

## **HAKHEL YEAR – KETZ MOSHIACH?**

©2023/5783 *Shnas Hakhel* – R' Yaakov Nosson Bock – YaakovBock@gmail.com

We are presently in a year of Hakhel. The Rebbe demands from each one of us to be a "Hakhel Yid": to utilize every opportunity to make Hakhel gatherings of Jews which strengthen Yiras Shomayim, encourage Mitzah observance, and increase Jewish unity. The Rebbe's *shturem* about these activities is known, but why such a *shturem*? With a fuller understanding of the subject, we can, with Hashem's help, give ourselves over to the Rebbe's *inyan* of Hakhel with even greater inner *chayus* (in addition to loyal *kabbolos 'ol*).

First, let us note that Hakhel is not a time period, it is an event. An event which occurs once every seven years in the year after a Shmitta year, the year called *Motzei Shvi'is*.<sup>1</sup> Hakhel is a mitzvah which is performed in the year of *Motzei Shvi'is*. By understanding more about *Motzei Shvi'is*, we can understand better the role of mitzvas Hakhel.

At this point, let us note some of the dramatic events that occurred in Hakhel years:

- 5713 -- all of Russian Jewry was in danger from Stalin's "Doctor's Plot", and they were miraculously saved upon the sudden death of Stalin on Purim.
- 5727 -- the Jews of Eretz Yisroel were threatened by five Arab armies, and miraculously saw the great victory of the Six Day War.
- 5734 -- the deadly surprise attack of the Yom Kippur war, which turned into a miraculous victory ("bigger than the Six Day War" said the Rebbe).
- 5741 -- Eretz Yisroel was facing the threat of a nuclear reactor in Iraq, until the successful bombing of that reactor by the Israeli Air Force.

Also interesting to note that the four times that 770 Eastern Parkway, the Rebbe's shul, was expanded<sup>2</sup> took place in Hakhel years: 5720, 5727, 5733 (finished by erev Rosh Hashanah 5734, the Hakhel year), and 5748 (the laying of the cornerstone ("*even hapina*") for the most recent expansion). *But what's the connection with Hakhel?*

---

<sup>1</sup> See Michtov Kloli of 6 Tishrei, 5748 (Likkutei Sichos 34:329). The Rebbe explains that we call the entire year a "Hakhel year" in the same way Torah refers to a "Yovel year". Even though the "yovel" ("ram's horn" in Arabic, according to Rashi on Rosh Hashanah 26a) is only sounded once, on Yom Kippur of the 50th year, the event gives its name to the entire year.

<sup>2</sup> For details of the expansions see <https://derher.org/wp-content/uploads/31-ivar-5775-02.pdf>

In the year 5748, the year with the biggest "shturem" about Hakhel, the Rebbe made a small comment which contains a big hint about what is behind the scenes of a Hakhel year. On 24 Kislev (*Yechidus Klolis* before Chanukah), the Rebbe introduced a new *hora'ah* (putting a Chanukah menorah in the doorway of a child's room) with the following words:

**"Since we are found in a *Hakhel Year*, and correspondingly there is a strengthening of undesirable things (which have already come, and which are able to come, ch"v). Therefore the best thing and the most fitting thing is to increase light in the world."<sup>3</sup>**

אנחנו נמצאים בשנת הקהל, וכמו"כ יש התגברות של ענינים בלתי רצויים (שכבר באו ושיכולים לבוא ח"ו), הרי דבר הכי טוב והכי מתאים, שיוסיפו אור בעולם, צ"ח שנתנו להגידה שחילוקים ביניהם.

We need to ask: Isn't a *Hakhel Year* about a holy gathering of Yidden in the Beis Hamikdash, hearing Torah from the King? What connection is there to "undesirable things"?!

In fact, we find such a concept alluded to in the *sicha* of Miketz 5752, where the Rebbe says:

**"Our approaching the coming of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* is also the reason for the strengthening of the darkness in the world — because it is due to the strengthening of holiness that there comes about a strengthening of the opposing side, which opposes the coming of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*, and there is a need to fight with the opponent..."**

נ"י לומר, שההתקרבות לביאת משיח צדקנו היא גם הסיבה להתגברות החושך בעולם — שבגלל התגברות הקדושה נעשית גם התגברות הלעו"ז שמנגד לביאת משיח צדקנו, ויש צורך ללחום עם המנגד, שזהו"ע "לחם מלחמות ה'" עד ש"נצח"ו].

In a similar vein, the Rebbe mentions in a *sicha*<sup>4</sup> that the Frierdiker Rebbe told that in the year 5666 the Rebbe Rashab was "fearful" because that year was a *ketz* for Moshiach to come (in addition to it being *motzie* a leap year). A *ketz* for Moshiach evidently fits with the concern of a "strengthening of the opposing side which opposes the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu", but what does that have to do with a Hakhel Year?

— הגיע לידי ביכל-חסידות מארץ ישראל, ובא' המאמרים שבו נאמר "קץ" על שנת תרל"ח<sup>48</sup>. ועד"ז בנוגע לשנת תרס"ו, כפי שסיפר כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר<sup>49</sup> שבר"ה תרס"ו אמר אביו כ"ק אדנ"ע שמתירא משנה זו מפני שיש בה "קץ" (נוסף על היותה מוצאי שנת העיבור) —

We see from the gemara that the Hakhel Year, which follows the 7th (*shmitta*) year, is called "*Motzei Shvi'is*". What does the gemara tell us about *Motzei Shvi'is*? The gemara<sup>5</sup> states:

**"In the 6th year, voices; in the 7th year, wars; in *Motzei Shvi'is*, ben Dovid comes".**

והנה חזרה להפשיט "בששת קלות בשביעית מלחמות במצאי שביעית בן דוד בא אשר רב יצחק וא' כמה שביעית חזרה בן

<sup>3</sup> In 5748, close to the time of this *sicha*, was the outbreak of the first Intifada. In the years since then: 5762 saw a huge spike (almost 300%) in terror casualties in Israel, r"l, leading to Operation Defensive Shield that year; in 5769 Israel launched Operation Cast Lead ("the Gaza War"); in 5776 there was a 500% leap in terrorist casualties in Israel' r"l. Interestingly, in the Hakhel year 5755 we don't find such dramatic events. Perhaps the concealment of Gimmel Tammuz the previous summer caused a concealment of dramatic developments. The matter requires further analysis.

<sup>4</sup> Va'era 5711

<sup>5</sup> Sanhedrin 97a

This seemingly hints that a Hakhel Year – "*Motzei Shvi'is*" – is in some way a recurring "*ketz*" for Moshiach. (We even see that Hakhel Year is referred to in the Torah<sup>6</sup> with the word "*ketz*": "at the *ketz* [end] of seven years" "*מִקֵּץ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים*"). We can already see the connection with the Rebbe's expression that a Hakhel Year is a time when there is a danger of the "strengthening of undesirable matters", much like a *ketz*. The Rebbe himself mentions<sup>7</sup> that:

**"The Hakhel Year is also connected with Geuloh – being that it is '*Motzei Shvi'is*', a time that is ripe for the coming of ben Dovid."**

שִׁבְעִית, זֶמֶן הַמְּסוּגָל לְבִיאַת בֶּן דָּוִד.<sup>32</sup> וְגַם שָׁנַת הַקֹּהֵל קְשׁוּרָה עִם גְּאוּלָּה – לְהִיטָהּ "מוֹצָאֵי

In other words, *Motzei Shvi'is* is a type of *ketz*. And we already saw that the Rebbe Rashab had reason to be fearful from a *shnas ketz*. The Sifsei Cohen<sup>8</sup> (the Sha"ch) provides an example of a *ketz* that was "exchanged", r"l: he calculated that the year 5408 was to be a year of Geuloh, but instead the opportunity was "turned over" and became a year of bloody massacres – the infamous *Tach v'Tat*.

In 5713<sup>9</sup> the Rebbe himself refers to such an "exchange":

**"As we are standing on the cusp of Rosh Hashana of *Motzei Shmitta* – may it be Hashem's will that the words of our sages will be fulfilled 'on *Motzei Shvi'is* ben Dovid comes' (in exchange for the fact that *churban habayis* was on *Motzei Shvi'is*)..."**

וּבַעֲמִדָּנוּ בְּסִמְכוֹת לַר"ה שֶׁל מוֹצָאֵי שְׁבִיעִית – יִהְיֶה שִׁקְוִיִּים  
מֵאֲרֻזֵּי "בְּמוֹצָאֵי שְׁבִיעִית בֶּן דָּוִד בֹּא" (תְּמוּרָת זֶה שְׁחֹרְבֵן הַבַּיִת הִ' –  
בְּמוֹצָאֵי שְׁבִיעִית), בְּגְאוּלָּה הַשְּׁלִימָה וְהָאֲמִיתִית, כְּמַהֲרָה בִּימֵינוּ, ע"י  
מִשִּׁיחַ צִדְקָנוּ.

The Rebbe is referring to the gemara<sup>10</sup> which states that *churban bayis rishon* and *bayis sheini* both took place on *Motzei Shvi'is*. In more recent generations: the Russian Revolution (5678), the rise to power of the Nazi party (5692), and the German invasion of Poland (5699, the beginning of World War II) all took place on *Motzei Shvi'is*. Unfortunately, many times the *ketz* of *Motzei Shvi'is* was "exchanged", and instead of Moshiach ben Dovid, there was a "strengthening of undesirable things".

With the dawn of Rebbe's *nesius*, however, we find the potential in *Motzei Shvi'is* consistently being channeled to positive results. We see that the Rebbe has successfully used the power of Hakhel to

<sup>6</sup> *Devorim* 31:10

<sup>7</sup> *Nights of Pesach*, 5748 (*Toras Menachem*, p. 82)

<sup>8</sup> *Sefer Megillas Eifa*

<sup>9</sup> *Erev Rosh Hashana*, 5713

<sup>10</sup> *Arachin* 11b

bring out the great potential of the *ketz* of *Motzei Shvi'is* to transform darkness to light (as seen *b'gashmiyus* in events of many of the Hakhel years of the Rebbe's *nesius*).<sup>11</sup>

More than that, the Rebbe has given each one of us the keys to do the same thing. In a *michtav Kloli* in 5727<sup>12</sup> the Rebbe wrote that in a Hakhel Year:

**"There is an empowerment that even an individual Jew has the power (if he only will truly want) to affect and change...an entire city...and he has the ability to affect change in the world..."**

ונסוף על האמור לעיל בתור הוראה כללית בכל השנים, הרי עאכ"כ בנוגע לשנה זו, שהיא "שנת הקהל", שהתחלתה היתה באופן ד"הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף ג' למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו ג' ושמועו לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת"<sup>104</sup>, אזי ישנה נתינת-כח במיוחד שגם יחיד מישראל יש בכחו (אם רק ירצה באמת) לפעול ולשנות לא רק את עצמו ומשפחתו, אלא גם עיר שלימה, כיון שהולך בכחו ובשליחותו של מלך המלכים הקב"ה, ולכן יש ביכולתו לפעול שינוי בעולם – בתכלית השלימות ומתוך שמחה וטוב לבב – להראות שהטבע יכול להיות למעלה מדרך הטבע, ובאופן ש"ראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו מנך"<sup>105</sup>, ועד לקיום היעוד<sup>106</sup> "אז אהפוך אל עמים שפה ברורה ג' לעבדו שכס אחר".

And the way we affect this change is through Hakhel, as the Rebbe wrote explicitly in 5734<sup>13</sup>, following the Yom Kippur war:

**"An additional emphasis on the Hakhel of the men, women, and children took place with the event that began on the holy day [Yom Kippur] this Hakhel Year, which was directed at the men, women, and children as they comprise *kahal bnei Yisroel*. Everyone uniting together<sup>14</sup> is what stood by and what will stand by all of *bnei Yisroel*..."**

ונתוספה הדגשה בענין הקהל האנשים הנשים והטף במאורע שהתחיל ביום הקדוש דשנת הקהל זו, שהי' מכוון ג"כ כנגד אנשים הנשים וטף בתור קהל בנ"י, והקהלת כולם יחד היא שעמדה והיא שתעמוד לכל בנ"י, אשר כתבטחת הנביא: הוי' צבאות יגן עליהם, על עמו גוי אחד בארץ, הוא גאלם וינשלם וינשאים כל ימי עולם.

<sup>11</sup> Interesting to note that in *Netzach Yisroel* (ch. 8) the Maharal of Prague draws a dual connection between *Motzei Shvi'is* and the first day of the week (Sunday) – both are the start of exiting the seventh day/year of rest. Because of this, he writes, the churban habayis took place on both *Motzei Shabbos* and *Motzei Shvi'is* (*Arachin* 11b). Additionally, he writes in chapter 32: *Motzei Shvi'is* is also the 8th year, and *Moshiach* is specifically connected with the number 8 (above nature). For this reason "*Motzei Shvi'is ben Dovid ba*". We can observe here that since he likens the cycle of days to the cycle of years, then *Saturday night/Sunday* share this connection with *Motzei Shvi'is*. *Motzei Shabbos* is established (*minhag Yisroel is Torah*) as the time of "*seudosa d'Dovid Malka Meshicha*" – explicitly connecting *Motzei Shabbos* with *Moshiach*. The continuation to Sunday (and the "Hakhel connection") is perhaps revealed in the Rebbe's establishment of the *Lag B'Omer* parades on Sundays (when the parade passes by the Rebbe standing on a wooden platform, "the King stands on a platform of wood") and also the Rebbe's establishment of Sunday as the day of distribution of dollars for *tzedakah*, which also has an element of "Hakhel" and hearing the words of the King.

<sup>12</sup> 19 Kislev, 5727

<sup>13</sup> *Igros Kodesh* 29:15, *Likutei Sichos* 10:194

<sup>14</sup> In the days before and after *Rosh Hashanah* 5734 the Rebbe called for gatherings of children in *Eretz Yisroel*. (And see *IK* 28, #10892, a private instruction to learn verses of *Hakhel* at the Western Wall).

To summarize: *Motzei Shvi'is* is a *ketz* of Moshiach, not a simple matter at all. When we successfully capitalize on it, we have an aspect of Geuloh<sup>15</sup>: “ben Dovid comes”. When it is “exchanged”, r”l, the opponents of Beis Dovid rise up: “on *Motzei Shvi'is* Yeravam took rulership over Yisroel”.<sup>16</sup> In other words: there is a year which by its very nature is fraught with the possibility of “the strengthening of undesirable things”, *chas v’sholom*, and in that year Hashem gives the Jewish people the mitzvah of Hakhel as the treatment before the illness. Hakhel is a mitzvah which has the power to nullify the negative potential and transform it to Geuloh.

Hakhel is gathering the nation in the Beis Hamikdosh. *Churban haBayis* scattered the nation into *golus*, the opposite of Hakhel. Only through the leadership of the Rebbe has Hakhel returned to prominence, and we can see that it brings about positive effects in the world. The Rebbe “builds the Mikdash in his place”, and continues to expand and enlarge it, and he gives every Yid the power to take a part in turning the *ketz* of a Hakhel Year into Geuloh.<sup>17</sup>

By fulfilling the Rebbe's instructions to use every opportunity to gather Yidden together for words of Torah and Yiras Shomayim, we are able to “affect change in the world”, affecting the miraculous destruction of Israel's enemies in a way of “they will speak a thing but it won't come to pass” (“*utzu eitza...*”). We add in light to nullify the undesirable matters, until not only the darkness is pushed away and nullified -- but until the darkness itself shines, as the posuk states<sup>18</sup>: “Even darkness will not conceal from You and the night will shine like the day, as darkness so is the light” – “גם חשך לא יחשיך” – “ממך ולילה כיום יאיר כחשיכה כאורה”.

יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד!

<sup>15</sup> *Psikta Rabbosi*, parsha 37: כנסת ישראל בשעה שעלתה מבבל במוצאי שביעית.

<sup>16</sup> *Yerushalmi Avodah Zora* 1:1, אמר רבי יוסי בר יעקב במוצאי שמיטה מלך ירבעם על ישראל, Explained there that he put up roadblocks to Yerushalayim because he wanted to read at Hakhel before the King from Beis Dovid. See also *Sanhedrin* 101b.

<sup>17</sup> Among the other “undesirable things” which occurred in earlier “*Motzei Shvi'is*” years: Napoleon conquers Europe (5566), the Cantonist decree (5587). Examples of *Geuloh* in prior Hakhel years: the Alter Rebbe was freed 19 Kislev (5559), Napoleon's defeat in Russia (5573), the printing of *Likkutei Torah* (5608).

<sup>18</sup> *Tehillim* 139:12