**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE:**

**THE PROPHECIES OF HOSHEA AND AMOS**

**By Rav Yitzchak Etshalom**

**Shiur #98:**

**The Prophecies of Amos:**

**DAY OF RETURN**

**JUDGMENT AND VINDICATION (9:7-12)**

**PART 3:**

**RESTORATION AND SOVEREIGNTY (verses 11-12)**

In last week’s *shiur*, we examined the three verses that foretell the exile, dispersion and difficult times ahead for *Am Yisrael*, all presented as the providential method for ridding the nation of its “detritus,” as symbolized with the metaphor of the sieve. We will now turn to the final two verses of this penultimate passage in the book and see how Amos’s vision of the future history of *Am Yisrael* is meant to unfold.

One note must be inserted here before we begin our study of the text. For the past number of weeks, we have been studying Amos’s envisioned “end-of-days” scenario. There are a number of such scenarios in *Tanakh*, and they are not all harmonious with each other. Indeed, in some cases, even the same prophet presents various visions of how history will play out, and they may be mutually exclusive. After our text study is complete, we will devote a *shiur* to this phenomenon and where Amos’s *eschaton* fits into this palette of prophetic *schema*.

THE TEXT

*Ba-yom ha-hu*

On that day

This phrase points us back to the previous passage, but likely also to an even earlier one where a “day” or “days” are mentioned. In other words, by stating “on that day,” the prophet connects the following line to the events of an already identified day. A “day” in *Tanakh*, outside of narrative and legal contexts, may refer to a period of time, not limited to a period of sunset to the next sunset. Ibn Ezra makes that point here: “*Yom* refers to a time period.” This could be taking us back to *ha-yom ha-hu* in 8:9, the day of terrible weeping and mourning, but it seems more likely that that passage, being the end of the “present-time” prophecies of Amos, is not connected to this prophecy. We can look a bit further, to the beginning of Amos’s *eschaton*:

*Hinei* ***yamim*** *ba’im ve-hishlachti ra’av ba-aretz*

Behold, days are coming and I will send a famine unto the land… (8:11)

This begins Amos’s vision of the far future. This is the period that will begin with a terrible famine, coupled with a thirst for God’s word, and neither will be resolved. God will then have the building shaken, leading to a slaying of all those who wish to flee – even if their “flight” is in captivity. Ultimately (assuming no positive and desired response on the part of the people), the kingdom will be destroyed and the people exiled, sifting out those who are beyond rehabilitation. And on that day – i.e. at the end of that period – the heart-stirring events described in these two verses will be realized.

Note that the entire *eschaton* presented, using these two literary markers – *hinei yamim ba’im* and *ba-yom ha-hu* – in chiastic fashion:

8:11 *hinei yamim ba’im* (the famine)

8:13 *ba-yom ha-hu* (the results of the famine)

9:1-10 The final “vision” and statement of judgment of all the nations and the “favored nation” status of *Am Yisrael*

9:11: *ba-yom ha-hu* – (the beginning of restoration)

9:13: *hinei yamim ba’im* – (complete restoration)

*Akim et sukkat David ha-nofelet*

I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen

THE SUKKA IN TANAKH

There is much discussion, both among the *Rishonim* as well as modern academicians, about the meaning and import of *sukkat David*. Although our first, somewhat instinctive reaction is to associate this word with *Chag Ha-Sukkot* and the harvest-booth in which we live during that week, that may limit us in our understanding of the verse.

Methodological note: We should always keep all available meanings open and see them as viable, then discount them, if possible, one by one. We just saw this in the Abravanel’s novel interpretation of *tzeror* in the previous *shiur*.

Of the thirty-three times[[1]](#footnote-1) that *sukka*/*sukkot* is mentioned in *Tanakh*,[[2]](#footnote-2) seventeen of them clearly refer to either the holiday or the specifically mandated booths constructed as part of that festival. Note – all of the mentions from the Second Temple period fall into this category. In other words, we have no internal evidence of the use of the word *sukka*/*sukkot* after the return from Bavel for anything outside of the ritual context.

Of the remaining sixteen instances, the five that are in narrative contexts[[3]](#footnote-3) are all “shade-booths,” typically used while traveling[[4]](#footnote-4) or while at war.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Of the eleven mentions in poetic books, two refer to actual booths, although used as an analogy for temporary dwellings that, although intended to be stately and permanent, have a limited and brief future. In Iyov’s long soliloquy (chapters 26-31), in describing the houses of the wicked, we read:

*Banah kha-ash beito, u-khe-****sukka*** *asah netzer*

He built his house like a moth, and like a *sukka* made by a watchman (*Iyov* 27:18)

In *Yeshaya*, when describing the impending (potential) destruction of Yerushalayim, the prophet intones:

*Ve-notra bat-Tziyon ke-****sukka*** *ve-kharem, ki-meluna be-miksha, ke-ir netzura*

And the daughter of Tziyyon will be left like a *sukka* in a vineyard, or a shelter in a cucumber field, like a besieged city (*Yeshayahu* 1:8)

In six mentions – in 2 *Shmuel* 22:12 (=*Tehillim* 18:12), *Yeshayahu* 4:6, *Tehillim* 27:5, 31:21, and *Iyov* 36:29 (Elihu’s final speech) – the *sukka* is used as a metaphor for protection. The protection may be the clouds, compared to a *sukka* that covers and shields (2 *Shmuel* 22, *Tehillim* 18, *Iyov* 36) or a Divine protection from enemies (*Tehillim* 27, 31). For instance, in Psalm 27, David describes the Divine protection that he experienced when at war:

*Ki yitzpeneini be-****suko*** *be-yom ra’ah, yasteireini be-seter oholo be-tzur yeromemeini*

For He will hide me in His *sukka* in the day of trouble; He will conceal me under the cover of his tent, He will set me high upon a rock.

Perhaps most telling is Yeshayahu’s use of the *sukka* in his description of God’s protection of the citizens of Yerushalayim after the widespread punishment and death described in chapter 3:

*U-vara Hashem al kol mekhon Har Tziyyon ve-al mikra’eha anan yomam ve-ashan ve-noga eish lehava layla, ki al kol kavod chuppa.*

*Ve-****sukka*** *tihyeh le-tzel yomam mei-chorev, u-le-machseh u-le-mistor mizerem u-mi-matar.*

Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy and a pavilion.

It will be for a *sukka* by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain. (*Yeshayahu* 4:5-6)

Two instances of *sukka* are, in light of this, somewhat surprising.

In *Tehillim* 10, describing the behavior of wicked people who lie in waiting to ambush the unsuspecting innocent, we read:

*Yeisheiv be-ma’rav chatzeirim ba-mistarim yaharog naki, einav le-cheilkha yitzponu. Ye’erov ba-mistar ke-aryeh ve-****suko*** *ye’erov la-chatof ani, yachatof ani be-moshkho ve-rishto*

He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the hapless, he lurks in secret like a lion in his *sukka*;[[6]](#footnote-6) he lurks that he may seize the poor, he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. (*Tehillim* 10:7-8)

In God’s first speech “from the whirlwind,” perhaps the most beautiful description of creation (*Iyov* 38-39), when describing the feeding habits of the lions, He states:

*Ha-tzud le-lavi teref ve-chayat kefirim temalei? Ki yashochu va-me’onot, yeishvu* ***va-sukka*** *lemo arev*

"Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,

when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in their ***sukka*[[7]](#footnote-7)**? (*Iyov* 38:39-40)

All of which leaves our final mention – not final in any chronological or literary sense, but final from the focused perspective of our inquiry – in *Amos* 9. What did Amos mean to convey when describing David’s monarchy – if that’s what he was referencing – as a *sukka*?

THE RISHONIM

Rashi does not explain what *sukkat David* means, but he quotes the Targum, which renders it as *malkhuta de-veit David* – the monarchy of the house of David.

R. Yosef Kara (2nd commentary) supports this and anchors it in the context: “After I destroy the wicked kingdom (above, v. 8), at that point I will restore the monarchy of the house of David.”

In his first commentary, however, R. Yosef Kara interprets *sukkat David* as the Beit Ha-mikdash. R. Yosef ibn Kaspi has a similar interpretation:

And the survivors [of the “sieve” and its subsequent ejection of the sinners of the nation] will return to Yerushalayim and will build the House, as it says: “On that day I will raise up the fallen *sukka* of David,” and this was said about Zerubavel, who was from the Davidic line.[[8]](#footnote-8)

This is a remarkable comment and requires some explanation. Perhaps they were influenced by the rough parallels between a *sukka* and an *ohel* (as we saw in several of the verses cited above, e.g. *Tehillim* 27). David, of course, was never allowed to even start the construction of the *Mikdash*, and the *aron* that he brought to Yerushalayim (2 *Shmuel* 6) was placed in a tent (ibid. v. 17) that he constructed for that purpose. That tent had an altar in it and was a “sanctuary” in every (temporary) sense of the word.[[9]](#footnote-9) There may be a more profound connection made here, which we will investigate below.

The rest of the traditional *mefarshim* follow Rashi here, and some offer explanations for the use of *sukka* to describe the Davidic house.

R. Eliezer of Beaugency explains that “since it is the way of the shepherd to make a booth to guide the flock and to sit in the shade to be able to watch his flock, and David was the shepherd of Yisrael, it compared Yerushalayim and his royal house to the shepherds’ booths.”

Radak explains that the monarchy here is called *sukka* because it covers and protects the nation. This same idea may be behind the interpretation of R. Yosef Kara and R. Yosef ibn Kaspi above; since the *Mikdash* is seen as protecting the people, perhaps that is why it is referred to as a *sukka*.

Perhaps further support for seeing *sukkat David* as the *Mikdash* can be found by investigating the use of the key verb here – *hakeim*. Although this verb is used to describe validation (of a vow), fulfillment (of a promise), raising (a generation – e.g. *Amos* 2:11), and physically raising a structure (e.g. the stones at Gilgal – *Yehoshua* 4:20), among others things, it is also used (in both the passive as well as the active voices) to describe the final raising (and repeated raising) of the *Mishkan* (e.g. *Shemot* 40:2, *Bamidbar* 10:21). Perhaps the use here of *ba-yom hahu* ***akim*** *et* ***sukkat David*** influenced these commentators. This is difficult, however, as we never find the destroyed House referred to, either prophetically or descriptively, as “fallen.”

I would like to suggest that *sukkat David*, following the Targum, Rashi et al, refers to the monarchy – but for a multiplicity of reasons. First of all, as Radak points out, it is the job of the king to protect his subjects; in addition, the shepherd motif is never far from our minds when we evoke David – as a person, if not as a dynasty.

There are yet several other implications of the *sukka* which play a role here. First of all, as is clear both from the ritual aspect as well as the common harvest use, a *sukka* denotes what *Chazal* like to call *dirat arai* (a temporary dwelling).[[10]](#footnote-10) By definition – and this has halakhic impact on the structural and utilitarian definitions of a *sukka* – it is meant to be seen and experienced as temporary.

Furthermore, and this is related to the last point, a *sukka* highlights the complete dependence and trust that the person or group, huddled inside, have placed in their Creator. The famous dispute between R. Eliezer and R. Akiva as to whether the *sukkot* that God “had you dwell in” during the Exodus were booths or the Divine clouds highlights this point. As we saw in our survey of verses that use the *sukka* as either a metaphor for protection or even an analogy, it is at once a symbol of Divine protection while, at its core, rickety with little security in its future.

There is one more image of the *sukka* that we saw that may play a role here. In two places – in *Iyov* 38 and *Tehillim* 10 – we saw that the *sukka* was a lion’s lair from where he pounces to attack. Much as we romanticize David as a shepherd and associate him with the docile sheep, keep in mind that he was a mighty warrior. Furthermore, he was a scion of the tribe of Yehuda. This tribe, the tribe of leadership (*Bereishit* 49:8-12), is symbolized by the lion (ibid. v. 9) – an image that, in its full glory, is used to describe the entire nation, at least when they are camped as an army (*Bamidbar* 23:24 and 24:9). If the monarchy is intended to demonstrate an experiential flimsiness while symbolizing protection of its citizens, it also speaks to the military prowess of its leadership towards its enemies.

But why would the prophet want to comfort the people by promising them a “flimsy” “temporary” monarchy?

The answer to that can be found in the previous section. As we saw, Amos at once promised harsh punishment against the “sinning kingdom” while securing a return of the remnant. The split between the people and their leadership, which was a subtle undercurrent of Amos’s prophecies until this point, comes to the fore here. The people will survive – Beit Yaakov will not be obliterated. Yet the kingdom will fall because it failed to understand its role. Its job was not to feed itself nor to see its subjects as a means to its own self-gratification. Rather, its job is to protect its citizens (the *sukka* as protection), to exemplify the awareness that all protection comes from God (the *sukka* as temporary and flimsy cover) while also demonstrating tenacity and valor against the enemies, pouncing on them like a lion from its lair. I believe that this is why Amos, again demonstrating his rhetorical prowess, uses the *sukka* as the image of the desired monarchy that will be a restoration of the united monarchy under a scion of the Davidic house.

*Ve-gadarti et pirtzeihen*

and repair its breaches

*Peretz* is a Davidic word par excellence. Not only does David hail from the Peretz clan of Yehuda, but the word appears in many different contexts in the David narrative cycles. In addition, in describing Shelomo’s construction projects, the text (in the context of Yerovam’s “rebellion”) states that Shelomo

*Sagar et* ***peretz*** *ir David aviv*

Sealed up the breaches of the city of David, his father (1 *Melakhim* 11:27)

Perhaps most significant is the nearly contemporaneous report about Yoash (Yerovam’s father) and his attack on Yerushalayim:

*…va-yavo Yerushalayim* ***va-yifrotz*** *be-chomat Yerushalayim*

…and he came to Yerushalayim and he broke down the wall of Yerushalayim… (2 *Melakhim* 14:13)

The aptness of this verb both in a Davidic context as well as in referencing supporting the security of Yerushalayim is clear. The use of this verb *gadarti* seems to argue in favor of *sukkat David* as the city, not the *Mikdash*.

*Va-harisotav akim*

and raise up its ruins

One cannot miss the double use of *hakeim* in this verse – raising up *sukkat David* and raising up the ruins of the city. Abravanel points out the correlation between this phrase and the woeful prophecy in 5:1:

*Nafla to tosif* ***kum*** *betulat Yisrael; nitesha al admata ein* ***mekima*.**

She has fallen and will never again **rise**, the maiden of Israel; she has been abandoned on her own land, there is no one to **raise her up.**

Abravanel sees our verse as “redeeming” the earlier one and distinguishes between *betulat Yisrael*, representing the northern monarchy (which will never again rise), and *Sukkat David*,which includes all of the tribes under Davidic rule.

I would like to suggest that this is yet another piece in Amos’s rhetorical puzzle, the pieces of which he has subtly placed within his pre-*eschaton* oeuvre and is using them as his palette from which to paint the picture of the glorious future. This verse is taking the temporal falling of the *betulat Yisrael*, which will never rise as long as she sees herself as entitled (as we described), and is raising her in the guise of *sukkat David*, with all of the transformative awareness outlined above.

*U-venitiha ki-yemei olam*

and rebuild it as in the days of old

Notice that all of the verbs in this verse are in the first person (or First Person). God is doing all of it on behalf of His people, and they are, at this point, the passive beneficiaries. This will slightly unfold in the next verse, but a much fuller partnership will be revealed in the epilogue.

The phrase *ki-yemei olam* appears only three times in *Tanakh*. Most famously – and latest – is in *Malakhi* 3:4, with the promise that the sweetness of the offerings will be restored *ki-yemei olam*. The closing prophecy of *Micha* begins with this beautiful image:

*Re’eh amkha ve-shivtekha tzon nachalatekha shokhni levadad ya’ar betokh Carmel yiru Bashan ve-Gilad* ***ki-yemei olam****. Ki-yemei tzeitkha mei-Eretz Mitzrayim arenu nifla’ot*.

Shepherd your people with your shepherd's rod, the flock that belongs to you, the one that lives alone in a thicket, in the midst of a pastureland. Allow them to graze in Bashan and Gilead, as they did in the old days.

As in the days when you departed from the land of Egypt, I will show you miraculous deeds. ([*Mikha* 7:14-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/net/mic/7/15/s_900015))

The powerful sense of wistful nostalgia is palpable here. In addition, we may read the continuation *ki-yemei tzeitkha…* as expanding on the end of verse 14. In other words, *ki-yemei olam* means “the time of the Exodus,” which, in prophetic imagery (see *Hoshea* 2, *Yirmiyahu* 2:1-2), was a time of great romantic attachment between God and His people.

We can hardly imagine the rebuilt city of Yerushalyaim as evoking the Exodus period, but it may take us to another epoch of “glory days” – the pinnacle of Israelite power and prestige enjoyed by the united monarchy, centered in Yerushalayim. Just as Malakhi’s *ki-yemei olam* is an imagined return to the sweet offerings of the First Temple period, Amos’s *ki-yemei olam* is an envisioned return to those halcyon days of Davidic rule.

*Lema’an yirshu et she’erit Edom*

that they may possess the remnant of Edom

Whether we understand *lema’an* as defining the purpose of the foregoing or as an independent statement, it is revealing. If we follow the former approach, then we are left with a poorer picture than we had before: All of this restoration is for one external goal – to disinherit the remnants of Edom and complete the prophecy given to Rivka, “The younger (Yaakov) will enslave the older (Esav=Edom)” (*Bereishit* 25:23). If we read this as a separate accomplishment of the period (and there are ample examples of *lema’an* used in that manner), then the next step of the restored Davidic kingdom is to use the *sukka* as a lion’s lair from which to pounce on Edom and defeat them.

*Ve-khol ha-goyim asher nikra shemi aleihem*

and all the nations who are called by my name

This is a most pregnant phrase. Do we read this as “all the nations of the world (because they are all) called by My Name”? In other words, does it imply ultimate rule of the Davidic monarch over everyone? Or do we read this as meaning that those particular nations over whom God’s Name is called will fall under the vassal-rule of David? If so, how do we define this group? Are they nations that have self-identified, at some point, with the God of Israel? This may include all of the Abrahamic seed, such as Amon, Moav, and Edom. Or does it mean all the nations that God has addressed, in which case it would extend to Egypt, Aram, and so forth? We will address this issue in our addendum about prophetic eschatologies.

*Ne’um Hashem oseh zot*

says the LORD who does this.

Even though we noted the shift to the third person plural in this verse – *lema’an* ***yirshu*** *–* the text reverts back and reminds us that behind all of this empowerment is the Empowering God, Who will give the Davidic king and his flock the strength and the opportunities to realize this vision.

In next week’s *shiur*, we will begin our examination of the epilogue – Amos’s uplifting and redemptive vision, with which he concludes these nine astounding chapters of oratorical brilliance.

**For Further Study:**

Reich, Nurith. “Tabernacle, Mourning, and Messianic Passion,” *Lĕšonénu: A Journal for the Study of the Hebrew Language and Cognate Subjects* 77:2-4 (2015), pp. 241–250.

Richardson, H. Neil. ""Skt" (*Amos* 9:11)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92:3 (1973), pp. 375-381

Rubenstein, Jeffrey L. “The ‘Sukka’ As Temporary or Permanent Dwelling: Study in the Development of Talmudic Thought,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 64 (1993), pp. 137-166.

1. I am not reckoning *Iyov* 40:31, which, according to most commentators, has a completely different meaning and root [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Besides 19 mentions of the town of Sukkot, identified with Deit ‘Alla on the east bank of the Jordan. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Bereishit* 33:17, 2 *Shmuel* 11:11, 1 *Melakhim* 20:12, 16, *Yona* 4:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Bereishit* ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 2 *Shmuel* and 1 *Melakhim* 20. *Yona* is a different matter, although that could be (very) loosely classified with either group [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See ibn Ezra and Radak ad loc. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In both *Tehillim* 10 and *Iyov* 38, translations of *sukka* include “covert,” “lair,” and “thicket.” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See 1 *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 3:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 1 *Melakhim* 2:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This phrase was evidently coined by Rava; see, inter alia *Yoma* 10b. See Rubenstein’s article in For Further Study. Nonetheless, the experience of *sukka* as temporary dwelling significantly predates Rava and seems to be anchored in the nature and typical use of the structure itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)