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"In the shadow of Faith"

I - Tradition has ascribed to every major festival a unique theme, one about which revolve all the rituals & prayers, all the mitzvos & meanings, of that day. Thus - Pesach: Freedom; Shavuot: Torah; R.H: Repentance; Y.K.: Judgment. Now what of the present holiday, 11310? what is the overriding & distinguishing theme?

II - In Torah merely ~~told~~ told: וְיָהוָה יֵלֶךְ בְּפָנֶיךָ וְיִסְּרֶיךָ וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת דְּרֹתֶיךָ (Devarim 31:8) what does this knowledge imply?

III - Zohar... refers to the 11310 as מַיְנוּתָא דְּבֵרַי - the "shadow of faith." The protection offered by the עֲרֵב, the loosely loose covering atop the 11310, is that of Faith. Faith, then, is the theme of this Festival. For Sukkos is מַיְנוּתָא דְּבֵרַי.

IV - And of course this is so. The 11310 - the same 11310 which our ancestors lived in at the birth of our history when they left Egypt because of a promise, in search of a land, & out of love for God - that 11310 is a tangible evidence of their faith. They had no sure knowledge that Moses was right. They put their faith only in a promise of they had heard about through Tradition - for they had never seen this God who was supposed to have communicated with their great grandfathers abt. They had not heard more than the echo of an echo of His voice.

It was not desperation, not the certainty of freedom,
 not patriotism which impelled our ancestors to
 take the wanderer's staff & enter into the yawning
 stretches of the Sinai wasteland, where nothing but
 a collapsible tent called a *misio* was to be their
 home for forty years. It was only one thing that
 motivated them to prefer the insecurity of the ^{unknown} *misio*
 to the safety of the well-known slave's quarters of Egypt.
 And that was - Faith; the faith that G-d does
 not disappoint those who trust in Him; the faith
 that in the long run it is better to cast one's
 lot with G-d than with any royal Pharaoh; the
 faith that the tortuous track in the desert will
 lead to a Italy land flowing with milk & honey.

V. Doubtless this element of faith is the key to our holiday of Sukkot, when we are bidden to leave the comfort of our permanent homes and for seven days dwell in the Sukkah, BETZILA DEMEHENUTA, in the Shadow of Faith, the faith that even when we have not a roof over heads, G-d is there to protect us. This message of Faith has not diminished one whit in importance. Despite all our outward signs of wealth, despite our savings and heavy insurances, we are all afflicted with basic insecurities. We all suffer from afflicted souls, and deep below our consciousness we wonder whether our bodies are not already hopelessly diseased, whether our friends really like us, whether we are really and truly loved by those whom we have elected to spend our lives with. Our whole world has been jettisoned from the security of its accustomed ways into the age of space travel, just as our ancestors were jettisoned from their accustomed Egyptian lives into the great Desert.

Our people have left the comparative normality of pre-World War II Days and have established a State of Israel - - charting the unknown seas of international diplomacy and national destiny. Who knows what can happen - - to the world, to Israel, to us and our families? Yet we proceed and take things in our stride: is it not because of faith? And do we not survive better the risks of breakdown and collapse if, during these trying times, we place our faith in Almighty G-d, if we learn the lesson of Sukkahn and dwell in The Shadow of Faith, BETZILLAH DEMEMENUTAH? No matter how sophisticated we are, we cannot live outside the Shadow of Faith, exposed to the harsh and unrelenting elements of reality.

VI. And yet, what we have defined as the message of Sukkot - - faith in G-d - - is true only according to one opinion. For our Rabbis recorded a difference between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Elazar as to the symbol of Sukkah and hence its meaning. One said: SUKKOS MAMASH. The Sukkah we are commended to build is the replica of the Sukkah in which our ancestors dwelt. The Sukkah in which G-d placed the Children of Israel was literally a booth, an impermanent, thatched-roof tent. According to this opinion, as we have explained it, the principle theme of Faith is clear enough: the Israelites trusted in G-d despite the poor housing, the insecurity of the dwellings. But the second opinion is more difficult to reconcile with the element of TZILA DEMEMENUTA, for that opinion is that the Sukkot in which G-d placed the Jews were not really the tents which we build in commemoration. Rather, they were the ANANA'Y HAKAVOD - - the clouds of glory. For this opinion is that during the forty year trek of Israel in the desert they dwelt not in tents, but under especially created clouds which shielded them and guided them through the desert. These ANANEY HAKAVOD, these divine clouds of glory, are what we commemorate when we build the Sukkot. Now where is there an element of faith here? ON the contrary, no faith was needed for the Jews of old to find security and comfort in the miraculous protection offered by G-d under these Clouds of Glory.

VIII. Yet the answer is that there certainly is an element of faith involved. And it is the kind of faith which is addressed to us with special emphasis and relevance. In order to understand the very different nature of the faith here meant, we ought to refer to a verse we read this past Saturday: EIL EMUNAH - G-d is a G-d of Faith. And our Rabbis comment: SHE'MAAMIN BE'OLAMO SHE'BARA - - G-d has faith in the world He created!"

Do you see now what the faith of Sukkot means when we refer to ANANA'Y HAKAVOD? It did not require faith for the Jews to benefit from the divine clouds. But it was an act of faith on G-d's part - - faith in His children that they would be deserving of the glory, the KAVOD, He imparted to them. G-d had faith that the Israelites would conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the glory of this special divine intervention, this special glory. So that Sukkot, the TZILA DEMEMENUTA, is, according to this opinion, the symbol - - of G-d's faith in us, the faith He has that we will prove worthy of His attention and favors.

IX. What a challenge that presents us with - - to live in the Shadow of G-d's Faith in us! How important life becomes when it is a question of justifying G-d's faith in us!

It is one thing to comfort ourselves by placing our faith in others. It is quite another thing to strive to justify the faith of others in us.

When we were very young we placed complete faith in our parents. When were a bit older, a bit more mature, we realized that they had a certain faith in us. Based on that faith in us, they gave us education, love, toil, and sacrifice. How many of us have lived up to our parental expectations, vindicting their faith in us? Perhaps there are some of us who as students showed real promise and in whom teachers invested their time and devotion. Have we justified their faith? Our children have absolute and undiminished faith in our wisdom and in the care we are going to give them. Do we indeed give enough thought to the things that are really going to count in their lives if we are to justify that great, naive faith in us? Recognize that faith that others have in us, and it becomes quite a challenge just to be a son or daughter, to be a pupil, to be a parent, to be a husband, to be a housewife.

But above and beyond all this, there is the challenge of G-d's faith in us. As Jews, G-d has granted us a life BETZILA DEMEHMUTA, in the shadow of His faith. The Sukkah symbolizes the ANANAY HAKAVOD, the glory we can achieve if we put ourselves to it. G-d has faith in us that we will be deserving of the glory with which He has surrounded us. That is the challenge of Faith on this Sukkot.

G-d has placed in our care the heritage of the ages, the traditions of Israel. He is EIL EMUNAH, a G-d who has faith in us. What shall we do with those traditions? - - observe them, perpetuate them, nurture them and thus justify His faith in us - - or disappoint G-d?, let Him down?

G-d has given us a Torah to live by and to study: VEHAGISSA BO YOMAM VLAILALH. Shall we let G-d down by leaving Torah to children and to special sts, or shall we prove worthy of His glorious faith by making it our Torah?

G-d has given us in this city ~~two~~ excellent schools of Jewish learning. He has expressed in us the faith that we ~~can~~ will keep them alive, teach our children in them, make them grow. Shall we let G-d down or prove worthy of His faith in us?

G-d has given us a State of Israel, the first time in 20 centuries Jews have attained independence. What tremendous faith G-d has in us! Shall we let Him down - - by lack of material support from American Jews and lack of spiritual devotion and religious rectitude in Israel - - or vindicate His faith by building Israel both materially and spiritually?

G-d has given examples of His faith in the Orthodox Jewish community of this city. Despite a nose-dive for some years, we now have attained more communications, more status, more energy and devotion of the youth. Shall we let him down by neglecting the needs of this cong., needs for new quarters and a willingness to change from mimicry to individuality, or shall we justify His faith?

G-d's Cloud of Glory is His faith that we Jews will always be a "Holy nation and Kingdom of Priests". Shall we justify that faith by remaining as the people of holiness, or shall we destroy all holiness by bringing in the poisoned air of secularism and vulgar fashionableness into our very sanctuaries

X. Whichever way one looks at it, this is the season when, symbolized by the Sukkah, we rest BETZILA DEMEHMUTA. And the opinions of both R. Akiba and R. Elazar are true. They call us to the two-fold task of faith - - of retaining & strengthening our faith in Him, that despite the frailty of the the Sukkah

of Life, He will protect us; and of justifying His faith in us, of proving ourselves worthy of the divine Clouds of Glory with which He has blessed us. May G-d justify our faith in Him; and may we justify His faith in us.

Benediction: MODEH ANI.....RABAH EMUNASECHA, great is Thy faith in us; may we justify that faith that Thou hast shown in us.

(so that YISMACH HASHEM BE'MAASAV.....)