

# MESHECH CHOCHMAH

## Parshas Re'eh

### Ve'hayisa Ach Sameach

שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תַּחֲגֹג לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ... כִּי יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל תְּבוּאָתְךָ וּבְכֹל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ וְהָיִיתָ אֶחָד שְׂמֵחַ

*For a seven-day period you shall celebrate before Hashem, your God... for Hashem, your God, will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, and you will be only happy. (16:15)*

#### THE MEANING OF THE WORD "ACH"

The final words of our pasuk inform us that Succos is a time of joy for us. The question which troubles the Meshech Chochmah is the Torah's use of the word "ach" in this phrase. Chazal state that this word acts as a "miyut," i.e. it has the effect of limiting or diminishing the message being communicated.<sup>1</sup> If so, it sounds as if the pasuk is expressing some form of limitation of the joy we will experience. What is the nature of this limitation?

Indeed, it is worth noting that the entire phrase appears redundant, for we have already been told in the preceding pasuk: "וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ בַּחֲגֹךָ – You shall rejoice in your festival"!

The Meshech Chochmah presents three approaches to this question.

#### 1. SUCCOS IN A HARVEST YEAR – AND IN THE SHEMITAH YEAR

In the first approach, the Meshech Chochmah notes that the beginning of our pasuk which tells us to celebrate for seven days appears redundant, for we were already told three pesukim earlier: "חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לְךָ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים – You shall make the festival of Succos for a seven day period." Why is this repeated?

Upon reflection, however, these two pesukim are not exactly the same. The earlier pasuk concludes "בְּאֶסְפְּךָ מִגֶּרְנֶךָ וּמִיִּקְבֶּךָ – When you gather in from your threshing floor and your winery," while our pasuk mentions only that you shall celebrate "before Hashem." The reason for this is that these two pesukim reflect the two different types of celebration which takes place on Succos, depending on when in the shemitah cycle it occurs:

► For six of the seven years, Succos is a celebration of Hashem having blessed

<sup>1</sup> Yerushalmi Berachos 9:7.

the year's harvest, as denoted by pasuk thirteen: "when you gather in from your threshing floor etc."

- ▶ In the seventh year, when there is no harvest, Succos is not a celebration of gathering in that year's crop. Rather, it is "a celebration to Hashem," based on our trust in Him that, in the merit of keeping the Shemita year faithfully, "He will bless you in all your produce" – i.e. in the years following the Shemita.

It is for the reason the joy mentioned in this pasuk contains the word "ach" which, as we noted, serves to limit or exclude, implying that something is missing. For the pasuk is referring to the rejoicing on Succos in the shemita year in the absence of that year's harvest.

## 2. SUCCOS AND SHEMINI ATZERES

In the second approach, the Meshech Chochmah suggests that the concluding phrase refers to the rejoicing which takes place *after* the seven days mentioned in the beginning of the pasuk, i.e. on the eighth day of Shemini Atzeres. According to this approach, the limiting connotation of the word "ach" does not relate to the joy itself, but those who are involved in the rejoicing.

The Gemara<sup>2</sup> informs us that among the korbanos offered over the course of Succos, the seventy bulls are brought for the welfare of the seventy nations of the world. This means that, to a certain degree, the chag of Succos is cause for rejoicing for all nations. In contrast to this, the eighth day has only one bull, for it is a time of rejoicing for the Jewish People alone.

It is with reference to this exclusive joy that the pasuk concludes with the word "ach". In contrast to the first seven days when the joy is global and inclusive, on this day, "Only you will be rejoicing." In other words, the limiting connotation of the word "ach" does not pertain to the joy referred to in the word "*sameach*," but rather, to the Jewish People referred to in the word "*ve'hayisa*."

## 3. WHEN PESACH FALLS ON SUCCOS

The third approach of the Meshech Chochmah takes us into the realm of Midrash halachah where we will discover a completely different angle on this pasuk.

According to the halachah, when the Torah refers to a festival with the word "chag," this indicates that there is a mitzvah to bring a *korban chagigah* (festive offering) on that festival. The Mechilta in Parshas Bo<sup>3</sup> quotes R' Yose Hagelili who notes that the mitzvah of bringing a *korban chagigah* on Succos has already been stated earlier in the Torah, in Chumash Vayikra:<sup>4</sup> "וְחִגַּתֶּם אֹתוֹ חַג לַה' שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בְּשָׁנָה" (You shall celebrate it as a festival for Hashem, a seven-day period in the year)." This makes our pasuk, which reiterates that mitzvah, redundant! One of the principles of Midrash halachah is that when something is redundant as related to its context, it is to be taken as referring to something beyond its context. Accordingly, R' Yose states that our pasuk teaches us the obligation of chagigah not with regards to Succos – which we already know – but with regards to Pesach!

The Meshech Chochmah states that the idea that our pasuk is referring to Pesach will actually resolve a certain issue in *parshanut* within the pasuk itself. The concluding words

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2 Succah 55b.

3 12:14.

4 23:41.

state: “for Hashem will bless you in all your produce (תבואתך).” The word “תבואה” refers primarily to crops that are harvested. In other pesukim which contain words of berachah, the Torah refers more generally to “פרי אדמתך – the produce of your land.” Why does our pasuk mention crops specifically? According to R’ Yose’s Hagelili’s understanding, that our pasuk is actually referring to Pesach, the matter is resolved, for the Mishnah<sup>5</sup> states that “בפסח נדונים על” – התבואה – On Pesach the world is judged concerning the year’s crops!”

Additionally, R’ Yose Hagelili’s opinion will provide an answer to a question which has troubled Tosafos.<sup>6</sup> It is unanimously understood that the mitzvah of simcha applies to all three *regalim*: Pesach, Shavuot and Succos. However, the Torah only writes about simcha in the pesukim dealing with Shavuot and Succos. What is the source for the mitzvah of simcha on Pesach? According to R’ Yose Hagelili, who states that our pasuk is actually referring to Pesach, the answer is right in front of us: “*Ve’hayisa ach sameach!*”<sup>7</sup>

What does all of this have to do with the word “ach”?

The Midrash<sup>8</sup> informs us that any rejoicing which takes place over physical attainments will never be complete, rather, it will be accompanied by certain negative feelings such as jealousy over those who have more. Therefore, since the joy in our pasuk refers to the joy in Pesach which is over the year’s anticipated crop, it appears together with the word “ach” which denotes an incomplete joy.

In contrast to this, the joy of Succos itself is over one’s spiritual attainments, as expressed in the songs that were sung at the Beis HaShoe’eva celebrations.<sup>9</sup> As such, this joy is complete and is referred to in the pasuk “וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה’ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – You shall rejoice before Hashem, your God.”<sup>10</sup> The word “וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם” is explained by the Meshech Chochmah as indicating “שמחה תמה – a full joy,” as befits rejoicing over spiritual matters!<sup>11</sup>

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5 Rosh Hashanah 16a.

6 See Tosafos Chagigah 8a s.v. *ve’samachta*.

7 The Meshech Chochmah does note, however, that numerous discussions in the Gemara indicate that it does not concur with R’ Yose Hagelili’s approach. See, for example, Gemara Succah 48a which understands the words “*ve’hayisa ach sameach*” as referring to Shemini Atzeres, not to Pesach.

8 Pesikta d’Rav Kahana sec. 49.

9 See Succah 53a.

10 Vayikra 23:40.

11 In his commentary, Rav Copperman points out that in this exposition, the Meshech Chochmah is applying a similar *derashah* found elsewhere (see Shabbos 103b) concerning the word “וּכְתַבְתֶּם – you shall write” stated regarding the writing of mezuzos (Devarim 6:9), which the Gemara expounds as meaning “כתיבה תמה – A full script.” It is worthwhile also referring to the Gemara in Berachos 16b, where it expounds the word “וְלַמְדֶתֶם – you shall teach” (Devarim 11:19.) as saying “שיהא למודך תם – Your learning shall be complete.” This *derashah* could be considered a firmer source for the Meshech Chochmah since, as in our case, the letter *tav* there is not vowelized with a kamatz and is nonetheless expounded to denote the word “תם” with a kamatz.