



# Hakhel in Galus

## *What's It All About?*

This year is unique in the fact that it is a year of Hakhel. However, Hakhel is seemingly only relevant when the *Beis Hamikdash* is around, so why are we even discussing it?

One can compare it to the idea of Shemitah—although halachically it only applies in Eretz Yisroel, we nevertheless explain that it is also relevant to Yidden in the Diaspora. They must make their own lives into an “Eretz Yisroel” so that Hashem’s presence can dwell among them. So, too, by Hakhel: Although it only applied when the *Beis Hamikdash* was standing, and even then, only inside

the *Beis Hamikdash*, its spiritual reality carries meaning today as well.

Although nowadays the *Beis Hamikdash* is only present *b'ruchnius* and one must pray to see it physically with the coming of Moshiach, the essential aspect of the *Beis Hamikdash* remains its spiritual existence. Additionally, it is known that when we occupy ourselves with the study of the structure of the physical *Beis Hamikdash*, it is considered as if we built it. This highlights the inherent connection between the material and spiritual aspects of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Seemingly, the year of Hakhel carries no unique significance aside

from the fact that it is the eighth year. For six years one plants and in the seventh year one rests. This differentiates Shemitah from the six years of planting, but Hakhel is just one of those regular six years.

However, regarding the *possuk* “*Mikeitz sheva shanim b'moed shnas hashemitah*,”<sup>1</sup> Rashi explains that it is referring to Hakhel, the first year in the cycle, in which the laws of Shemitah still apply to the harvest that extends into it from the previous year. We see from this that Hakhel has two advantages: Not only is it the eighth year—Hakhel—but it also has some of the unique qualities of Shemitah.



## *The Eternity of Chanukah*

The main event in the month of Kislev is the Yom Tov of Chanukah, which took place during *galus* when the *Beis Hamikdash* was standing.

Nowadays, when we do not have the *Beis Hamikdash*, the impurity does not have such a devastating impact, for we are only in the mundane state of exile. During the time of Chanukah, however, when the Greeks defiled all the pure olive oil in the *Beis Hamikdash*, the *tumah* was so much more acute—“*lichbosh es hamalka imi babayis*” (defiling the holiness in the *Beis Hamikdash* itself!)

Therefore, the eventual miracle of finding the single jug of oil resulted in the lighting of *neiros Chanukah*, lights that can never be extinguished. The *yisron ha'or min hachoshech* (the superior light resulting from a previous state of darkness) causes them to shine perpetually. This is what the third *Beis Hamikdash* will

accomplish; it will be a *binyan nitzchi*, enduring forever.

## *'A Congregation Does Not Die'*

The Gemara in Horayos<sup>2</sup> states that “A congregation does not die.” If the owner of a *korban chatas* dies, the animal cannot be used and must be left to live out its natural life. However, a *korban chatas* of the *tzibbur* will always be brought, because of the above-mentioned rule. The same goes for Hakhel, the definition of which is the gathering and congregation of Yidden. This is the connection between Kislev (Chanukah) and Hakhel. Both symbolize the idea of eternity—never being extinguished—connecting them to the *geulah*.

## *Towards Geulah*

There are two ways of counting the months of the year; starting either from Nissan or from Tishrei. Nissan symbolizes the *avodah* of a *tzaddik* and Tishrei is associated with the *avodah* of

a *baal teshuva*. The third month from Tishrei is Kislev, the number three also symbolizing the third *Beis Hamikdash*, when “the righteous will come to *teshuvah*.”<sup>3</sup>

All the above-mentioned items are connected to the *geulah*, when Shemitah will once again be observed in a complete manner. Similarly, only when Moshiach comes will we be able to fulfill the laws of Hakhel.

Thus comes the *horaah*, that we must occupy ourselves with things that bring the *geulah* closer, like learning Torah and doing *mitzvos*. And since “*simcha poretz geder*,”<sup>4</sup> by doing this with joy we can break through all boundaries. This will all lead to *kabbalas pnei Moshiach tzidkeinu, bimheirah biyameinu mamosh!* **7**

– From the *sicha* of Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5741

1. Devarim 31, 10.
2. 6a.
3. Zohar 153b.
4. Maamar Samach Tisamach 5657.