

LIVING JEWISH

Tell Your Children

To Joy of the Sukkah

For a long time, Rabbi Shmuel Pruss, known to his friends as “Muleh,” managed to evade the Soviet secret police, who were relentlessly searching for him. Eventually, however, he was caught. His unmistakably Chassidic appearance, with the beard and peyot he refused to remove, made it difficult for him to hide from his pursuers. He was tried and found guilty of “Jewish, Chassidic, Zionist and counterrevolutionary activity.”

A tribunal consisting of a judge and two female Communist Party members serving as “representatives of the people” subjected him to a speedy trial and sentenced him to ten years of hard labor. After waiting two months until there were enough prisoners to fill a train, he was sent to the Yanogiz labor camp in Asia, thousands of kilometers from central Russia. Two other Chabad Chassidim, convicted of similar “crimes,” were sent there with him.

Muleh was assigned to work in a textile factory. For twelve hours a day, he had to operate old, heavy machinery that required tremendous physical strength. He worked under harsh climatic conditions and survived on approximately half a kilogram of coarse bread a day. Many prisoners in the camp died from sheer exhaustion. But with Hashem’s kindness, Muleh managed to withstand both the physical hardships and the emotional suffering of being completely cut off from his family and surroundings.

A Georgian Jew Named Avraham

In the camp, Muleh met a Georgian Jew named Avraham. He did not observe the mitzvot and was completely ignorant of Judaism. Avraham was an expert hatmaker, and this was his job in the camp. He had a room of his own, where he sat from morning until evening sewing hats. Before long, his hats gained a reputation throughout the area, and army officers would line up at his door to have hats made for them.

Avraham cleverly used the demand for his hats to cultivate good relationships with the camp officers. Beyond these connections, he was also considered the unofficial leader of the prisoners in Yanogiz. He



At the Simchat Beit HaShoeva, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel would juggle eight fiery torches.

was strong and fearless, and the other prisoners were afraid of him. Yet despite the great differences in their personalities and backgrounds, for some unexplained reason a warm friendship developed between the rough Avraham and the chassid Muleh.

The Sukkah

The High Holidays arrived. Muleh and his two friends managed to find a quiet corner and a few moments free from work to pray from memory. Then Sukkot began to approach, and one thought troubled them constantly: how could they fulfill the mitzvah of dwelling in a sukkah?

Avraham noticed the worry on Muleh’s face and asked what was bothering him. Muleh told him about the holiday of Sukkot and about his longing to fulfill the mitzvah of sitting in a sukkah.

“No problem!” Avraham declared. “I’ll take care of everything!”

He summoned several of his trusted men, and within hours all the materials needed to build a sukkah had been obtained,

wooden boards, reeds for the sechach, and string. That night, beside the window of Avraham’s room, they erected a small but kosher sukkah.

On the eve of the holiday, Muleh and his friends gathered inside the tiny sukkah. Avraham was waiting for them, beaming with happiness and pride at what he had accomplished. “So, what now?” he asked.

“Now we need some mashkeh,” Muleh said. “On Yom Tov we make Kiddush!”

Avraham immediately set his men into action, and before long a bottle of vodka appeared on the table. Somehow, they also managed to obtain salted fish and cooked potatoes. It was a real Yom Tov meal.

The atmosphere in the sukkah became increasingly joyful. Muleh recited Kiddush over a large glass of mashkeh, and the three chassidim began their festive meal, while the others took an occasional drink.

Gradually, everyone forgot where they were. They broke into a joyous chassidic melody. With so little room, they put their arms around one another’s shoulders and danced in place. “Vesamachta bechagcha—You shall rejoice on your festival!”

They did not notice the senior officer who suddenly appeared at the entrance to the sukkah, glaring at them menacingly. “Aha!” he shouted furiously. “I’ve caught some big fish!” *continued on page three*

Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	5:56	7:07
Tel Aviv	6:12	7:09
Haifa	6:03	7:08
Beer Sheva	6:14	7:08
New York	6:30	7:26



Simchat Beit HaShoeva

On Sukkot there is a special commandment to rejoice, and in our prayers the festival is called “the time of our rejoicing.” At the same time, this festival contains additional mitzvot that bring with them an added joy, such as Simchat Beit HaShoeva, connected with the mitzvah of the water libation on the altar in the Temple. The drawing of this water was with tremendous joy, as the verse states, “and you shall draw water with joy from the fountains of salvation.” (Isaiah 12:3)

The joy of Simchat Beit HaShoeva is higher than all other forms of rejoicing. Our Sages went so far as to say, “whoever did not see the rejoicing of Simchat Beit HaShoeva never saw rejoicing in his life.” What was so unique about the water libation that it led to such great joy?

Wine: Limited Joy

In the Temple, wine was also poured upon the altar. This too was accompanied by song and joy. Yet the joy associated with the pouring of water was incomparably greater.

This seems surprising. Wine naturally has the ability to bring joy, while water possesses no particular quality associated with rejoicing.

Yet this very point contains the answer. Wine, which naturally brings joy, produces a joy connected with a person’s nature and qualities. Such joy, however, is inherently limited, because it depends upon the degree of joy that wine can produce.

Water: Infinite Joy

The water libation, by contrast, represents a G-dly joy that does not depend upon human nature. It is therefore a joy without limits.

In both mitzvot, the joy is connected with the holiness of the mitzvah. With the wine libation, however, the joy of the mitzvah is combined with wine’s natural ability to bring happiness. As a result, the joy remains limited, because the joy produced by wine has boundaries and measure.

The joy of the water libation, by contrast, is not mixed with the nature of the world. Indeed, water itself has no natural quality of producing joy. The happiness comes entirely from the G-dly dimension of the mitzvah—from the fact that Hashem commanded that water be poured upon the altar.

A Jew rejoices simply because he has been given the privilege of fulfilling Hashem’s will. Such joy has no measure or limit.

Wine and Water Today

The spiritual service represented by the wine and water libations exists today.

The pouring of wine represents the joy in performing a mitzvah that comes from intellectual understanding. When a Jew reflects upon the tremendous privilege he has been given—to fulfill Hashem’s will and become attached to Him—he becomes filled with joy. But because this joy comes from intellectual understanding, which by its very nature is limited, the joy itself is also limited.

The pouring of water represents something higher: joy in performing mitzvot that transcends intellectual understanding. When a Jew gives himself over completely to Hashem, then upon hearing that Hashem commands him to perform a mitzvah, he does not require explanations, understanding or intellectual contemplation. Instead, he becomes filled with an overwhelming joy that bursts forth from the depths of his soul.

This is an unlimited joy, the joy of Simchat Beit HaShoeva, about which our Sages said, “whoever did not see the rejoicing of Simchat Beit HaShoeva never saw rejoicing in his life.”

(Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 24)

From Our Sages

Spiritual Ingathering

The physical world reflects the spiritual. Sukkot, which is literally the season for gathering in the produce of the fields, is also a spiritual Festival of Ingathering. All the Torah, mitzvot and good deeds that a person acquires throughout the year are gathered together on Sukkot.

(Shem MiShmuel)

The Body and the Sukkah

When Rabbi Mordechai of Lechovitch would enter his sukkah on the first night, he would fall to the ground, kiss it, and lament, “how can a coarse, physical body dare tread upon this beloved mitzvah, the mitzvah of sukkah!”

Uniting the Small and the Great

When the hadassim and aravot are bound together with the lulav, the mitzvah is complete. This alludes to the idea that when the small joins together with the

great, completeness is achieved.

(Chiddushei HaRim)

The Lulav

The lulav symbolizes the Jewish people. Although it has many leaves, they cling closely to one another, and it has only one heart, central spine. So too, although the Jewish people consist of many tribes and diverse communities, they are united “as one person with one heart” to fulfill the will of their Father in Heaven.

(Yeina Shel Torah)

Joy Without Calculations

Joy does not need to arise from various considerations or calculations. Rather, “you shall rejoice before Hashem your G-d”—simply because He is Hashem, our G-d. The very fact that Hashem wants us to be joyful should itself bring us to joy.

(Rabbi Avraham of Slonim)

Joy Throughout the Year

In the year 5679 (1918), it was impossible to obtain etrogim in Russia. These were the turbulent days following World War I, and the borders were closed. Only the Rebbe Rashab, the fifth Rebbe of Chabad, who was then living in Rostov, had an etrog. Naturally, all the Jews of the city came to make the blessing over the Rebbe’s etrog.

During Chol HaMoed, large numbers of Jews began arriving from the surrounding towns to make the blessing over the etrog. One chassid traveled hundreds of kilometers. Deeply moved, he entered and held the etrog as though in a dream.

When he finished making the blessing, the chassid exclaimed with joy and satisfaction:

“Ah! Thank G-d!”

The Rebbe then said:

“May Hashem grant that the joy of the mitzvah illuminate the entire year.”

This Sukkot edition of *Living Jewish* is dedicated to all our readers and their families.

May the joy of Sukkot, Zman Simchateinu, fill every Jewish home with happiness, unity and blessing, and may we merit the ultimate joy—the coming of Moshiach and the complete Redemption, now. Chag Sameach!



Unity in the Details

Jewish unity is one of the primary things that brings the Redemption. Perhaps this is also why the festival of Sukkot is so closely connected with the Redemption, for the theme of the unity of the entire Jewish people is particularly emphasized in the mitzvot of this festival.

The sukkah expresses unity. In the simplest sense, when a person leaves his home and sits in a sukkah, he removes the barriers separating him from others, making it easier to unite with them. Our Sages say, “all of Israel are fit to sit in one sukkah.”

This unity is expressed even more in the mitzvah of the Four Species, which, as the Midrash teaches, represent different types of Jews. Regarding them, Hashem, says, “let them all be bound together as one.”

Species of Unity

Chassidic teachings expand upon the theme of unity found in the mitzvot of Sukkot. Unity is evident not only when the Four Species are taken together, but also within each species individually.

The unity expressed by the etrog is reflected in the fact that it dwells on its tree from year to year. Every fruit has its particular growing season, after which it falls or rots. The etrog, however, can remain on the tree throughout all the seasons of the year. Not only is it unharmed by the changing seasons, but it actually grows through them all. In this way, the etrog expresses the unity of all the seasons of the year, which together form one complete whole.

The lulav also expresses the idea of unity. Our Sages teach that its leaves must be joined closely rather than separated. In addition, each leaf of the lulav consists of two parts joined together. Thus, the theme of unity is present within the lulav itself.

One of the signs of a kosher hadas (myrtle) is that its leaves grow in groups of three. This is reflected in the Torah’s description of it as an “*avot* [interwoven] tree branch.” The number three represents the completeness of the different “lines”—right, left, and center. In the hadas, the idea is expressed that all three lines emerge from one common point.

We also find the theme of unity in the aravah (willow) in that it grows in brotherhood with other willows, in clusters. Each willow is a tree on its own, yet it tends to grow together with other willows—an expression of brotherhood and unity.

Unity Within Diversity

In this way, each of the Four Species of Sukkot expresses the theme of unity. The emphasis here is not on erasing differences, but on creating unity within those differences. Each species—and certainly all four together—expresses the idea that although there are different qualities, they remain united and form one mitzvah.

This is the unique quality of unity expressed by the Four Species compared with the unity of the sukkah. The unity of the sukkah is indeed very lofty, but it does not descend into the smallest details. It is a general unity, coming “from Above.”

The purpose of the Four Species is to bring the unity of the sukkah down into the level of details and particulars—to emphasize that even within a reality containing many different details and diverse qualities, there remains a common point of unity.

Such an awareness of Jewish unity is especially necessary in these days, on the threshold of the true and complete Redemption. In its merit, may we merit the coming of Moshiach now!

The Joy of the Sukkah

continued from page one:

The singing stopped instantly. Everyone stared at the officer in terror, dreading what would happen next. Muleh, however, had already drunk quite a bit and did not fully grasp the seriousness of the situation.

“Ah, Comrade Officer!” he called cheerfully. “Come over here and make Kiddush! Surely you know that today is Sukkot.”

As he spoke, Muleh poured a glass full of vodka and held it out to the officer, whose furious expression now mixed with astonishment. Muleh stood up and approached him, holding the full glass in one hand while warmly embracing the officer with the other.

“Come on, don’t hesitate. Make Kiddush. Today is Yom Tov—Sukkot!”

The Revelation

Muleh’s friends wanted the ground to swallow them from fear and shock. But suddenly they had to pinch themselves to make sure they were really seeing what was happening. The officer hesitantly reached for the glass, brought it to his lips, and, with Muleh’s help, said the blessing, “Savri maranan... Shehakol nihyeh bidvaro.”

The full glass had its effect on the senior officer as well. His anger completely disappeared. Suddenly, he began telling Muleh and his friends the story of his life. Yes, he too was Jewish. As a child, he had studied in a cheder and later in a yeshivah. But like many of his friends, he had strayed from the path and eventually arrived where he was today.

“This reminds me...” he said, looking around with moist eyes. “My father had a sukkah exactly like this one—only a little bigger.”

Silence filled the little sukkah. After a while, the officer recovered somewhat from the effects of the vodka.

“Now get out of the sukkah and go to sleep,” he said. “If I am caught here with you, I too will be sent to a barren land.”

Moshiach Now



The Joy of Simchat Beit HaShoeva

May it be Hashem’s will that by increasing in the Simchat Beit HaShoeva celebrations, we will hasten the true and complete Redemption. Joy breaks through all boundaries. How much more, the joy of Simchat Beit HaShoeva, as our Sages said, “whoever has not seen the rejoicing of Simchat Beit HaShoeva has never seen rejoicing in his life.”

Surely, then, this joy has the power to break through all limitations—first and foremost, the limitations of exile—until no trace of exile remains.”

adapted from a talk of the Rebbe on the first night of Sukkot, 5749 (1988)



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Human Interest

Standing Proud

Rabbi Mendy and Rivka Minkowitz, Directors of Chabad at Elon University in North Carolina, did not expect their September 4th Shabbat dinner to attract the response it did. An Israeli soldier was scheduled to speak about his experiences serving in Israel since the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023.

However, publicity for the event sparked an organized campaign of antisemitic harassment. The family's



personal information was circulated online, threatening messages poured in, and protesters planned to descend on the small town. Concerned police, suggested canceling the gathering.

But the Minkowitzes were determined not to allow intimidation to silence Jewish life. Working closely with law enforcement and security officials, they quietly moved the dinner to another location. Students received the new details shortly before Shabbat.

Rather than staying away, more than 100 students came. What could have become an evening of fear was transformed into a powerful expression of Jewish unity. They sang, celebrated Shabbat and drew strength from one another. Some were moved to tears.

The experience, Rabbi Minkowitz said, left the students with a renewed sense of Jewish pride. Coming just before Rosh Hashanah, that inspiration was already having an impact, with increased interest in High Holiday services and programs.

Farbrengen



Question: I work very hard preparing for Sukkot, and although it is exhausting, I love the Yom Tov. But once Sukkot arrives, my husband wants to spend Chol Hamoed sitting in the sukkah, learning and hosting friends, while I want to go out with the family. He offered to take three days off after Sukkot for family trips. I appreciate that, but I want to enjoy Sukkot itself. What do you think?

Answer: Your husband's offer shows that he is trying to respond to what you want, and that is worth appreciating. But it is understandable that it doesn't fully satisfy you. You want to enjoy the special atmosphere of Chol Hamoed by getting out and going places. Three days afterward simply isn't Sukkot.

Sometimes marital disagreements aren't about right and wrong. Two people simply enjoy things differently. Your husband enjoys Sukkot by sitting in the sukkah, learning and hosting; you enjoy it differently.

The challenge is how we approach those differences. If compromise means, "how much of what I want can I get?" both spouses may leave disappointed. Often, couples argue over the end result before truly making room for what matters to the other person.

A helpful approach is: **acknowledge** → **share** → **collaborate**.

You might say, "I know how much you enjoy being in the sukkah, and I don't want to take that away. [acknowledge] At the same time, going out on Chol Hamoed is part of how I enjoy Sukkot. [share] Can we think together of a way to plan the week that works for both of us?" [collaborate]

How we approach a situation can make all the difference. Psychologically, feeling understood reduces defensiveness and makes us more willing to be flexible. This requires one to first make room for the other person's perspective. In Chassidic terminology this can be described as *bittul*—moving beyond ourselves to make space for another. In marriage, *bittul* means recognizing that what our spouse wants matters to us too.

Perhaps this is also a message of the Sukkah: creating a space of unity—a marriage large enough to make room for both.

Aharon Schmidt, marriage and personal coaching: www.aharonschmidt.com

*** Marriage seminar for couples beginning Rosh Chodesh MarCheshvan (October 12th).
Contact aharonschmidt@gmail.com to reserve your place.

Cooking Tip of the Week

Hot Dog Goulash

Mix together 2½ tablespoons olive oil, 2 onions cut into medium chunks, 1 smashed garlic clove, black pepper to taste, and salt if needed. Add 1 package of hot dogs cut into hearty chunks and 3 red-skinned potatoes, peeled and cut into large cubes. Pour in 1 cup of soup broth, mix everything together, and let the flavors slowly come together. Cook on low for 8 hours. Enjoy!

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Halacha Corner – Trips During Sukkot

We learn: "Those traveling during the day are exempt from the sukkah during the day but are obligated at night." The halachic states: "This applies specifically when they are able to find a sukkah. However, if they cannot find one, they may continue their journey even though they will not sit in a sukkah, neither by day nor by night." (This refers to one traveling for personal reasons. One traveling for the sake of a mitzvah is exempt even from making an effort to find a sukkah.) In truth, however, one should not go on a recreational trip, when it is not for the sake of a mitzvah or another essential need, if it is known in advance that there will be no sukkah available.

Our Sages said that a person is exempt from the sukkah only when remaining there causes him discomfort (*mitzta'ar*), not simply when it is more convenient for him to remain outside. Furthermore, our Sages said that there may be *kitrug* (accusation) on one who seeks a way to exempt himself from the obligation of a positive mitzvah, even when the exemption is technically valid.

Nowadays, there are tourist sites throughout Israel that have sukkot. Their kashrut should be checked, since some sukkot are not constructed according to halachah. With a little advance planning, a trip can generally be arranged so that there will be no need to eat outside a sukkah.

Adapted from *Sichat HaShevua*

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Sunday, September 27

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