



## FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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# Between Heaven and Earth

There are times when we occupy a more elevated plane, when our thoughts and our efforts are focused on bigger and loftier matters and we try to avoid being mired in pettiness. Yom Kippur is the most notable example of that, as we prepare for Yom Kippur by granting each other forgiveness and then spend the day exclusively engaged in matters of the spirit such that our Sages described our state of being on Yom Kippur as angelic (Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 46).

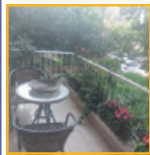
This general concept is highlighted at the outset of our Parsha (Devarim 32:1) when Moshe declares “*ha’azinu hashamayim vo’adabeira*, addressing – so to speak – the heavens and the earth, and using two different terms for listening, the Hebrew

equivalent of “listen” – *shimu*, and “hear” – *haazinu*. Just as the word “hear” in English includes the word “ear”, the Hebrew *haazinu* includes the word *ozen*, the Hebrew word for ear. Our Sages (in the Sifrei in our Parsha) understood that this term for “**hearing**” implies speaking from up close, right into the **ear**, and therefore noted a fascinating contrast. Moshe, who was the most elevated of men, to the point that he will be described at the outset of next week’s Parsha (Devarim 33:1) as an *ish ha’Elokim*, a man of G-d, here in our Parsha speaks to the heavens from up close, *haazinu hashamayim*, “Hear, O heavens,” and to the earth from a distance, *v’tishma ha’arezt*, “listen, O earth.” Whereas Yeshayahu, a prophet on a different level than Moshe, began his book of prophesy with the opposite phraseology, *shimu shamayim v’haazinu ha’arezt*, addressing the earth from up close and the heavens from afar. Different people and different times can have us centered in different spheres.

This has particular application for us as we move into the Yom Tov of Succot. The Succah structure is meant to recall our state of existence in the desert, when we literally lived “in the clouds”, surrounded by the *ananei hakavod*, the clouds that represented Hashem (see TB Succah 11b). The desert is not a part of the settled earth, and we were living for that protracted period closer to heaven than earth, sustained by the *lechem abirim*, the Manna that is described (TB Yoma 75b) as the sustenance of angels. The Succah thus



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maintains the elevated plane we experienced on Yom Kippur, removing us from our usual context to be able to see the world we usually occupy from 30,000 feet. Indeed, while the Halacha encourages us to do everything within the confines of the Succah, including conversations on whatever subject we need to discuss, the *Poskim* (see *Ba'eir Heitev* and *Mishna Berura* to OC 639:1) cite the *Shelah* who encouraged us to aspire to limit our discussions in the Succah to elevated matters. Additionally, part of being angelic is being peaceful, as we always invoke the peace amongst the angels as the model we aspire to, *Oseh shalom bimraomav, Hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu* (see Avot d'Rabbi Nathan 12:6), and as such we are similarly guided that our Succah is to be an anger-free zone, reflecting the true value of *Succat Shalom*.

Life is complicated and we inevitably must deal with boatloads of mundane and practical realities. This festive period is built to enable to us to step out of that for a bit and to experience the incomparable benefits of elevating ourselves, our thoughts, and our discussions to a different plane, one that is a bit closer to heaven than to earth, to maintain to some extent the “cruising altitude” of Yom Kippur.

Enjoy the flight. ■





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