

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z"l (Spain; 1255-1340) writes that all of history--from the creation of the world until the coming of *Mashiach*--is alluded to in a general way in *Parashat Ha'azinu*. Some examples:

We read (32:7-8), "Remember the days of yore . . . When the Supreme One gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of man . . ." This refers to *Hashem's* dividing the people of the world into many nations and languages. From among those nations, He chose only *Yisrael*, as we read (verse 9), "For *Hashem's* portion is His people; Yaakov is the rope of His inheritance." [See *Rashi z"l* regarding the meaning of "rope."] *Hashem* showered *Bnei Yisrael* with kindness (verses 10-14), but they forgot Him and rebelled (verses 15-18). Because they worshiped gods who had done nothing for them ("gods whom they knew not"--verse 17), they were exiled among nations that they did not know.

R' Bachya continues: The Jewish People will keep their faith during their long exile and will earn the praise of some of their captors for this ("Nations--sing the praises of His people"--verse 43). At the same time, the gentile nations will murder many Jews and will steal their property, for which *Hashem* will ultimately take vengeance ("for He will avenge the blood of His servants; He will bring retribution upon His foes"--also in verse 43). Finally, *Hashem* will return us to His land ("He will appease His Land and His people"--end of verse 43) and resurrect the dead ("I put to death and I bring life"--verse 39). (*Midrash Rabbeinu Bachya Al Ha'Torah*)

Sukkot

R' Nosson Yehuda Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) writes: The upcoming holiday has two names that seem to commemorate two unrelated ideas--*Chag Ha'sukkot* / the holiday of huts, reminding us that *Hashem* protected us as we traveled through the desert for 40 years, and *Chag Ha'asif* / the holiday of the gathering, marking the bringing in of the harvest before the rainy season. It seems as if we are observing two unrelated holidays simultaneously! Moreover, *Chag Ha'asif* seems to be similar in purpose to *Chag Ha'katzir* / the holiday of the harvest, which is another name for *Shavuot*. Is that really so? It seems far-fetched that the Torah would give us two holidays to mark the same thing!

R' Mintzberg explains: *Chag Ha'katzir* (*Shavuot*), which marks the harvest, is a time to thank G-d for the gift of *Eretz Yisrael*. This is reflected in the commandment to bring *Bikkurim* / the first fruits from the Seven Species for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised. *Chag Ha'asif* (*Sukkot*), in contrast marks the successful conclusion of the gathering-in of the harvest. The produce is safely stored away in the house or in the silo, and it is a fitting time to reflect on *Hashem's Hashgachah* / watchfulness over us. Not only did He give us a wonderful land, He also watches over us and blesses us. This is why *Sukkot* is when we pray for rain, including taking the *Arba'ah Minim* / Four Species that are associated with prayers for rain, for rain is something over which *Hashem* is particularly watchful (see *Ta'anit* 2a).

Hashem's Hashgachah over us is a reflection of the fact that He dwells among us, so-to-speak. That is why *Sukkot*, the holiday when we acknowledge *Hashem's Hashgachah*, was celebrated in "His house," the *Bet Hamikdash*, more than any other holiday--both in terms of the number of *Korbanot* offered and the especially memorable *Simchat Bet Ha'sho'evah* celebration in the Temple.

In light of the above, it emerges that *Chag Ha'sukkot* and *Chag Ha'asif* are not two different holidays that are observed at the same time. They are one and the same, both acknowledging *Hashem's Hashgachah* over us--in the past, when we were in the desert, and in the present, when we have gathered in the harvest.

(Ben Melech: *Chag Ha'sukkot* p.1)

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"Mine is *Nakam* / vengeance *Ve'sheelaim* / and retribution at the time when their foot will falter, for the day of their catastrophe is near, and future events are rushing at them." (32:35)

R' Moshe David Valle z"l (Italy; 1697-1777) writes: "*Nakam*" (נָקָם) has the same *Gematria* as "*Ketz*" (קֵץ) / the end of days, while "*Ve'sheelaim*" (וְשֵׁלַיִם) has the same *Gematria* as "*Esav*" (עֵשָׂו). These *Gematrias* hint that *Hashem* is waiting until Esav's descendants--the Roman Empire that destroyed the *Bet Hamikdash* and exiled the Jewish People and its political and spiritual heirs--have "filled their measures," i.e., they have angered *Hashem* so much that He is, so-to-speak, fed up with them. When that day comes, their *Ketz* / end will come, and they will be paid their *Sheelaim* / complete retribution. (The root "שָׁלַם" means both "complete" and "retribution.") Then, says our verse, "their foot will falter," an event alluded to by Yaakov's holding Esav's heel when they were born, as if Yaakov was saying, "The day will yet come when I will bring you down." It will be *Hashem's* vengeance, as our verse says, but it will be *Yisrael* specifically that will bring down Esav, as we read (*Yechezkel* 25:14), "Then I will place My vengeance in Edom [another name for Esav] by the hand of My people *Yisrael*." (*Mishneh L'Melech*)

After Yom Kippur . . .

One year, R' Meir Chodosh z"l (1898-1989; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Chevron Yeshiva) called his students together on *Motzai Yom Kippur*, and he said: People sometimes experience feelings of hopelessness after *Yom Kippur*. We have tried to improve, we made a spiritual accounting, we recited *Selichot*, we made resolutions, we imagined that our hearts were receptive and that we had climbed lofty summits, that we were on a new plane, and that we had reached a new level. But, once the holy days pass, we feel like we have nothing to show for our efforts. We are no different than last year, and the year before, and the year before . . .

This feeling of hopelessness is the work of the *Yetzer Ha'ra*, R' Chodosh continued. *Hashem* did not give us *Mitzvot* that are pointless, and if the High Holidays were not leaving an impression on us, He would not have commanded us to observe them. Whether we see it or we do not, our accounting, our regrets, and our resolutions make an impression on us. We should not view the year as a circle that returns us to the same place every year, R' Chodosh concluded. Rather, going through the year is like driving a screw. It takes a while until the screw is in place and can do the job it is meant to do, but every single turn of the screw makes an impression that is deeper and deeper.

(Quoted in *Otzar Peninei Ha'chassidut: Yom Kippur* p.404)

"Like an eagle arousing its nest, hovering over its young, spreading its wings and taking them, carrying them on its pinions." (32:11)

Rashi z"l writes: *Hashem* guided *Bnei Yisrael* through the desert with mercy and pity like the eagle that is full of pity towards its young and does not enter its nest suddenly; rather, it beats and flaps with its wings above its young, passing between tree and tree, between branch and branch, in order that its young may awaken and be prepared to receive it.

Rashi continues: When an eagle wants to move its young from one place to another, it does not lift them with its claws (and carry them underneath it), as other birds do. Other birds are afraid of the eagle that flies above them; therefore, they carry their young in their mother's claws (under the mother, sheltered from the eagle above). But the eagle is afraid only of an arrow; therefore it carries its young on its wings, saying, "It is better that the arrow pierce me than my young." So, too, *Hashem* says (*Shmot* 14:4) "I carried you as on eagles' wings." This occurred when the Egyptians marched after *Bnei Yisrael* and overtook them at the *Yam Suf*. The Egyptians threw arrows and stone projectiles at *Bnei Yisrael*, whereupon "The angel of *Elokim* moved and came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of *Yisrael*" so that it would take the brunt of the attack. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch z"l (1808-1888; Germany) elaborates: The eagle does not bear its young aloft sleeping or in a passive condition; rather, it first stirs up the nest and then spreads its wings--not under, but above, its young. The eaglets must then fly up out of the nest on their own and set themselves on their mother's wing, something that requires both courage on their part and trust in their mother.

Similarly, *Hashem* awakened His people and accustomed them to having the courage to trust Him. Other nations feel themselves secure only in a comfortable life built on human power, and it requires courage for the Jewish People to sacrifice the life of purely material greatness and imagined security and replace it with all that is spiritual and moral. It requires courage to deny the worshiping of nature and man, and to reach the lofty heights of mind and morals to which people can and should soar. It was to foster this courage, which can be found only in firm rock-like trust in *Hashem*, that the entire wandering in the desert took place.

(*Commentary on the Torah*)

תם ונשלם שבח לקל בורא עולם

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