

## Philosophy of Science and the Strong Partnership of Yom Kippur and Sukkot

Rabbi Frank's Soundbayit: A Jewish Lens on Time, School and the World Around Us

As a college student of philosophy, I spent much of my sophomore spring semester contemplating the concepts of space and time and the philosophical foundations of these concepts in my class of Philosophy of Science. Space and time not only inform the realms of science and philosophy, they inform the Jewish experience, especially around this time of year. I would like to briefly look at two concepts of Yom Kippur that inform our space and our time and inspire us toward the Sukkot holiday.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel called Shabbat “a palace in time”. It is where we break free of the distractions of the week and sanctify time by connecting to family and to Hashem. Rabbi David Aaron has taken this concept to another level by calling Yom Kippur, “a mikvah in time”. He writes, “On Yom Kippur, we disassociate ourselves, for one day, from our bodies so that they do not separate us from immersing ourselves in the *mikvah* of G-d's oneness.” (Inviting God In, pp.117-118). We leave the trappings of the physical and enter into a total 25 hour immersion in our relationship with God.

In a way the sukkah is also a mikvah. The Talmud in Sukkah discusses how much of your body must enter the sukkah in order for one to fulfill the obligation of Sukkot. Interestingly, it is the only mitzvah aside from mikvah, according to tradition, that you optimally do with your entire body. The immersion in the space of the sukkah just four days after immersing ourselves in the mikvah in time, helps us to dedicate our lives, our spaces and our times to our relationship with Hashem.

The second concept which informs this tradition is the promise that Hashem gave us which informs Tashlich—the ritual done at a body of water during the 10 days of Teshuva. Hashem promises, “I will (*mashlikh*) cast your sins away like the sea (Micah, Ch. 18). Hashem's greatest gift is the gift of forgiveness and mercy.

Seane Corn, master Yoga Teacher, said that “the inability to forgive is the poison you take, hoping someone else will die.” (Speaking of Faith radio program, Sept. 3, 2009). Without forgiveness we only damage ourselves and then others in the process. With forgiveness, we bring others closer. This is what Hashem models for us during this time of year. Hashem forgives on Yom Kippur and then invites us to attain a closeness and an intimacy with the Divine and we go outside of our homes, into a space that symbolizes this intimacy—the sukkah.

We often connect Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashana. There is a name for the days between them and one informs the other. But, let's also connect Yom Kippur and Sukkot. For, although the four days separating the two have no famously known name, they are connected through the concepts of time and space. May our experience in the mikvah of time, on Yom Kippur inspire our experience in the mikvah in space—the sukkah. And, may the Yom Kippur experience of forgiveness allow us to enter into the all encompassing space, the protection of the sukkah with meaning and joy.