

THE YESHIVA PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

# **The Roadmap to Prayer**

## **Lesson 57**

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# The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson

57

## The Three Festivals: Succos, Pesach and Shavuos

### THE ORDER OF THE HOSHANAH RABBA PRAYERS

As mentioned earlier, the day of *Hoshanah Rabba* is special in that it is a day when *Hashem's* judgment is finalized and the *Malachim* (angels/messengers) are dispatched to start executing the judgments.

- a) It also is the time when judgment is passed for the rain water that we will receive the coming year which is the basic source of sustenance for all humankind.
- b) In fact, the Divine punishment for not fulfilling the *Torah* commandment for tithing the produce grown in Israel and meeting the deadline of *Succos* for its distribution is drought and famine<sup>2</sup>.
- c) Since the festival of *Succos* is associated with the fulfillment of pledges and vows it is easily understood why *Hoshanah Rabba* which marks the conclusion of the *Succos* festival, became associated with the prayers for rain.
- d) Additionally, the conceptual development of the Festival season in the calendar, beginning with *Rosh Hashanah* corresponds with the structure of the *Shemoneh Esrei* (*The World of Prayer*, Rabbi Dr. Elie Munk, pgs 169-171).
- e) Just as the *Shemoneh Esrei* ends with a prayer for the welfare of our bodies and spirits, so too, *Hoshanah Rabba* closes the Festival season with prayers for a fruitful and blessed year (*The World of Prayer* pages 284, 285).

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<sup>1</sup> Listed in order of occurrence starting with the first of the three festivals after *Rosh Hashanah*

<sup>2</sup> *Shabbos Daf* 32b

The order of the *Shacharis* (morning) prayer on *Hoshanah Rabba* itself differs from the rest of the *Chol Hamoed* days of *Succos*.

- I. Although the regular order for *Chol Hamoed Shacharis* prayers follow the weekday order of *Shacharis* up to *Shemoneh Esrei*;
- II. On *Hoshanah Rabba* the first part of *Shacharis* - the *Pesukei De'Zimra* - follows the order of the *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov Pesukei De'Zimra* with a slight difference from that as well.
- III. On this day we recite the full *Pesukei De'Zimra* of *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* but we do not recite the prayer of *Nishmas*.
- IV. According to some customs, even *Nishmas* is recited on *Hoshanah Rabba*.
- V. We also recite the prayer of *Mizmor Le'Sodah* and according to some customs we also recite *Mizmor Shir Le'Yome Ha'Shabbos*.
- VI. Sephardim, however, do not recite any additional *Pesukei De'Zimra* on *Hoshanah Rabba*; only the additional *Hoshanah* prayers.
- VII. It is the custom of Sephardim to recite *Nishmas* separate from *Pesukei De'Zimra* after *Chazoras Hashatz* of *Mussaf*.

If we were to categorize *Chol Hamoed* as intermediate festival days which are partly like *Weekdays* and partly like *Yom Tov*, with emphasis on the *Weekday* aspect; *Hoshanah Rabba* would be categorized as partly like *Yom Tov* and partly like *Weekdays*, with emphasis on the *Yom Tov* aspect. Even the tunes of the prayers are sung according to the *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* tunes, and the *Chazzen* dons a white *Kittel* (tunic), a garment associated with the Days of Awe.

***Hallel* and *Krias HaTorah* are recited as usual,**

The *Hoshanas* are recited in their usual place as well, either immediately after *Hallel* or after *Tefillas Mussaf*. Beyond this, the *Hoshanah Rabba Hoshanah Prayers* take on their unique character with its special arrangement of *Hoshanah* prayers along with the additional prayers that are recited while holding the five *Hoshanah* branches, as we began explaining in the previous lesson and as we are about to explain right now in greater detail.

## The Structure of the Hoshanah Prayers for Hoshanah Rabba

During the first part of *Succos*, the *Hoshanah* prayers are fulfilled by circling the *Bimah* (podium) once, with the *Arba Minim* (four species) in hand.

- I. On *Hoshanah Rabba* we perform the *Hoshanah* prayers by circling the *Bimah* (podium) seven times with the *Arba Minim* (four species) in hand, each time reciting a different combination of prayers.
- II. After these circuits are completed, we put our *Arba Minim* (four species) aside and replace them with a set of five *Hoshanah* branches which we bang against the floor after reciting additional prayers that focus on receiving *Hashem's* blessing for sufficient rain for the coming year.
- III. Before turning our attention to the ritual of the five *Hoshanah* branches, we will first give details on the prayers that we recite during the seven *Hakafos* (circuits) that we perform with the *Arba Minim* (four species) in hand.

## Sephardic Version of the Hoshanah Rabba Prayers

Aside from the textual differences between the Sephardic version of the *Hoshanah* prayers and the Ashkenazic version, we find a greater emphasis in the Sephardic version in correlating the seven *Hoshanah* prayers with the Seven *Sefiros* which are represented by the corresponding great personalities of the Jewish Nation. The Sephardic version mentions the following seven correlations at the end of each of the seven prayers.

- 1) The first circuit represents the *Sefira* of *Chessed* (Kindness) - in the merit of *Avraham Avinu* (who excelled in the attribute of kindness).
- 2) The second circuit represents the *Sefira* of *Gevurah* (Might) - in the merit of *Yitzchok Avinu* (who excelled in the attribute of Might by conquering his own desires in doing *Hashem's* will)<sup>3</sup>.
- 3) The third circuit represents the *Sefira* of *Tiferes* (Glory) - in the merit of *Yaakov Avinu* (who excelled in the attribute of compassion and truth).
- 4) The fourth circuit represents the *Sefira* of *Netzach* (Eternality) - in the merit of *Moshe Rabbeinu* (who excelled in the attribute of eternity by being the primary conduit of the transmission of the *Eternal Torah*).
- 5) The fifth circuit represents the *Sefira* of *Hode* (Splendor) - in the merit of *Aharon HaKohen* (who excelled in the attribute of splendor by promulgating peace amongst the Jewish people).
- 6) The sixth circuit represents the *Sefira* of *Yesode* (Foundation) - in the merit of *Pinchas* and/or *Yosef* (who excelled in the attribute of Foundation by adhering with great strength to purity of character).
- 7) The seventh circuit represents the *Sefira* of *Malchus* (Kingship) - in the merit of *David HaMelech* (who excelled in the attribute of Kingship by being a dedicated king of the Jewish nation).

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<sup>3</sup> As he did when he was willing to give up his life by *Akeidas Yitzchok* (the Binding of Isaac)

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IN CONTRAST, THE ASHKENAZIC VERSION INSERTS SELECTIONS OF TORAH VERSES BETWEEN EACH OF THE SEVEN PRAYERS THAT CORRESPOND TO THE SEVEN SEFIRAS. THEY ARE:

- 1) *Ki amarti olam Chesed yibaneh - Tehillim 89:3* (for I have said, the world shall be built with kindness).
- 2) *Lecha zero'ab im Gevurah ta'oz yadcha tarum yeminecha ibid 89:14* (Yours is the arm with great might, show the power of Your hand, raise high Your right hand).
- 3) *Titein Emmes<sup>4</sup> le'Yaakov Chesed le'Avraham Michah 7:20* (grant Truth to Jacob, Kindness to Abraham)
- 4) *Ne'imos bi'yemincha Netzach<sup>5</sup>* (there is delight at Your right hand for triumph, or alternatively, for Eternity).
- 5) *Hashem Adoneinu mah adir shimcha be'chol ha'aretz asher tenah Hodcha al ha'Shamayim<sup>6</sup>* (Hashem our G-d, how mighty is Your Name throughout the earth; for it were fit that You place Your Splendor above the Heavens).
- 6) *Tzaddik Hashem bechol derachav vechasid bechol maasav<sup>7</sup>* (Hashem is righteous<sup>8</sup> in all His ways; virtuous in all His deeds).
- 7) After the seventh set of *Hoshanas* we recite the verse *Lecha Hashem* (to You Hashem) *HaGedulah* - is Greatness; *VehaGevurah* - and Might; *VehaTiferes* - and Splendor; *VehaNeztach* - and Eternality; *VehaHode ...* - and Glory. *Lecha Hashem...* (Yours, Hashem) **Hamam'lachah** - is Kingship; *Vehamishnaseh lechol lerosh* - and sovereignty over every leader<sup>9</sup>. The verse *Vehaya Hashem LeMelech al kol ha'aretz etc.* followed by the verse *Shema Yisrael* and *Baruch sheim kevod etc.*

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<sup>4</sup> This is related to the *Sefira* of *Tiferes*

<sup>5</sup> *Tehillim* 16: 11

<sup>6</sup> *Tehillim* 8: 2

<sup>7</sup> *Tehillim* 145: 17

<sup>8</sup> Righteousness is related to the *Sefira* of *Yesode* - which is related the attribute of *Tzaddik* (righteous)

<sup>9</sup> *Divrei Hayamim* I 29: 11

### Another Reason for the Seven Hoshanah Prayers

In the final set of verses that we recite at the end of each *Hakafah* from *Divrei Hayamim*, where *Dovid HaMelech* (King David) articulated seven different expressions of praise to *Hashem* in the section of *Vayevorech Dovid* which was said when the Jews made their dedications towards rebuilding the *Beis Hamikdash* (the Holy Temple). The following are the seven expressions of praise he used:

*Lecha Hashem...* (Yours, *Hashem*)

1. *HaGedulah* - is Greatness
  2. *VehaGevurah* - and Might
  3. *VehaTiferes* - and Splendor
  4. *VehaNeztach* - and Eternality
  5. *VehaHode ...* - and Glory *Lecha Hashem...* (to You *Hashem*)
  6. *Hamamelachah* - is Kingship
  7. *Vehamishneh lechol lerush* - and sovereignty over every leader
1. **Lema'an Amitach** (For the sake of Your Truth) - This stanza speaks of Hashem's **Greatness** - **HaGedulah**.
  2. **Eh'ven Shesiya** (Foundation Stone) - This stanza is about the *Beis Hamikdash* that was destroyed which according to our Sages are proof to *Hashem's* **Might**; Who watches as the Nations of the world destroy His Holy Temple and trample upon His holy people and remains silent. In human terms, this takes great strength of character to refrain using one's ability to prevent such a calamity and allow it to occur without a single response or even a sense of revenge - **VehaGevurah**.
  3. **Ome Ani Choma** (A nation that declares: "I am a Fortifying Wall") - This stanza mentions many praises of Bnei Yisrael, the nation that Hashem takes **Pride** in - **VehaTiferes**.
  4. **Adone Hamoshia** (The Master Who Saves) - *Hashem* won't leave His nation **Eternally** forsaken, for we will merit **Eternal** salvation - **VehaNeztach**.
  5. **Adam U'Beheimah** (A man and a beast) - This stanza speaks of how lowly a man is when we look at his physical makeup, yet how noble he is when we look at

his spiritual essence. It speaks also of the wonders of nature that bespeak Hashem's **Splendor - VebaHode**.

6. **Adamah Me'Errer** (Save the earth from its curse) - In this stanza we ask Hashem to save the earth from all kinds of curses that may come upon it because of the weather, natural causes and locust infestation etc. This prayer in effect alludes to **Kingship**, since after *Hashem* created the world He then Ruled as King over all beings and creations - **VehaMamlacha**.
7. **LeMa'an Eisan Hanizrak Belahav Aish** (For the sake of the resolute one who was thrown into a fiery furnace) - Since this stanza enumerates the luminaries of each generation, we confirm that Hashem is elevated and exalted over all great personalities as well.

### **Hoshanah Rabba Hakafah (Circuit) #1**

#### **Lema'an Amitach (For the sake of Your Truth)**

In this stanza we ask *Hashem* to fulfill His promise to *Adam Harishon* to accept the *Teshuvah* (repentance) of his offspring. We also mention the merit of *Torah*, *Beis Hamikdash*, reciting *Shema Yisrael*, as well as our own merit of existence through our devotion in bringing glory to *Hashem's* Name throughout the ages.

### **Hoshanah Rabba Hakafah (Circuit) #2**

#### **Eh'ven Shesiya (Foundation Stone)**

This stanza begins by mentioning the Foundation Stone that was situated in the *Beis Hamikdash* in the *Holy of Holies*. It is from that stone that the world was founded when G-d created the world<sup>10</sup>. Accordingly, we mention this as a merit to redeem us and rebuild the *Beis Hamikdash* where we served *Hashem* with devotion.

It is meaningful to note that until this day we recite the *Shemoneh Esrei/ Amidah* prayers facing the general direction of Jerusalem with the specific intent towards the *Holy of Holies* where this stone still remains as of this day!

Another interpretation is found in the *Medrash* that traces this origin to *Yaakov Avinu* who came to this spot on his way down to the house of *Lavan* when he left home to

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<sup>10</sup> *Yoma Daf* 53b, 54b

avoid *Eisav's* wrath. The *Torah* tells us that he took stones from that area and placed them around his head to protect him at night. The *Medrash* explains that he took twelve stones from the altar constructed by *Avraham Avinu* for the *Akeida* (The Binding of Isaac) of his father. He took twelve stones corresponding to the Twelve Tribes that he would eventually bear. The *Torah* relates that these stones fused together into one stone, symbolizing the UNITY that will emerge from the tribes as ONE NATION serving G-d. Then G-d thrust this stone into the ground as a Foundation Stone underneath the *Holy of Holies*. The rest of this stanza continues with various references to the *Beis Hamikdash* of Scriptural and Talmudic origin.

### Hoshanah Rabba Hakafah (Circuit) #3

#### **Ome Ani Choma (A nation that declares: "I am a Fortifying Wall")**

In this piece, there are many metaphors used to describe *Bnei Yisrael's* (The Jewish People's) travails and difficult existence amongst the nations in Exile.

It also speaks of *Bnei Yisrael's* strong faith in *Hashem* and in His salvation during the most difficult and trying circumstances of their existence.

1. One reference in this portion is that *Bnei Yisrael* are similar to a date-tree - *Domsa La'tamar*. One interpretation of this is to praise the Jews who stood upright like a date-tree that goes straight up, and refused to bow down to *Nebuchadnezzar's* statue<sup>11</sup>.
2. Another interpretation of *Domsa La'tamar* is praise that we are similar to *Tamar*, the daughter-in-law of *Yehudah* the son of *Yaakov Avinu*.

#### **Tamar had a noble desire to bear children from the seed of Yehudah.**

After the untimely death of her first two husbands, both sons of *Yehudah*; *Tamar* waited to marry *Yehudah's* third son, *Sheilab*. However, *Yehudah* feared that he too may die like his brothers so he didn't allow them to marry. In the end, *Tamar* had two children from *Yehudah*; *Peretz* and *Zerach*. From *Zerach* came the seed for the kingdom of *Dovid Hamelech* and *Mashiach*

**In this merit we pray that Hashem should answer our prayers as we are compared to Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Yehudah.**

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<sup>11</sup> *Daniel* Chapter 3

#### **Hoshanah Rabba Hakafah (Circuit) #4**

#### **Adone Hamoshia (The Master Who Saves)**

In this portion we pray that *Hashem* grant us salvation from our oppressors.

We also pray that *Hashem* protect our natural sources of livelihood such as the sheep, the crops, the vegetation etc.

In one of the phrases we pray **Nesi'im Lehasi'ah** (make the clouds soar with the wind) in order to bring us rain and blessing of abundant crops and produce.

**The word Nesi'im is used here as the term for clouds.**

- a. The word *Nesi'im* means to “lift” which refers to clouds that lift the water and moisture up high above the ground.

**Alternatively, the word Nesi'im also means “Princes” denoting that clouds are in a way similar to princes.**

- b. According to the *Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem Talmud) it means that the rain brought by the clouds makes people wealthy like princes by blessing the crops and produce with abundant rain.
- c. *Raw Samson Raphael Hirsch זצ”ל* explains that the clouds themselves are like princes too.
- d. Just as princes and rulers have the obligation and responsibility of providing their subjects with sustenance, as they are the ones responsible for their high positions;
- e. So too, the clouds carry the rain which they gathered from the moisture down on earth, delivering it back to earth providing all that inhabit the earth with its most vital need - water.

## Hoshanah Rabba Hakafah #5

### Adam U'Beheimah (A man and a beast)

In this section we say the following stiches according to the *Alef Beis. Mitros oze lesamema* (to heal with powerful rains); *Neshiyah lekaymah* (to give life for forsaken rains); *Sichim lekomemah* (to sustain with vegetation).

The *Gemara* in *Taanis*<sup>12</sup> tells us,

*Gadol yome hegeshamim keyome shenitna bo Torah* (the day that it rains is as great as the day the Torah was given).

The *Divrei Yoel*<sup>13</sup> explains this homiletically that the day of rain which is the Holiday of *Shemini Atzeres* is also the day we celebrate as *Simchas Torah*.

The rain here represents our accepting the *Torah* with joy; just as we celebrate *Simchas Torah* joyfully. The *Medrash* tells us, that when we heard the *Torah* directly from *Hashem* it went straight into us so that we never forgot what *Hashem* taught to us directly.

However,

Since after hearing the first two commandments directly from *Hashem*, *Bnei Yisrael* preferred that *Moshe Rabbeinu* teach them the rest of the Ten Commandments, this caused them to be susceptible to human frailty of forgetfulness.

Thus our prayer,

Is that we merit to the *Geulah Sheleimah* (the Total and Final Redemption by *Hashem*) when we will once again merit to hear *Torah* taught to us directly by *Hashem*, so that we won't forget any of our learning.

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<sup>12</sup> *Daf 7a*

<sup>13</sup> *Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum ז"ל*- Grand Rabbi of the Satmar Chassidic Dynasty. He was famous for pouring out his heart and soul while reciting the *Hoshanah* prayers, especially on *Hoshanah Rabba* when he would spend many hours explaining his deep interpretations of each of the *Hoshanah* prayers.

Accordingly,

The words of the *Hoshanah* mentioned above are interpreted to allude to the strong rains which represent the Torah taught by *Hashem* directly to us (*Mitros oze lesamema*) then what was once *Neshiyah* (forgotten) will again be *lekaymah* (established and firm in our memory). But to merit this we need to pray fervently to G-d to redeem us from our present exile. This is what we continue to say, *Sichim lekaymah*, meaning that through *Tefilla* (*si'ach* - prayer) it will be established (*lekaymah*).

### **Hoshanah Rabba Hakafah (Circuit) #6**

#### **Adamah Me'Errer (Save the earth from its curse)**

This stanza focuses on,

Protecting our hard earned produce and sources of livelihood from the various “natural” causes that may damage and destroy them. We say that *Hashem* should save *Yekeiv miyelek* (vineyards from *Yelek* - a type of grasshopper), *Kerem mitola'as* (the vines from worms), *Lekesh me'Arbeh* (late crops from *Arbeh* - another type of grasshopper)... *Nefesh me'behalah* (soul from panic).

The difficulty with this section why in the middle of praying to protect our sources of livelihoods, do we all of a sudden ask *Hashem* to protect our “souls from panic?”

The answer to this is,

According to the mystical powers that govern our world, those people who sin in the area of man's power of procreation lose the Heavenly influence to earn their livelihoods.

This is indicated by the sixth *Hakafah*,

Which represents the purity of soul of *Yosef Hatzaddik* who resisted temptation with *Potiphar's* wife. Thus in the middle of our prayer for sustenance we ask that *our soul should be saved from panic* which alludes to the above sin that wreaks havoc on the Heavenly influence that sustains our livelihoods.

### Hoshanah Rabba Hakafah (Circuit) #7

## LeMa'an Eisan Hanizrak Belahav Aish (For the sake of the resolute one who was thrown into a fiery furnace)

This section is about the many great Jewish personalities and their great feats that they performed over the generations, out of their devotion to *Hashem*.

One of the examples noted is *Lemaan vehu lach kesegen be'erelei aish* (in the merit of he who is for You like a deputy at the altars of fire<sup>14</sup>) (Alternative translation - for the sake of he who serves You like a *Malach* (angel) of fire)

There are two ways to interpret this prayer.

- I. One understanding is that this refers to *Moshe Rabbeinu* who protected the *Bnei Yisrael* through his constant devotion and prayer.
- II. Others explain this is referring to *Aharon HaKohen* who served in the *Beis Hamikdash* like an angel up above.

Why do we refer to this in the present tense, using the phrase *Ve'hu Lach* instead the past tense of *Ve'haya Lach*?

To answer this question we must preface that indeed,

The spiritual service of *Korbanos* through the *Kobanim* exists even today in *Yerushalayim shel Maalah* (In the spiritual Jerusalem up above). Therefore, although the service of *Aharon HaKohen* doesn't exist today in the city of *Yerushalayim*, it does continue up above as the *Medrash* states that when the time for the rebuilding of the third *Beis Hamikdash* will come, *Hashem* will descend the *Heavenly Beis Hamikdash* onto the original place where the *Beis Hamikdash* stood down below. Thus, in this sense, *Aharon HaKohen's* service to *Klal Yisrael* continues even to this day. This is why the present tense is used<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> This translation is according to Artscroll

<sup>15</sup> From the Sefer *Divrei Yoel*

## Questions:

- 1) Why do we consider *Hoshanah Rabba* such a special occasion?
- 2) In what way is *Shacharis* of *Hoshanah Rabba* different than the rest of *Chol Hamoed*?
- 3) What does the number 7 represent with regard to the *Hakafas* of *Hoshanah Rabba*?
- 4) According to the Ashkenazic version of the *Hoshanas* of *Hoshanah Rabba*, what portion alludes to the concept of 7 which is explicit in the Sephardic version?
- 5) Where do we find the 7 expressions that are expressed in the 7 *Hakafas* of *Hoshanah Rabba*?
- 6) What stone does *Eb'ven Shesjya* in the second *Hakafah* refer to? (2)
- 7) Briefly describe the 2 interpretations for the stanza *Damsa La'tamar*.
- 8) Briefly describe the 2 interpretations for the stanza *Nesi'im Lehasi'ah*, why clouds are referred to as *Nesi'im*.
- 9) What special benefit did we lose out on by asking that *Moshe Rabbeinu* speak to us by *Mattan Torah* (The Giving of Torah) instead of listening to them said by *Hashem*?
- 10) How does *Nefesh me'behalab* (a soul from panic) fit into the *Hoshanah* of the sixth *Hakafah* which discusses *Hashem's* protection of our sources of livelihood?

## Answers:

- 1) *Hoshanah Rabba* is considered a very special occasion since it is written in the *Zohar* that on this day is when the judgments passed during the *Yamim Nora'im* (Days of Awe) is handed to the *Malachim* (angels) for execution, and we have a final chance to have a stay of its execution.
- 2) *Shacharis* of *Hoshanah Rabba* follows the general order of the *Pesukei De'Zimra* of Shabbos and *Yom Tov* except that we add *Mizmor Le'sodah* but we don't add *Nishmas* and according to some customs we do add even that.
- 3) The number 7 represents the 7 *Sefiros*, the 7 attributes with which *Hashem* acts towards us.
- 4) According to Ashkenazic custom, there are verses added in between each set of *Hakafas* which represent the 7 *Sefiros*.
- 5) In *Divrei Hayamim* in the portion that begins with *Vayevorech David*.
- 6) *Eb'ven Shesiyah* refers to the stone in the *Kodesh Kodoshim* (the Holy of Holies). Its origin is either from the time of creation when *Hashem* used this stone to establish the world. Another interpretation is that these were the 12 stones from the altar used for *Akeidas Yitzchok* and then used by *Yaakov Avinu* to protect him as he slept outdoors one night and became fused into one stone by a miracle and then *Hashem* thrust it into the *Kodesh Kodoshim*.
- 7) *Damsa La'tamar* can be interpreted as *Being compared to a Date tree* that stands erect even in the face of challenge. Alternatively it a comparison to *Tamar* who was *Yehudah's* daughter in law.
- 8) Clouds are referred to as *Nesi'im* which can be interpreted as *lifted*, since clouds are generally lifted from the ground. It can also mean that clouds are like *Princes* since they can provide the single most important life sustaining force and distribute it to the world, like *Princes* that distribute sustenance to the poor.
- 9) We caused ourselves the possibility to forget *Torah* that is taught to us by mortals.
- 10) In the sixth *Hakafah* which represents the purity of *Yosef Hatzaddik* in the face of temptation, and of *Pinchas* who fought against those who defiled this purity.