

Bereishiet 5780

BS"D Parashat Bereishiet 5780

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Connections

The mathematical formula for calculating the number of connections between a given number of objects is n times $(n-1)$ divided by 2. Accordingly: on the premise that every Torah mitzva connects with every one of the other 612, the number of connections formed (613×612 divided by 2) is 187,578.

The great Moshe Rabbeinu, and perhaps other illustrious Torah scholars knew how to decipher the inherent meanings of all the 187,578 Torah connections, which no one is able to perform today.

Parting is difficult

We have just completed the holiday of Shemini Atzeret (Eighth day of Assembly) and this coming Shabbat we shall commence a new yearly cycle of Torah readings with parashat Bereishiet. Shemini Atzeret and Bereishiet appear to be mutually exclusive, but I suggest the following connection between them.

Rashi in Parashat Emor quotes the Midrash that there is no historical or spiritual reason to declare the day following Succot as a holy day with its own set of Temple sacrifices and prohibitions on certain activities as with other holidays. So why Shemini Atzeret? The answer given is that HaShem says to

Am Yisrael

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We have been together so long, beginning with the month of Elul, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and all of Succot, and now we are parting. Your departure (from my presence) is difficult for me, so stay one more day”.

Question: The departure of Am Yisrael from our intimate connection with the Almighty is as difficult and traumatic for us as it is for Him, so why does the Creator make the difficulty into a personal one saying “it is difficult for Me”, when in fact it is difficult for both parties?

To answer this, we have to recall what I have written regarding the Ushpizin who visit our succot daily.

The critical factor in any succa is its schach (the leafy roof), which is governed by three Halachic conditions: (1) it must be from the vegetable family (grown from the earth); (2) it must be detached from the earth when it is placed upon the succa; and (3) it must be an entity that cannot acquire tuma, thus invalidating all edible materials such as bread or fruit for schach.

The Zohar (Emor 103a) and kabbalists revealed that during Succot, the souls of the seven great leaders of Israel, Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya’akov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and King David appear in every kosher succa as ushpizin (guests). Some claim that each one appears individually on his respective night, while others claim that they all appear together with one serving as the leader on his respective night.

Is it not bizarre that these tzadikim leave their places in Gan Eden to visit our humble earthly succot?

So, I suggest the following:

These great souls do not leave their places in Gan Eden; but rather the great sanctity of the succa becomes an extension of the heavenly Gan Eden where we go to meet with them! This explains the three halachot of the schach mentioned above (vegetable source, detached from the ground, and cannot acquire tuma), which are the very same characteristics of the earthly Gan Eden, as described in the book of Bereishiet. As a garden, it was part of the earth, but its ephemeral, spiritual nature detached it from the natural laws that govern the Earth and there was no tuma in Adam and Chava's Garden. (I believe the intention is only to the succot in Eretz Yisrael, just as the earthly Gan Eden is in Eretz Yisrael). Accordingly, while we sit in a kosher succa we are enveloped in the sanctity of Gan Eden, and while we are not conscious of it our eternal souls are.

At the end of 8 days, our succa reverts to being a hut with a thatched roof which is no longer connected to Gan Eden, and we the Jewish people replay HaShem's age old expulsion of Adam, Chava and of all humanity from the Garden of Eden.

Humanity's expulsion was HaShem's decree that man should from that time on "eat bread by the sweat of his brow" and suffer the rigorous demands of competition and lust imposed upon him by the curse of expulsion; and that women should bear the pain of childbirth.

So, in fact when HaShem says to Am Yisrael "your departure is difficult for Me", His intent is that our departure from the Gan Eden of the succa parallels man's departure from Gan Eden which HaShem Himself had to impose because of Adam and Chava's sin. Hence the creator is expressing His difficulty as a personal one by saying "your departure (from the succa-Gan Eden) is difficult for me because I imposed upon humanity the punishment of banishment from Paradise".

Shabbat Shalom,

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