

בעזרת ש"ת

The Way of Emunah

Collected Thoughts
on the Weekly Parshah

From

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Sukkos



The Way of Emunah

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Sukkos

Learning Maseches Sukkah

Reviving the Heart Through Learning Maseches Sukkah:

Almost every year, the Koloshitzer Rebbe *zy"ta* would relate the following story on Motzoei Yom Kippur in the name of his grandfather, the Sanzer Rov *zy"ta*:

After his marriage, the Yeshuos Yaakov *zt"l* was supported by his mother-in-law in the city of Yaroslav. One year, the Yidden of that city went to shul for Kol Nidrei on the eve of Yom Kippur, and they saw a man with a nice beard and shining face standing before the *amud*. He began Kol Nidrei and chanted the words with extreme enthusiasm, as the entire congregation recited the

prayer along with him. They also allowed him to serve as the chazan for Maariv, as they saw that he was a holy man.

This was Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchov *zy"ta*. His tremendous *hislahavus* and *kedusha* cast a shadow of fear upon the people. Everyone sitting on the Mizrach wall moved towards the back because they were afraid to look at his fiery face.

After Maariv, everyone went home. When they came back in the morning, they saw that the Berditchover was again still by the *amud*. He had not moved from that place all night. He proceeded to serve as the *chazan* for all the *tefillos* – Pesukei D'Zimrah, Shacharis, Mussaf, Minchah and Neilah.

After Maariv, as Yom Kippur ended, everyone wanted the *zechus* of inviting him to their house to break his fast. They understood that he had come to raise funds for some worthy cause, so they decided that whoever pledged the most money would host him for the *seudah*. They began to place their bids, with the amount growing higher and higher.

The Yeshuos Yaakov's mother-in-law was sitting in the Ezras Nashim, wearing a necklace bedecked with exquisite gems. She immediately took it off and threw it into the bais medrash as a donation to the guest. Since the necklace was worth more than all the bids, she merited hosting Rav Levi Yitzchok.

Rav Levi Yitzchok walked to her home, accompanied by the Yeshuos Yaakov, and made

Havdalah. The mother-in-law put all kinds of delicacies on the table, but the Berditchover screamed, "I need something right now to revive my heart."

The Yeshuos Yaakov understood what he meant. He brought him a Gemara Maseches Sukkah, and the Berditchover sat down and learned from it all night, finishing the Masechta with Rashi and Tosafos by morning.

The Sanzer Rov would conclude by saying, "There are many difficult Tosafosim in Maseches Sukkah. Learning this Masechta is what revived his heart."

Learning Maseches Sukkah Saves From Harm:

The Tosher Rebbe zy"va writes

(in Sefer Avodas Avodah, Sichos Kodesh, Chelek, page 381) that his grandfather, Rav Elimelech of Toshiy"ta showed him a *maamer* that says: **"Anyone who learns Maseches Sukkah will be saved from all suffering and danger."**

Rav Elimelech would say that Maseches Sukkah was his "Maseches Olam Haba", and he would learn it many times through the year with much *iyun*.

On this topic, the Munkatcher Rov zy"ta writes (Divrei Torah, Mahadura 7, Ois 49): "I heard in the name of the *gaonim* and *tzadikim* of Ashkenaz z"l that **it is a *segulah* to learn Maseches Sukkah every day. Through doing this, our enemies will fall and become subjugated, and will be unable to do us any harm.**"

He adds that there is a hint to this in the *pasuk* in Tehillim (31:21): "You shall hide them in the shelter of Your face, from bands of men; protect them in a sukkah from the strife of tongues." The *pasuk* can be understood as saying that when one "hides in the shelter" of the sukkah, by learning Maseches Sukkah, he will be saved from "the strife of the tongues" of prosecuting forces and enemies that wish to harm him.

This is also hinted to by the words: "*Vayomer Hashem salachti k'devarecha.*" (And Hashem said, "I will forgive them like your word.") The first letters of these words spell the word "Sukkah".

Erev Sukkos

Tzedakah on Erev Sukkos:

The Match Efraim writes (Siman 625, Ois 21): “One should give a lot of *tzedakah* on erev Sukkos and invite poor and upright guests for Yomtov. Everyone should do this as much as he can afford.”

The K’tzeh Efraim (Siman Koton 25) adds the following:

The Gemara says (Shabbos 133B): “This is my G-d and I will beautify him.’ This means to beautify His mitzvos. Make a beautiful sukkah, a beautiful *lulav*, a beautiful *shofar*, beautiful *tzitzis*, a beautiful *sefer* Torah, written for His sake with beautiful ink, with a beautiful quill, and with an expert scribe, and tie it with beautiful thread. Abba Shaul says: To beautify Him means to make yourself similar to Him. Just like He is full of grace and mercy, you should be full of grace and

mercy.”

Rav Yehuda Assad *zt”l* explains Abba Shaul’s words by saying that if someone makes a beautiful sukkah, etc., it may seem to him that he has fulfilled his obligation to glorify Hashem, and he will not give sufficient *tzedakah*. Thus, he stresses that it isn’t enough to beautify mitzvos. One must also emulate Hashem’s *middos* and show compassion to others by giving *tzedakah*.

Giving Tzedakah to Merit Shelter in His Shade:

The Bnei Yissochor (Tishrei, Maamar 10, Ois 24) quotes Arizal *zy”a* as saying that **one should give a lot of *tzedakah* on erev Sukkos.**

The Chida *zt”l* (Sefer Kisei Dovid,

Drush 7) explains the reason for this by quoting Chazal, who say that when Klal Yisroel left Mitzrayim, they made a pact to do *chesed* to each other. Mahar" a Meyuchis explains this pact by quoting the Medrash (Rus Rabbah 5:2) that states: "Rav Avin said: Come and see the great power of *tzadikim*, the great power of *tzedakah*, and the great power of acts of *chesed*. They don't take refuge in the shadow of the land...Rather, they take refuge in the shadow of Hashem Himself, as is stated (Tehillim 36:8): 'How precious is Your kindness, Hashem, and the sons of man will take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.'"

He explains this to mean that **those who give *tzedakah* and do *chesed* are not shielded by any angels or other entities.** Rather, they are protected

directly by Hashem. Accordingly, the Medrash is saying that when the Jews left Egypt, they made a pact to do *chesed* to each other so that they should be guided directly by Hashem, and not through any angel or intermediary. And in this merit, they were able to have Hashem walk before them day and night (Shemos 13:21) and protect them at all times.

On Sukkos, we commemorate the *Ananei Hakavod*, which were a sign of Hashem personally protecting and caring for Klal Yisroel in the merit of them giving *tzedakah* and doing *chesed* for each other. **Therefore, it is appropriate to approach this day by giving *tzedakah* and helping our fellow Jews. When we do this, we too will merit being guided directly by Hashem and not through any**

intermediary.

adds that this is the reason why Avrohom Avinu visits us on Sukkos, as he was the first man to truly engage in *chesed*.

The Sanzer Rov's Tzedakah:

The distribution of tzedakah of the Sanzer Rov zy"ra was legendary. Throughout the entire year, he would give away every dollar he had to the poor and needy. He would never go to sleep at night if even one penny remained in his house. **But he would give even more tzedakah during the days before Sukkos.**

His grandson, Rav Shlomo of Bobov zy"ra (the son of his son, Rav Meir zy"ra) related that one year on erev Sukkos, the Sanzer Rov said to his sons, "Give me all the money you have. I need it to

obtain the most beautiful sukkah decorations in the world."

He explained that on erev Sukkos one must give as much *tzedakah* as he can because we are visited on Sukkos night by the Ushpizin of Avrohom Avinu, who personified the *middah* of *chesed*. We can only properly greet him if we try to emulate him by giving to others.

That erev Sukkos, he distributed 1,800 gold coins to the poor. By noon, he had run out of money. He told someone to go out in the street and ask the esrog dealers to come to his home. He told them, "You sold a lot of *esrogim*. You certainly have some money in your pockets right now. Please lend it to me, and I'll pay you back when I can. I need the money for my sukkah decorations."

They lent him the money, and he gave that away to the poor as well.

His son, my grandfather Rav Yeshaya of Tchechoiv zy”a, recalled that when he was a boy, he once made a picture of an eagle for a sukkah decoration. When he showed it to his father, the Sanzer Rov told him, “Very nice! Now let me show you my sukkah decoration.”

He then showed him how he gave away money to the poor, and he said, **“This is my sukkah decoration.”**

Lending Sukkah Boards to the Poor:

Rav Mordechai of Lechovitch zy”a was accustomed to preparing many wooden boards so that he could lend them to

poor people to use for their Sukkahs.

One year, a poor shoemaker came to him on Erev Sukkos. The man was limping on one leg and said that he needed to borrow some boards to make a Sukkah. The *tzadik* told him that he had already lent out all of the boards that he had. The poor man then went out to try to find boards elsewhere.

Rav Mordechai watched him from his window and saw that he was going from house to house asking if anyone had extra boards. He felt terrible for the man and cried out, “Ribono Shel Olam. Do you see how much the Jewish people love Your mitzvos? It is raining outside, yet this poor shoemaker who walks with a limp is shlepping from door to door to try to find wooden boards so that he can

fulfill Your mitzvah. Please send some boards from Shomayim so that he can have a Sukkah.”

Rav Mordechai then went up to the roof of his house and found a few boards laying there. He told his *shamash* to run and bring them to the shoemaker and to help him build his Sukkah.

Chag Hasukkos

Teshuva With Peace of Mind:

The *pasuk* states (Vayikroh 23:42): “You shall dwell (*teishvu*) in sukkos for seven days.”

Rav Yaakov Dovid of Radmosk *zy”a* (Sefer Avnei Hamakom) quotes Rav Dov Berish of Biala *zy”a* as translating the word “*teishvu*” to mean “*teshuva*”, and also to connote “*yishuv hada’as*” (peace of mind). He says that in actuality they are both the same thing, as

to do *teshuva*, one needs *yishuv hada’as*.

Chag Ha’asif:

The *pasuk* states (Shemos 34:22): “And the Chag Ha’asif (festival of the ingathering of the crops), the period of the year.” Sefer Toras Avos quotes Rav Mordechai of Lechovitch *zy”a* as explaining this to mean that **through the influence of this *yomtov*, one can gather the strength to serve Hashem properly all year long.**

Mitzvas Sukkah

Entering the Sukkah With a Commitment for the Future:

The *pasuk* states: “*B’Sukkos teishbu*. (You shall dwell in sukkos).”

The Yitav Lev *zy”a* (in Sefer

Yitav Panim) notes that the word “*teishbu*” has the same letters as the word “*boshes*” (embarrassment). He explains that if a person would think about how holy the Sukkah is and how Hashem provides us with a “light that surrounds us” and raises us to great heights, he would be overcome with embarrassment for any sins he ever committed. He would be ashamed to enter this holy place knowing that he did bad things in the past.

The best solution for this problem is to accept to improve one's ways and not to do any more *aveiros*. When one does so, Hashem accepts him and considers it as if he already perfected himself. He is now worthy to enter the Sukkah.

The Yitav Lev continues by saying that the deeds of *tzadikim* are called “*ohr*” (light), while the

deeds of the wicked are called “*choshech*” (darkness). With this in mind, he explains the *pasuk* that says that every “*ezrach*” (literally “every citizen”) shall sit in the Sukkah. The word “*ezrach*” can be understood to mean “*ohr zorach*” - my light will shine. In other words, if someone promises to improve and who says that in the future he will be a *tzadik* whose deeds are “a light”, he can then sit in the Sukkah without shame. The proof of this is “because the children of Yisroel sat in Sukkos when they left Egypt.” Even though they were on the 49th level of impurity, Hashem took them out of Mitzrayim because they would accept the Torah in the future. So too, we can sit in the Sukkah without embarrassment if we accept to shine in the future by becoming *tzadikim*.

The Preciousness of the Sukkah:

Whenever Sukkos started on a Sunday night, the Bnei Yissochor zy”a would offer non-Jewish workers a lot of money to build his sukkah on that day. He would have to give them two pints of whiskey to convince them to work on their holiday (Sunday).

When he entered the sukkah at the beginning of Yomtov, he would spread out his hands and feet and kiss the floors and the walls. He would enthusiastically say, “Ribono Shel Olam, you see that for a bit of whiskey, non-Jews are willing to work on their holiday. But Your nation wouldn’t do this for all the money in the world, even in this lowly generation.”

With the Entire Body:

The Vilna Gaon zy”a would say that there are only two mitzvos that encompass the entire body – sukkah and living in Eretz Yisroel. This is hinted to in the *pasuk* (Tehillim 76:3): “*Vayehi b’shalom suko u’maonaso b’tzion*”, which he translated to mean that the mitzvos that are done with “*shelimus*” (the entire body) are sukkah and living in Tzion.

Full of Holy Names:

The Sanzer Rov zy”a (quoted in Sefer Chakal Yitzchok, Parshas Eikev) also notes that the mitzvah of sukkah is the only mitzvah that encircles the entire body. It is true that tzitzis also cover the majority of the body and wrap one who wears them in holiness, but they do not cover the feet. When one is in a sukkah,

however, even his feet are encircled by the mitzvah.

Furthermore, he says that the sukkah consists of “holy names” of Hashem, and even the ground of the sukkah is made up His holy names. Hashem commands us to sit in the sukkah and walk upon the holiness in order to purify and sanctify ourselves.

Sitting in the Sukkah is Like Leaving Golus:

The Yalkut (Emor, Remez 653) states: “Rav Eliezer bar Maros said: Why do we make a sukkah after Yom Kippur? Because on Rosh Hashanah, Hashem judges the entire world. On Yom Kippur, He seals the judgment. It is possible that it was decreed that we must be exiled. Therefore, we make a sukkah and exile ourselves from our homes, and

Hashem considers this as if we went into exile...”

A Bigger Mitzvah if Done by Oneself:

Sefer Shivchei Rav Yaivi relates that Rav Yaivi of Ostroha would do all the work related to mitzvos himself. Even when he had others who could do it for him, he would do it on his own. He would personally purchase *schach*, and make several trips to carry it home on his shoulders.

With Him in Gan Eden:

Sefer Siach Sarfei Kodesh relates that Rav Fishel of Strikovy^{”a} lived in the same house as a tailor. The tailor built a sukkah that he decorated with all types of paintings, flowers, fruits, etc. When the Strikover saw the

sukkah, he asked who decorated it so nicely. When he was told that it was the tailor, he was very happy. He asked him if he wanted a *bracha* for children, wealth, or a long life. The tailor answered, “I only want one small thing. Just like we dwell together in this world, I want to be with you in the next world.”

The Rebbe replied, “That’s not a small thing. That’s a major thing. But since I promised to fulfill your request, I can’t retract my offer, even though it will be hard for me.”

After the Rebbe’s *petirah*, the tailor got sick. He passed away just eight days later.

The Best Sukkah Decorations:

Sefer Keser Shem Tov (Hosafos

at the end of the sefer, Os 112) quotes the Baal Shem Tov *zy”a* as saying: “My sukkah decorations are the simple Jews who accept to serve Hashem with simplicity. Through the joy they have in the mitzvah, which comes from their simple *emunah*, they create much joy in Shomayim.”

The same *sefer* adds (ibid, Ois 113) that a major part of the Besht’s avodah on Sukkos was to bring joy to simple Jews.

Similarly, it is related that Rav Moshe of Razvodov *zy”a* had a beautiful sukkah, which was decorated very nicely. It was so nice that people would come from all over to see it. Even the government ministers of Vienna once came to have a look. Still and all, the Rebbe would humbly say that he envied the simple Jews who made sukkos of just four walls, solely for the purpose

of fulfilling the mitzvah.

A Choleh is Not Exempt From Welcoming Guests:

A guest once came to the home of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky *zt”l* in Vilna on Sukkos, and the Rov told him, “Please go to my sukkah in the backyard and eat as much as you want. Unfortunately, I am sick and am exempt from sitting in a sukkah, so I have to remain in the house.”

The guest went to the sukkah. He was surprised when Rav Chaim Ozer appeared in the doorway and proceeded to sit down next to him at the table. The man asked, “Didn’t the Rov say that he is sick and exempt from sitting in a sukkah?”

Rav Chaim Ozer replied, “According to halacha, I am not

obligated to sit in a sukkah, but I am not exempt from the mitzvah of *hachanasas orchim*, as we see that Avrohom Avinu fulfilled this mitzvah even when he was sick. Therefore, I decided to sit with you in the sukkah, as it would be wrong for me to allow my guest to sit alone.”

To Merit Sitting in the Sukkas Livyasan:

Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchov *zy”a* would invite many simple Jews to his sukkah. He maintained an open door, with everyone being warmly welcomed. He explained this custom by saying, “In the future, when *tzadikim* will sit in the sukkah made from the skin of the *livyasan*, I will want to join them. If they ask me why I should be permitted to sit with

the *tzadikim*, I will have an answer. **I will say that I allowed simple people into my sukkah, so even though I am a simple man, I should be allowed into this sukkah.**”

Daled Minim

Small to Man, Big to Hashem:

The *pasuk* states (Mishlei 30:29): “Three are outstanding in their step, and four are outstanding in their walk.” The Medrash (Vayikroh Rabbah 30:14) says that this refers to the Daled Minim. Every Jew runs to acquire the finest minim in order to glorify Hashem. It states: “They appear small to human eyes, but they are big to Hashem.”

Like Fulfilling All the

Mitzvos:

The Yesod V'Shoresch Ha'avodah (Shaar 11, Perek 14) quotes a Medrash that says that one who takes the four minim is considered like he did all the mitzvos. The Avudraham adds that the *gematriah* of “esrog im gimmel minim” is 613.

The Joy of Fulfilling a Mitzvah L'Shem Shomayim:

There once was a shortage of *esrogim*. A man came to the Vilna Gaon *zy”a* and told him that he was willing to give him his *esrog* on one condition – that he would receive all the reward for the mitzvah.

The Gaon said, “This is a really good deal. It would even be worth it for me to give away my entire portion in Olam Haba

for the chance to perform the mitzvah of *esrog* properly.”

When he was handed the *esrog*, the Gaon was full of joy. He declared, “This year I have the *zechus* to do a mitzvah 100% *l’sheim shomayim*, with no personal considerations!”

Selling a Horse for an Esrog:

Sefer Zichron Tzadikim (Chelek Hei) relates that Rav Nachman of Radvill zy”a (brother-in-law of the Magid of Zlotchov zy”a) once went to the city of Lemberg to purchase an *esrog mehudar*. He brought along with him a lot of money for this purpose, and traveled in his horse and carriage, along with his attendants. When he got to Lemberg, he saw that the price of *esrogim* had gone up substantially. He didn’t have enough money to buy a nice one.

Therefore, he sold his horse and carriage in order to purchase a good *esrog*, and he hired a wagon driver to take him home.

A Revelation Through the Daled Minim:

Sefer Zichron Tzadikim (Chelek Aleph, Erech Rav Pinchos of Koretz, Siman 14) relates that before his greatness became revealed to the world, Rav Pinchos of Koretz zy”a was a very poor man. He would sit all day in the bais medrash, immersed in his holy *avodah*. Although he and his family were starving, he accepted it all with love. Since he was unknown to the public, no one offered to support him.

One year, the *esrog* crop was inferior in quality, and almost no kosher *esrogim* could be found. When Rav Pinchos heard people

talking about the problem in the bais medrash, he said with his *ruach hakodesh*, “I will, *im yirtzah Hashem*, have a kosher *esrog*.”

The people who heard him say this laughed at him. They wondered how a poor *batlan* could possibly get a good *esrog* when even the wealthiest men couldn't get their hands on one. However, he insisted that he would have a kosher *esrog* for Yomtov, and the men continued to mock him.

Erev Sukkos arrived, and there still were no kosher *esrogim* in town. On Sukkos morning, someone asked him, “Do you still believe that you'll have an *esrog*?”

He answered, “The *k'hal* still hasn't reached Tefillas Hallel!”

Again, he was laughed at and

told he was dreaming.

Everyone was shocked when the chazan finished *Chazaras HaShas* of Shacharis, and a gentile rode up to the shul on a horse, with a beautiful *esrog* in his hand, as well as the other three *minim*, already tied up nicely in accordance with halacha. He gave the Daled *Minim* to Rav Pinchos, who made a joyful, enthusiastic blessing on them.

It was later learned that during the summer, Rav Pinchos had met a friend of his who lived in the city of Zeslov. This man was a merchant who traveled far and wide for business. Rav Pinchos told him, “When you get to a place where *esrogim* grow, please buy a nice one for me.”

There was still a long time until Sukkos, and the merchant

wondered why Rav Pinchos was thinking about *esrogim*, but he did as he was asked. He bought an *esrog* as soon as he could and kept it in his home until *erev* Sukkos.

Since he couldn't travel to Koretz himself, he hired a non-Jew to take it for him, and the messenger arrived on Sukkos morning, right before Hallel.

It then became known that Rav Pinchos was a holy man who could see things that others could not.

Pri Eitz Hadar-Horse:

Rav Mordechai of Neshchizy" *a* lived a difficult life. He was so poor that all he ever ate during the week was bread with salt. On Shabbos, he would also have a bit of herring. All year long, he

would put away a few pennies each week to save up enough to buy an *esrog mehudar* for Sukkos.

One year, he traveled during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to the city of Brody to purchase an *esrog*. He had with him 10 rubles, which he had managed to save up over the course of an entire year. On the way, he met a Jew who was crying bitterly. Rav Mordechai asked him why he was weeping, and the man said, "I have been struck with a terrible tragedy. I live in a nearby village, where I make my living as a water carrier. I have a horse and wagon and a barrel that I fill with water from a well in a field. I make just enough money to live very simply. Today, my horse collapsed and died. I don't have any money for *yomtov*, and I

cannot afford to buy a new horse!”

Rav Mordechai immediately took out his ten rubles from his pocket and gave them to the water carrier, saying, “Use this to buy a new horse.”

He came home empty-handed, without any money and with no *esrog*. When he got home, he happily told his *chasidim*, “*Boruch Hashem*, Hashem sent me a ‘*pri eitz hadar*’ for Sukkos. **Everyone else will make a *bracha* on an *esrog*, but this year I will make a *bracha* on a horse!**”

**Zerizin
L’Mitzvos:**

There once was a severe shortage of *esrogim*, and only one *esrog* could be procured for

the entire city of Berditchov. The *esrog* was kept in the home of Rav Levi Yitzchok zy”a, and everyone came to his house to make a *bracha* on it. The *shamash* thought to himself: After Rebbe makes a *bracha* on the *esrog*, the next in line will be the distinguished scholars and leading *chasidim*. After them will be the turn of the wealthy men. By the time I get a turn, it will be almost nightfall. Why should I have to wait so long? Why am I worse than them?

He decided that early in the morning, when the Rebbe went to the mikvah, he would stealthily take the *esrog* and make a *bracha* on it.

That’s exactly what he did. He got up early, waited for the Rebbe to go to the mikvah, took out the *esrog*, and made a *bracha*. However, since he was so scared

that someone might see him, he began to tremble. The *esrog* fell to the ground, and the *pitom* fell off, rendering it *posul*.

The *shamash* was overcome with grief and fear. When Rav Levi Yitzchok returned, he tearfully told him what had happened. He thought the *tzadik* would be angry with him, but he was amazed to see that he remained fully calm. He held the *esrog* in his hands and emotionally declared, “Ribono Shel Olam, look at how much Your children love mitzvos. This man wanted to do the mitzvah of

Daled Minim with *zerizus*. He put so much effort and even placed himself in danger of being yelled at so that he could be amongst those who are *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos*.”

An Esrog Like a Heart:

The Ropshitzer Rebbe *zy”a* would say that the reason we make sure that an *esrog* has no blemish at all is that an *esrog* is comparable to the heart, and even a tiny blemish on the heart is very dangerous.

Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah

The Greatness of the Day

Complete Achdus With Hashem:

The Me’or Einayim (*Parshas Haazinu*) writes: “All the *avodos*

that we do during this month – Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, *shofar*, *sukkah*, and *lulav* – the purpose of it all is because of Shemini Atzeres, when we unite with Hashem with complete

unity.”

The World Stands on the Merit of These Days:

Sefer Raza D’Uvda (Leil Bais D’Sukkos) quotes my ancestor, Rav Eliezer Zev of Kretchnif zy”a, as saying in the name of his grandfather, Rav Uren Leib of Premishlan zy”a, that the entire world stands upon the three days of Hoshanah Rabbah, Shemini Atzeres, and Simchas Torah.

No Need for a Specific Mitzvah:

The Chasam Sofer *zt”l* (Drashon L’Sukkos, page 54) writes that every holiday has a special mitzvah, such as eating matzoh on Pesach, the *Shtei Halechem* on Shavuot, *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah,

fasting on Yom Kippur, and the *Daled Minim* and *sukkah* on Sukkos. Shemini Atzeres, however, has no special mitzvah. Since it is so holy in and of itself, it doesn’t need any mitzvah besides “*v’hayisa ach sameach*” (you shall only be happy). On this day, we don’t need anything else for our *avodas Hashem*.

Entering the King’s Chamber:

Sefer She’eris Yisroel (Shaar Hazemanim) relates that one year, after the *hakafos* on Simchas Torah, the Rebbe of Vilednik zy”a related a *moshol* of a powerful king who designated one day in the year when any subject could enter his castle to see him in his glory. He knew that the regular guards wouldn’t allow the lowliest people to

enter, so he assigned a special guard to be in charge on that day. He took the man who usually guarded the horses and gave him this job. Since this man was lowly himself, he happily allowed all the lowliest people to enter. And since he was opening the door for all the simple people, he too was able to see the face of the king.

The Rebbe then said in his humility, "I am like that guard of the horses. I am lowly person. But since I help people see Hashem's glory on this day, I also am able to see it."

To be Able to Get Home:

Sefer Imrei Kodesh Hashalem writes that Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz *zy"ra* quoted Rav Uri of Streisk *zy"ra* as saying: "After Hashem helps a Jew fulfill the

mitzvos of sukkah, and he merits to feel the holiness of the walls and the *schach* and perform all the associated mitzvos, how is it possible for him to return to his regular home? It is a great kindness of Hashem that He gives us the holiness of Shemini Atzeres right after Sukkos, which helps us transition back to our homes. Without this, it would be impossible to go straight from such holiness to our regular lives."

Tov Li Toras Picha:

Sefer Darchei Hayashar V'Hatov relates that one year, Shemini Atzeres fell on Shabbos and the crowd at the Liska Rebbe *zy"ra's tish* was grabbing the kugel. The Rebbe stood up and declared, "I can give you something even better than

kugel.”

He then encouraged the working men to financially support the Torah scholars, and he told the *talmidei chochomim* how to interact with the *balhabatim*. He concluded by saying, “Nu, didn’t I give you something better than kugel?”

Simchas Torah

Nagilah V’Nismecha Bo:

The Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Pinchos, Remez 682) says a *moshol* of a king who makes a seven-day feast. Throughout that entire time, his sons took care of the guests. Once the seven days ended, he told his sons, “I know that you were busy with the guests for the past seven days. Now we can rejoice together. Sit down and enjoy yourselves.”

So too, for the seven days of Sukkos, Klal Yisroel is busy taking care of the *korbanos* sent by the nations of the world, as Rav Pinchos says that the 70 cows offered during *yomtov* represent the 70 nations of the world and are brought as *korbanos* so that they will have no power to destroy the Jewish people. Once these seven days end, Hashem tells His people that they should now sit down and celebrate with Him.

Taking Out All the Torahs:

Sefer Yesod Yosef (Perek 79) explains the *minhag* on Simchas Torah of taking out all the *sifrei* Torah from the *aron* by saying that this shows Hashem’s great love. When a father truly loves his son, he opens the doors to everything he owns and allows

him to take whatever he wants. So too, we empty the *Aron Hakodesh* as a sign that Hashem has opened all His treasure houses of holiness for us, and He enables us to take as much as we want.

The Simcha of Completing the Torah:

The Dubno Magis *zt"l* asks why we celebrate Simchas Hatorah on the day we finish Parshas V'Zos Habracha, rather than on the sixth day of Sivan, when we received the Torah. He answers with the following *moshol*:

There was a king who had an only daughter. When she reached marriageable age, she told her father that she wanted to marry a boy from a simple family, who has good character traits and

isn't haughty. The king wasn't happy about this, but he wanted to give his daughter what she wanted, so he sent his servants to find such a boy. They came to a remote village and found a smart, refined young man. After conversing with him, they concluded that he would be a good groom for the king's daughter. They told him that the king desired to meet him, and he agreed to go with them.

When the king met the boy, he was very impressed with his character. He asked him if he would marry his daughter, and the man said that he would.

A year after the wedding, the husband told the king, "I want to invite you to my wedding with your daughter."

The king didn't know what he meant. They had already been

married for a year!

The son-in-law explained, “At the wedding, while everyone else rejoiced, I was sad and anxious. I wondered why the king would want his daughter to marry a simple villager like me. I thought that there must be something seriously wrong with the bride, or else he never would have agreed to this match. Now that a full year has gone by, I know that my wife has no flaws. Therefore, I can now finally be happy, so I want to make another marriage celebration.”

Of course, the king was very happy to hear this, and he participated in the second wedding ceremony with joy.

When Klal Yisroel accepted the Torah, their joy was not complete. They wondered why He was giving His precious gift

to them. Therefore, they assumed it must contain rules that they couldn't possibly keep. After learning the entire Torah, however, they saw that it was perfect and contained only pleasantness. That is why the completion of the Torah is the time for true joy and celebration.

The Days of Joy Start Now:

The Ropshitzer Rebbe zy”a (quoted in Sefer Chemdah Genuzah, Chelek Bais) explained the yomtov of Simchas Torah with a story of a villager who was looking for a wife who would agree to live in his small town. However, when he did get married, his wife persuaded him to move to the big city. When he arrived there, he asked the *shamash* to inform him about all the local customs, promising to pay him for this

service.

On Rosh Chodesh Elul, he was leaving shul after Shacharis, when the *shamash* stopped him and informed him that the custom was to recite Tehillim after davening on that day. When he got home, he told his wife, “I told you that living in a big city would only cause me trouble. Today, they made me stay late after davening to say Tehillim.”

His wife comforted him, and he calmed down.

A week before Rosh Hashanah, the *shamash* knocked on his door early in the morning and told him that he had to get up to say Selichos. He was upset that he had been awakened so early, and, once again, his wife comforted him.

On *erev* Rosh Hashanah, the *shamash* knocked on his door at

3 am to wake him up for early Selichos. On Rosh Hashanah, the *shamash* took him to shul and kept him there until 2:30 pm. He did the same thing on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. Right after his seudah ended, the *shamash* told him it was time for Minchah. The next day, he told him that it was Tzom Gedaliah, and he couldn't eat at all. Every day of the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, he woke him up early for Selichos.

On *erev* Yom Kippur, the *shamash* knocked on his door and announced, “The *shochet* is coming!”

The man got scared and told his wife, “Now they are going to slaughter me!”

His wife comforted him and explained that the *shochet* was coming for *kaparos*, not for him.

In the afternoon, the *shamash* told him to come to shul for Minchah. After Minchah, the *shamash* told him to sit down on the ground, and he gave him 39 lashes. He went home and told his wife that he had been lashed. While he was talking, the *shamash* arrived to take him back to shul.

The next day, the *shamash* brought him early to shul and told him that he was going to pray all day, without eating or drinking anything. After Yom Kippur, things went normally for a few days. He was happy that it looked like life would be easier from now on.

On the first day of Sukkos, when the *shamash* showed up to take him to shul, he told his wife, "He's coming to bother me again. Let's hurry back to the village."

She managed to calm him down again. When he got to shul, he was handed a stick (*lulav*) and a lemon (*esrog*), and told to shake them. Davening took a few hours, and he was very angry when he got home.

On *erev* Hoshanah Rabbah, the *shamash* brought him to shul and told him to stay up all night saying the *tikkun* and Tehillim. On Shemini Atzeres, he was very angry at his wife and at the entire city for making him so much trouble.

On the night of Simchas Torah, he was invited to a large *seudah*, where he was given a lot to eat and drink. On the morning of Simchas Torah, the *kehillah* davened quickly, and a large Kiddush was set up. He ate and drank and felt happy. He then went home and told his wife, **"The good days have finally**

begun.”

The Rebbe concluded, “**This is the *inyan* of Simchas Torah.**”

Drinking Wine:

Sefer Shivchei Baal Shem Tov relates that one year on Simchas Torah, the inner circle of the Besht *zy”a* was dancing and drinking a lot of wine. The Besht’s wife told her husband that they wouldn’t have any wine left for Kiddush or Havdalah. She asked him to tell them to stop drinking.

He told her, “Ok. You should go tell them to stop drinking and to go home.”

When she saw them dancing in a circle, she saw that a fire was burning around them like a *chuppah*. She then went personally to bring them more

wine.

The Besht then asked her, “Did you tell them to leave?”

She replied, “You should have told them yourself!”

Hakafos

Don’t Say Ata Haraysa With the Yeitzer Hara:

It was the first year after the wedding of Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchov *zy”a*. He was living in the home of his father-in-law, and his greatness was not yet known to the world. That year, he was given the honor of standing before the *aron* and reciting the *pesukim* of Ata Hareisa.

He walked towards the front of the shul and picked up the *talis*. However, he then put it back

down and stood motionless for a few minutes. He then picked up the *talis* again, and immediately put it down again. He did this several times, while everyone was waiting for him to start Ata Hareisa. Finally, his voice called out, **“Do you think you’re a *chasid* and a *lamdan*? Just start Ata Hareisa already!”**

He then turned around and went back to his seat.

Everyone thought he was acting very strangely. His father-in-law, who was a wealthy, respected man, was very embarrassed. Still and all, he didn’t want to question his son-in-law. After the *Hakafos*, however, he couldn’t hold himself back, and he asked Rav Levi Yitzchok to explain himself.

Rav Levi Yitzchok said, “When I was about to put on the

talis to start Ata Hareisa, the *yeitzer hara* came to me and said that it wanted to say the *pesukim* along with me. I asked it: Who are you? Why should you get to say Ata Hareisa with me? It replied: And who exactly do you think you are? I answered: I am a *lamdan*. It then said: I am also a *lamdan*.

“I asked it: I learned Shas and Poskim by well-known *gaonim*. Who did you learn from? It answered: I was with you there. So I learned by the same *gaonim*.

“I then said: But I am also a *chasid*. It said: I too am a *chasid*. I told it: I learned *chasidus* by famous *tzadikim*. Who taught you *chasidus*? It answered: I was with you there and learned the same things you did.

“When I saw that I had no answers that would get the

yeitzer hara to leave, I put down the *talis* and said: If you're such a *lamdan* and *chasid*, then you should say Ata Hareisa by yourself."

Similarly, it is written in Sefer Imros Moshe that Rav Moshe of Kobrin *zy"ra* related that Rav Moshe Iver *zy"ra*, (one of the *Gedolim* of Vilna) was once honored with the reciting of Ata Haraisa on Simchas Torah, as it is customary to grant this honor to a distinguished member of a congregation. When the *gabbai* announced that he was receiving this honor, he called him up using the more distinguished word "*eich*". He said, "*Men iz eich mechubad mit Ata Haraisah.*" (In Yiddish, an individual can be called by the more personal "*du*", you, which is a singular tense, or by the more honorable title "*eich*", you, which is technically the plural tense.)

Rav Moshe responded, "Why are you using the plural word '*eich*'?... Certainly, your intention is that both my *yeitzer hara* and I are receiving this honor. My *yeitzer hara* tells me that he is always with me. He says, 'We learn together. We daven together.' That must be why you are including him in the Ata Haraisa together with me."

He then put his *talis* down on the table and said, "If that is the case, let him say it by himself. *Yeitzer hara*, you go ahead and say Ata Haraisa alone. I don't want to say it together with you."

Tears of Blood:

The Rashab of Lubavitch *zy"ra* asked his father, the Maharash of Lubavitch *zy"ra* to explain the concept of *Hakafos* to him. He answered that the word

“*Hakafos*” connotes beseeching Hashem with tears of blood, as is stated: “My tears were my bread.” Thus, we dance with the *sifrei* Torah with great joy on the outside, but on the inside, we are weeping tears of blood.

The Joy of the Angels:

Sefer B’Yashishim Chochmah (page 324) relates that a group of *chasidim* once went to take leave of the Tzvi L’Tzadik of Bluzhov *zy”a* after the *yomtov* of Sukkos. He asked them, “Why haven’t you asked me why most *chasidim* in Chutz La’aretz make *Hakafos* only by night on Shemini Atzeres and not by day, but I make *Hakafos* even by day?”

The Rebbe continued to tell them a story: Rav Moshe Sofer of Pshevorsk *zy”a* would travel every year to spend Shemini

Atzeres with his Rebbe, Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk *zy”a*. One year, his wife gave birth to a baby before Yom Kippur. He needed to be home for the *bris*, so he didn’t go to Lizhensk that year. On Shemini Atzeres, he was filled with longing for his Rebbe. So what did he do? He went down to his basement, where he had a barrel full of whiskey. He drank a little bit, and danced around the barrel, and continued to do this all day.

On the day after Simchas Torah, he traveled to Lizhensk. Rav Elimelech was by the door waiting for him, because he saw with *ruach hakodesh* that he was coming. He told him, “Tell me the truth. What did you do on Shemini Atzeres? I saw that the *malachim* in Shomayim were smiling with joy because of you.”

Rav Moshe told him that he had danced around a barrel.

The Bluzhover concluded, “*Hakafos* like these create great joy in Heaven, which is why we make them in the morning as well.”

Canceling the Satan Through Hakafos:

The Rashab of Lubavitch *zy”a* (quoted in *Sefer Toras Shalom*) said in the name of his father, the Maharash of Lubavitch *zy”a*, that on Simchas Torah, there is no Satan and no angel can harm Klal Yisroel. On this day, all the Divine angels hold back the Satan and tell it, “**Look at how much this nation loves Hashem. They come with their entire families to the bais medrash to rejoice with His Torah. How could you speak**

badly about them?”

They laud the nation for kissing and dancing with the *sifrei* Torah, and this causes a great joy in Heaven. The Satan is so ashamed to say anything bad about them that it goes into hiding for the day.

The Hashpa’ah of the Days

Granting all Desires:

The Zohar Hakadosh (Chelek Gimmel, 32A) states: “At this joyous time (of Shemini Atzeres), no entity is found with the King except for Yisroel alone. And when one sits alone with the King, he can ask for whatever he wants.”

Rav Pinchos of Koretz *zy”a* (Imrei Pinchos, Shabbos U’Moadim, Ois 201) states that this only is true if

we “sit with the King”, meaning that we focus on our connection to Hashem and don’t think about any mundane matters.

Geshem-Tal:

Sefer Siach Zekeinim (Chelek Gimmel, page 73) relates that one year while Tefilas Gashem was being recited on Shemini Atzeres, the Ateres Yeshua of Zhikov zy”a stood next to the *amud* and was silent for a long time. He then turned to the *mispaalelim* with a fiery face and said, “The Gemara says (Gittin 2A) that when a witness brings a *get* (divorce document) from overseas, he must say that it was written and signed in front of him. ‘*Get*’ is an acronym for ‘*geshem tal*.’ The Gemara says (Taanis 2A) that Hashem does not give three keys to any agents.

They always remain in His hand. One of these is the key to rain. **Thus, Hashem is the one who brings the ‘get’ of *geshem* and *tal* overseas. Therefore, He must, so to speak, say that it was written for a good year and signed for a good year.”**

He then began to sing *Yisgadel V’Yiskadesh Shmei Rabbah*.

Morid Hageshem:

Rav Yankele of Pshevorsk zy”a (Yud Gimmel Oros, Chelek Gimmel, page 279) quotes Rav Hersch of Rimanov zy”a as explaining the reason we start to pray for rain on Shemini Atzeres by saying that we have gone through the month of Elul, Selichos, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos, which were all days of pure *ruchnius*. We now say to

Hashem: “*Mashiv haruach*. Let the *ruchnius* sit in its place for now. *U’Morid Hagashem*. And send down a lot of *gashmius*.”



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