shabbat, September 30, 2023-15 Tishrei, 5784

Passing of R. Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo (1655)

R. Yosef Shlomo was a rabbi, philosopher, and physician. A prolific author, he was proficient in many sciences in addition to Talmudic studies. He is known as "the Yashar from Candia," Yashar being an acronym for Yosef Shlomo Rofei (Hebrew for doctor), and Candia (Crete) being his place of birth. Among his more famous works are *Sefer Eilim*—on mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences—and *Matzref Lechachmah*, a defense of Kabbalah in 423 BCE.