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A WELLSPRING OF CHIZUK

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סוכות

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סוכות - תשפ"ז

Simchah isn't Just About the Finishing Line

SUKKOS: PREPARING DURING ZMAN SIMCHASENU FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

The *Yom Tov* of Sukkos is identified as *Zman Simchasenu* - a time specifically meant for rejoicing and happiness.

The *Trisker Maggid* cites his father, the *Chernobyler Maggid* who explained that by altering the vowels of the word *Zman*, "time", it can be read as *Zimain*, meaning "to prepare." Meaning, one who truly experiences joy during Sukkos will carry that happiness throughout the entire coming year.

Additionally, he asserts that maintaining joy throughout Sukkos guarantees an abundance of *brachos* for the rest of the year.

He notes that the *Chernobyler Maggid* considered this the true definition of *Zman Simchasenu*. *Zman* indicates preparation; as we are preparing and amassing our *simcha* - both inner and

external happiness - for the whole year ahead. By joyfully investing in these seven days, we will merit the greatest *yeshuos*.

JOYFUL KARBANOS NULLIFY DIFFICULT CURSES

The *Shem Mishmuel* presents a question raised by his father, the *Avnei Nezer*. In *Parshas Emor*, *Rashi* cites a *Midrash* regarding the *posuk* noting that during Sukkos, ninety-eight lambs were brought as *karbanos* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. This total corresponds to and was meant to annul the ninety-eight *klallos* listed in *Parshas Ki Savo*.

The *Avnei Nezer* asks: What is the inner connection between offering these lambs and nullifying those severe *klallos*?

He provides the following explanation. One might wonder while reviewing the *tochacha* in *Parshas Ki Savo*: why did *Klal Yisroel* have to face such severe and harsh consequences? Clearly it was due to their *aveiros*.

However, how can it be that the same people - who witnessed the remarkable miracles and had *Nevi'im* while the *Beis Hamikdash* stood - fall to the *yetzer hara* and commit so many *aveiros*?

The *Avnei Nezer* explains the *yetzer hara* first attempts to make a person feel depressed and broken. Once their spirits have been broken, the *yetzer hara* takes control over their logic and emotions, leading them away from clarity so that they unfortunately succumb to temptation with much greater ease.

However, the *Avnei Nezer* says that if a person remains joyful - refusing to give into the *yetzer hara's* plans - they are protected and have a *shmirah*. When a person is happy, the *yetzer hara* cannot penetrate the same way and *chas v'shalom* suggests an *aveira*; he is, so to speak, locked out.

He notes that within the *tochachas*, the Torah explicitly explains that the *yetzer hara* gained entry and led the *Yidden* to *aveiros* because of the lack of *simcha*. It all stems from one root cause found in the *posuk*: תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' - *because you didn't serve Hashem with joy and a good heart when you had everything*. The failure was not serving Him with happiness despite all the good the *Yidden* had.

When we recognize the goodness of our lives; the endless *brochas* that we have, we are healthy, that we are able to breathe, walk and see, and so many thousands of things - we feel the urge to thank Hashem and celebrate. In such a state of joy, the *yetzer hara* cannot enter our personal space and rob us from our logic.

The *Avnei Nezer* explains that Sukkos is

a time of rejoicing. When *Klal Yisroel* brought the ninety-eight *karbanos*, they did so with great happiness. By serving Hashem with joy, they effectively nullified those ninety-eight *klallos*.

The *Shem Mishmuel* adds a profound insight into the *posuk*, noting that regarding Sukkos, the Torah uses a specific word not found by any other *Yom Tov*. It says, בחגותם חג לה' שבעת ימים בשנה - *You shall celebrate it as a Yom Tov to Hashem seven days in the year*. Asks the *Shem Mishmuel*: why is the phrase בשנה necessary; it seems extra?

He explains that if you are happy during these seven days - when those ninety-eight joyous *karbanos* are offered - you can rectify the entire year. In today's times, our *tefillos* take the place of those *karbanos*, as the *posuk* says, ונשלמה פרים שפתינו - *let our lips substitute for bulls*. When we *daven* joyfully, it's as if we're offering the ninety-eight *karbanos*. We possess a unique power during these seven days, as we have the opportunity to rectify the entire year.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS IN AVODAS HASHEM

There is a common misconception about *simchah*. Many believe that serving Hashem - the source of ultimate physical and spiritual happiness - is only for the flawless, perfect people.

Dovid Hamelech said, פקודי ה' ישרים, משמחי לב - *the mandates of Hashem are upright, rejoicing the heart*. Doing *mitzvos* brings joy to one's heart; the

Torah gladdens the soul. שש אנכי על - *I rejoice over Your word like one who finds great spoil*. It feels like discovering an incredible treasure for the very first time. This was Dovid's daily experience with learning Torah, embodying the joy it contains.

התורה בשמחת השיש ושמחו - *be glad and rejoice in the joy of the Torah*. The Torah represents the world's highest form of happiness. However, people often mistakenly believe they can only be happy upon completion. They think joy only comes after finishing a *masechte*, completing an act of *chesed*, or perfectly guarding their eyes and speech all the time. Upon reaching the finish line, they at long last feel permitted to be happy. But what if you didn't finish the full *masechte*? What if you were not 100% successful in guarding your sight, or unfortunately failed to perfectly guard your speech? You stumbled along the way; your *avodas Hashem* was not complete.

A person might believe that there is no way he can be happy now. But that is a significant error. While serving Hashem requires much investment, and our ultimate goal is to become perfect; it does not follow the same rules as the material world.

אנו עמלים ומקבלים שכר

The *Chofetz Chaim* explains that every time we conclude a *masechte* in *Gemara*, we announce: אנו עמלים והם עמלים - *we toil and they toil*. אנו עמלים ומקבלים שכר - *we labor and receive a reward*, while *they labor and do not receive a reward*.

The *Chofetz Chaim* questions this,

asking, "Is there favoritism involved?" What does this mean? Why is a non-Jew not compensated for the work he puts in?

He offers the following illustration, describing a businessman who employed a salesman. After one week, the salesman arrives seeking his wages. The employer tells him, "You haven't generated any sales."

The man replies, "But I worked so hard; I traveled from town to town and city to city." The boss responds, "I see you worked hard. I'll give you another chance for one more week." However, he did not pay him because no sales were finalized.

At the end of the following week, the man returns to his boss and says, "I need my paycheck." The employer responds, "I explained last week that I was giving you more time because you hadn't brought in sales. I gave you a second week. You still haven't brought in sales. Not only won't I pay you, but you are fired."

The man begins to weep. He argues, "But I traveled between cities! I invested so much effort." The boss replies, "How does your effort benefit me? If you bring sales, I can pay you. Without sales, I have no money for you."

The *Chofetz Chaim* says this represents the way of the secular world.

However, if a *Yid* toils over a page of *Gemara*, or *davens* with the intent to focus but struggles due to distractions, their effort is nevertheless counted. Even if they did not finish - they did not complete the *masechte*, perform the

intended kindness, or guard their eyes and speech as they wished - their work is recognized.

The *Chofetz Chaim* teaches that you will be rewarded because the *Mishnah* in *Avos* states, לפום צערא אגרא - according to the effort is the reward. Hashem rewards you based on your effort, your investment, your dedication, your aspirations, your willingness, and the struggle you endured.

The *Chofetz Chaim* continues, אנו עמלים - we toil; we put in the work and the effort, even if we do not see immediate results - ומקבלים שכר - and we receive a reward; we get paid for every attempt.

In a materialistic world, however, אינם שכר מקבלים; one is not paid simply for traveling from city to city. If you produce sales, you get paid; if not, you get nothing. The same is not with us, *Yidden*, because the effort itself is a "sale" to Hashem.

Even more so, *Rebbe Mendele* of Vitebsk notes that finishing a page of *Gemara* or refraining from *lashon hara* is truly incredible. Serving Hashem perfectly and successfully brings immense joy to a person's life. However, he says, success can breed arrogance, leading one to think that their strength and effort achieved this and they deserve the credit.

Rebbe Mendele says: You will certainly receive credit from Heaven, but arrogance is disliked there. On the other hand, if a person strives to be good but fails to do so completely, resulting in a broken heart, Heaven declares, "This is magnificent! This is very precious!" because there is no room for pride.

SUKKOS PREPARATIONS - THE RESULTS AREN'T ACCORDING TO THE EFFORT

The Sukkos preparations are unlike any other *Yomim Tovim*. For Pesach, we prepare the *matzah*; starting mid-summer by harvesting wheat, ensuring it stays dry, then sifting the flour, and finally kneading and baking in the bakery.

If you consider it, 99% of investment in *matzah*, results in a tangible outcome. Perhaps 1% is discarded, but generally, what you put in is what you get. You have beautiful results and excellent *matzos*.

The same applies to making wine or when women prepare food for the meals or clean the house of *chametz*. What you invested in, cooked, and baked in honor of Pesach is exactly what you have. We can see and feel the productivity of our labor.

The same applies to Shavuos. On Shavuos, men stay up all night learning, followed by *davening* and the *Akdamus*. Everyone is joyful despite having been awake all night. The happiness during the day is incredible.

However, regarding the *Yom Tov* of Sukkos, the preparations are very different. When buying the *arba minim*, no one simply walks into a store, grabs an *esrog* or *lulav* and leaves. Finding the perfect *esrog* requires traveling from place to place, investing time to examine numerous *esrogim* until you

come across the right one. Yet, ultimately, you only have one *esrog*.

The same applies to putting up the *succah*. No matter the work that was put in the year before, each year it must be reconstructed, and rearranged. Endless effort goes in to construct the *succah* perfectly, with the right wires for electricity, beams and screws, and the decorations.

Despite all the effort, there is always some panel that was not used, one decoration that was not hung, or extra electrical wires that were unnecessary. Thus, during the *Yom Tov* of Sukkos, we observe a remarkable phenomenon. We heavily prepare and invest, yet we do not always see the direct results of our labor. However, this very preparation is what leads us into the *Yom Tov*, our *Zman Simchasenu*.

THE DAYS WE PREPARE FOR SUKKOS HOLD THE SAME KEDUSHAH AS YOM KIPPUR

The *maggid* that taught the *Beis Yosef* mentioned that the power of Yom Kippur extends from its conclusion until after Sukkos. Which means that the five days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos retain the sanctity of Yom Kippur. This is based on a *midrash* stating that on Yom Kippur Hashem said “סלחתי כדברך” and from that moment until Sukkos He observes that *Klal Yisroel* is fully occupied with *mitzvos*.

What about the period before Pesach when we are also constantly busy with *mitzvos*?

Sukkos is a unique *Yom Tov* centered on a profound level of preparation. Much of our effort remains unseen and unfelt. We gather and prepare *schach*, panels, wood and numerous decorations that may never be used. We dedicate countless hours and sort through many *esrogim* and *lulavim* without seeing immediate productivity.

Hashem observes our dedication and says that because you are *טרוך במצוות* - immersed in preparation and effort for a *mitzvah* without seeing so-called productivity. This effort holds such power that the essence of Yom Kippur is extended for another five days.

HAPPINESS IS DEFINED BY THE STRUGGLE

In *avodas Hashem*, there is certainly joy in completing a task such as finishing a long, complex *masechte*, or a full month of guarding our speech. While it is true that completing what you took upon yourself brings happiness, you must also recognize that the energy and effort you expend, even if you don't reach the finish line – is considered a success and a completion in its own right.

Says the *Chofetz Chaim*, success isn't merely about physical completion. In *avodas Hashem* we receive reward simply for the toil.

While preparing for Sukkos, *Zman Simchasenu*, we must know that happiness does not only stem from reaching total perfection or completion. Even if most of the investment is not noticed, whether in the *arba minim*, or building the *succah*, the effort itself makes you a winner and should bring you much happiness.



Simchas Bais Ha'Shoevah

THE SECRET TO SIMCHAH

THE UNPARALLELED JOY OF SIMCHAS BAIS HA'SHOEVA

On the *Zman Simchasenu*, as the *Abarbanel* and various other commentators note, one who experiences true happiness during these seven days of Sukkos is assured a year filled with joy.

We all wish to acquire genuine happiness, yet how can we achieve this state? How can we ensure that sadness has no place in our hearts?

Although there's much to explore regarding the topic of happiness, we'll build on previous lessons to focus specifically on the concept of maintaining happiness even when you haven't reached complete success.

The *Mishnah* in *Masechte Sukkah* famously pronounces: *מי שלא ראה שמחת בית השואבה לא ראה שמחה מימיו* – *he who hasn't seen the celebration of the Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeva never saw true happiness in his life*. Beyond just lacking the feeling of joy, the *Mishnah* suggests

you haven't even glimpsed its true form.

If the joy of the *Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeva* was so immense - that missing it means one cannot even begin to comprehend happiness - we should at least study the *Gemara* and *Midrashim* to see what occurred there, so that we may gain some connection to those incredible moments.

CELEBRATING THE DRAWING OF THE WATER FOR THE MIZBEACH

The name of this major celebration was known as the *Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeva* – named for the place where the water was drawn.

What was the essence of this joy? What was its objective? And why was it given this specific name?

According to *Rashi*, during the morning *Karbon Tamid*, there was typically a *ניסוך היין* – pouring wine, as every *karbon* was accompanied by wine.

There were two silver cups atop the Mizbeach where the *Kohen* would pour wine for each *karbon*.

Once a year, in addition to the wine, the *Kohen* would also pour water. This water was drawn in the morning. To prepare for this drawing, the people would dance throughout the night. Anyone who missed this celebration – of drawing the water in the *Beis Hamikdash* – never truly saw happiness.

All of *Klal Yisroel* traveled up to Yerushalayim. Women and children, who weren't technically obligated to make the pilgrimage, still attended the festivities. Special balconies had to be constructed to accommodate them. *Chazal* discuss the *halachic* details of how they were permitted to modify the structure of the *Beis Hamikdash* to extend those platforms, since adding even a single piece of wood to the *Beis Hamikdash* is generally prohibited.

Every last *Yid* was present, from the elderly to the young, to take part in the extraordinary moments of the *Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeva*. They spent the entire night dancing and rejoicing in celebration, in preparation to draw the water at dawn.

In actuality, there's no formal *mitzvah* to draw the water. The real *mitzvah* was the pouring of the water. The *posuk* states, וּשְׂאֲבַתֶּם מַיִם בְּשִׂשׁוֹן - and you shall draw water with joy. This is just an allusion, a support to the primary *mitzvah* of pouring the water.

THE JOY OF PREPARATION FOR A MITZVAH

So, what was the purpose of celebrating the drawing of the water? Why was this celebration so major that *Chazal* declare that whoever hasn't witnessed it, has never experienced true joy?

The *Pele Yoetz* notes that this teaches us that even if a *mitzvah* itself has not yet been performed, the preparation for it, is the essence of *avodas Hashem* and is therefore worth celebrating. This is the peak toward which a *Yid* must strive. Regardless of whether the deed was completed or not, I'm overjoyed simply for the opportunity to prepare to serve the *Melech Malchei Hamlachim Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

This is the core point of the *Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeva*. Happiness in *avodas Hashem* doesn't only come upon the completion of a *mitzvah*. Joy doesn't only belong to those who have finished their projects. The *Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeva* teaches us that the greatest joy ever experienced in this world was found in the preparation for a *mitzvah*; the initial stages. The celebration and dancing lasted all night just for the drawing of water, which was merely a preliminary step.

WATER'S TRANQUIL NATURE

Why was the preparation for the נִסְיֹן הַמַּיִם specifically chosen for such a celebration? Why didn't we dance with such intensity for all the other preparations in the *Beis Hamikdash*? Many *Mitzvos* required daily preparation, such as the *lechem*

hapanim, the *menorah*, or the *ketores*. Why was such a massive celebration observed specifically for the preparation of pouring water on the *mizbeach*?

There's a concept brought down by the *Rishonim* that when people seek tranquility, they naturally gravitate towards the water. What is the secret of water that it possesses a calming effect on humans?

The *Yetev Lev* offers a profound insight. Observing a body of water reveals a fascinating phenomenon: the waves constantly leap upward as if striving to reach a higher destination. *Chazal* say that the waters desire to overflow their banks, yet Hashem restrains them. Despite this, they continuously persist in their attempts.

What's their ultimate goal? Why do they continue to try after failing time and time again? The *Midrash* in *Bereishis* explains that during creation, Hashem divided the waters. The upper portion remained in the Heavens, while the lower portion was placed in the physical world. The lower waters wept, crying out, "We desire to be in the presence of the Ribbono shel Olam." Hashem responded, "*I have heard your sincere cries. Therefore, whenever a karbon is offered, it must include salt derived from the sea. Furthermore, once a year during Sukkos, the נִסּוּךְ הַמִּים will be offered from your waters.*"

However, the *Yetev Lev* notes that the water wasn't completely placated. It continues to strive and weep, pleading with the Ribbono shel Olam for permission to return to His presence. It remembers the feelings of being close

to Hashem, and therefore the waves perpetually jump upward, expressing their desire to return home. Yet, when they reach the shore, Hashem declares that they may not proceed further.

Still, they try repeatedly, never ceasing. This very pursuit is what brings them joy. This striving sustains them and defines the very essence of the ocean.

RESILIENCE AND THE CONSTANT STRIVING FOR THE HEAVENS

This explains why standing by a river or ocean calms a person. Often, we feel broken because our aspirations are unmet or our projects fail, leading to a sense of defeat. When we observe the waves tirelessly leaping toward the Heavens without success – yet remaining resilient and uncrushed – it provides us with deep comfort.

This is why Hashem commanded the celebration of the *Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeva*, a level of joy unsurpassed elsewhere, centered specifically on the נִסּוּךְ הַמִּים in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Hashem suggests that if we deeply analyze the water's behavior - its constant striving and refusal to be broken despite repeated setbacks - we will find the key to happiness. Watching the ocean brings joy because it demonstrates that the waves are as determined today as they were on the first day of creation, hoping that perhaps today they will reach the Heavens. This is the joyful spirit with which we must serve Hashem.

Tsafos quotes the *Yerushalmi* stating that *Yonah HaNavi* began receiving *nevuah* when he ascended to

Yerushalayim for Sukkos and experienced the *Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeva*. The *Shechinah* rested upon him there because *nevuah* only dwells within a person who is truly happy.

We must learn from the waters that we should always strive; even if we don't achieve our ultimate goal, the effort itself should bring us joy. This realization was the source of the celebration of the *Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeva* and represents the pinnacle of happiness. When a person internalizes this foundation - that serving Hashem isn't just about the finished product but about every ounce of effort invested - they find success. It proves one is sincere and has the correct priorities. If you're serving Hashem, you have already succeeded;

since the mere desire to serve Hashem is a victory in it of itself.

This is the core message of the *Simchas Beis Ha'Shoeva*. They rejoiced all night simply preparing for a *mitzvah*, teaching us that the preparation, the dreaming, and the planning of a *mitzvah* are sufficient to make one happy.

The dancing continued all night in anticipation of the next day's water offering. Water was specifically chosen, because it tries every day to leap back to the Heavens. It teaches us that in *avodas Hashem*, trying, failing, and striving to try again is an incredible success in its own right, bringing the greatest joy in life.



Simchas Ba'is Ha'Shoevah

THE SECRET TO DANCING

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT OF SIMCHAH ON SUKKOS

The idea of *simchah* is mentioned three times in the Torah regarding Sukkos. The *Rambam*, at the conclusion of *Hilchos Lulav*, notes that the *mitzvah*

to rejoice on a *Yom Tov* - the *mitzvah* of *ושמחת בחגך* - applies to all three *shalosh regalim*: Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkos. However, the *Rambam* concludes that Sukkos is unique because the Torah explicitly states, *ושמחתם לפני ה' אלקיכם שבעת ימים* - *you shall rejoice before Hashem for seven days*. The joy of Sukkos therefore

surpasses the usual celebration.

Chazal say about the extraordinary sight of *Simchas Beis Ha'shoeva*, *מי שלא ראה שמחת בית השואבה לא ראה שמחה בימיו* - *whoever has not witnessed the joy of Simchas Beis Ha'shoeva has never seen true happiness in his life*. If one has not beheld that beautiful scene in the *Beis Hamikdash*, there is no way they can truly comprehend the meaning of joy.

The celebration lasted many hours each night. The greatest *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* - such as *Hillel*, *Rabban Gamliel*, and *Rebbi* (*Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi*) - spent hours dancing and singing. Furthermore, the *Midrash* notes that all of *Klal Yisroel* was present; even women and children - who were technically exempt from traveling to *Yerushalayim* for *Yom Tov* - came during *Sukkos* to participate in this joy. Why was the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos* so uniquely significant that its happiness was so unparalleled?

REJOICING AFTER YOM KIPPUR ON THE RETURN OF THE SHECHINAH'S PRESENCE

The *Alshich*, in *Parshas Emor*, introduces a powerful principle based on a *midrash* in *Tehillim*. He explains that on *Yom Kippur*, Hashem declared “סלחתי כדברך,” and then established *Yom Kippur* as a day of atonement for all future generations. On that same day, Hashem granted *Moshe* the second set of *luchos*, replacing the ones that were broken. Furthermore, on *Yom Kippur*, Hashem told *Moshe* that *Klal Yisroel* could begin constructing the *mishkan*, promising, *וּשְׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* - *I will dwell among Klal Yisroel*. With the

initiation of building the *mishkan*, the *Yidden* began gathering their gold, silver, and jewelry, rushing to contribute.

The *Alshich* explains that when *Sukkos* arrived, the *Yidden* rejoiced because they were cleansed of *aveiros*. The *Ribbono shel Olam* was returning to dwell among them, the *mishkan* was being built, and the second *luchos* were received. For these reasons, *Sukkos* was established as a significantly joyful *Yom Tov*.

The *Alshich* adds that although we currently lack the *Beis Hamikdash* and the *luchos* are hidden, every individual experiences a personal *Yom Kippur* which cleanses their *neshamos*. Because of that purification, we desire to rejoice, and thank Hashem, which is why we celebrate *Sukkos*.

CHAG HAASIF – CLEARING AWAY THE SUFFERING AND PAIN CAUSED BY AVEIROS

The *Magen Avraham*, citing the *Trisker Maggid* and others, notes that *Sukkos* is called *Chag HaAsif*; the literal meaning, (as explained by the *Chinuch* and *Rashbam*) refers to the time when one gathers the crops harvested throughout the summer to store them for the winter. Seeing the abundance of ripe produce and the successful harvest brings about a super joyful atmosphere.

However, there is a deeper interpretation of *Chag HaAsif*. A person's *aveiros* can lead to various hardships; there is generally no suffering without sin. As *Reb Chanina*

ben Dosa states in *Masechte Berachos*, אין הרוד ממית אלא החטא ממית - *it is not the animal that kills, but the aveira that kills*. No external force can harm a person unless it is rooted in sin. When a *Yid* does *teshuvah* and is cleansed, Hashem says on Yom Kippur, לפני ה' - *before Hashem you shall be purified*. This means all the pain and obstacles one faces are cleared away. Naturally, his heart is filled with joy, which is expressed during the *Yom Tov* of Sukkos.

LIBERATING THE NESHAMAH AND JOYFULLY TASTING ITS SWEETNESS

There is another reason for our rejoicing. When a person performs a *mitzvah* or a good deed, they draw down an abundance of divine light into the world. When a *Yid* unfortunately does an *aveira*, the forces of impurity and the *yetzer hara* effectively tap into the spiritual flow. As long as they have not repented for their sins, that abundance is funneled away toward the *yetzer hara*. Once one does *teshuvah*, that spiritual wealth earned through *mitzvos* returns to their own account.

Additionally, when one does an *aveira*, his *neshamah* is captured by "*klipos*," or husks. Just as a peel surrounds a fruit, these *klipos* besiege the *neshamah*. This is why a person might *daven* but feel no emotion or try to experience the beauty of *Shabbos* but remain unmoved. The *klipos* prevent him from tasting the sweetness of his own *neshamah*. However, when he repents, those *klipos* disintegrate, allowing him to finally feel connected to his *neshama*.

Thus, there are many reasons for the profound happiness felt after Yom Kippur, which we celebrate on Sukkos.

THE SUPERNATURAL ESSENCE OF DANCING

Chazal note that during the dancing of the *Simchas Beis Ha'shoeva*, only חסידים ואנשי מעשה - *the true tzaddikim would dance*. The *Gemara* mentions and lists the greatest *tzaddikim* who danced through the night. If all of *Klal Yisroel* were present, why didn't others participate in the dancing? What would have happened if an ordinary person had joined?

A *talmid* of the *Chasam Sofer* who records in his *sefer* an incredible principle he heard from his *rebbe* regarding the essence of dancing. He explains that every individual possesses both a *neshamah* and a physical body. While the *neshamah* constantly yearns to ascend toward Heaven, the physical body acts as a weight, pulling it back down to earth.

When a person engages in Torah, *tefillah*, or experiences a surge of joy and gratitude toward Hashem, the light in his *neshamah* is kindled. It ignites with an intense flame, growing stronger as it seeks to launch upward and - like a rocket heading into space - the body gives a physical jump.

This is why profound *simchah* serves as a vessel for the *Shechinah*. As the *posuk* states, עוז וחזקה במקומו - *strength and gladness are in His place*, and *Chazal* teach that the *Shechinah* only rests where there is the joy of a *mitzvah*.

Consequently, when a person is filled with joy and gratitude, their *neshamah* attempts to break free from the physical shell, causing them to leap and dance. However, the physical body immediately pushes back, regaining control and bringing the person back to the ground, only for them to jump again. This cycle is the hidden meaning of dance.

The *Chasam Sofer* notes that there was a unique occasion where people remained suspended in the air for extended periods: *Simchas Beis Ha'shoeva*. The dancing there was supernatural; participants stayed airborne because their *neshamos* reached such an elevated state.

Based on the *Chasam Sofer's* insight, we can understand why only the *tzaddikim* danced at the *Simchas Beis Ha'shoeva*. Others might have felt embarrassed to participate, as they would immediately fall back to the ground. In contrast, the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*, whose *neshamos* were unreservedly ignited in Torah, possessed the supernatural strength to remain suspended.

Nevertheless, everyone present rejoiced, even those not dancing. Their celebration centered on the fact that the Ribbono shel Olam had forgiven their *aveiros* on Yom Kippur.

Furthermore, the *Keretzkir Rav*, son-in-law of the *Kedushas Yom Tov*, reveals a profound secret regarding the physical difference between a *Yid* and a non-Jew. He explains that dancing demonstrates the presence of a *Yiddishe neshamah*. When a *Yiddishe* child dances, they lift themselves off the earth, away from the physicality of

this world. Whereas a non-Jewish dancer often keeps the feet connected to the ground, focusing instead on arm movements. He explains that this is because a *Yid* has a *neshamah* which constantly seeks to ascend upward, toward Heaven.

As we celebrate Sukkos, we must thank Hashem for atoning for our *aveiros* and for the gift of our *Yiddishe neshamos*, which enable us to rise above the physical world when we dance. May we all merit a bright and joyful Yom Tov!





Sukkos in Teverya THE ANCIENT SLONIMER CHASSIDIM AND THEIR GREATNESS

REB LEIZER KATZ OF TEVERYA

The stories told of the *Slonimer chassidim* illustrate how a person, despite living in this physical world, could conduct himself like a *malach*, serving Hashem with incredible fervor. While we may not reach such spiritual heights, these accounts can open gates within us, inspiring yearnings and deeper aspirations to grasp how these *tzaddikim* served Hashem. It encourages us and helps us open new channels to serve Hashem on a higher level with genuine joy and enthusiasm.

Let us travel to the city of Teverya to encounter one of the greatest *tzaddikim* who resided there: Reb Leizer Katz. He was a prominent *chassid* among the Slonimer community in Teverya, and a *talmid* of both the *Kobrin* and the *Yesod Ha'avoda* of *Slonim*. As other *tzaddikim* observed, he was far more than a standard *chassid* or even a *rebbe*. He possessed the stature to have served as a *Rebbe* for other *Rebbes*.

His *rebbe*, the *Yesod Ha'avoda*, remarked that his *talmid* Reb Leizer Katz truly fulfilled the *posuk*, 'אל הנער הזה התפללתי - *serve Hashem with gladness*.

The *Kabrin* applied to him the *posuk* Chana spoke regarding her son, Shmuel HaNavi: 'אל הנער הזה התפללתי - *for this child, I davened*. The *Kabrin* declared, "I say this regarding my *talmid*, Reb Leizer."

THE LASTING IMPACT OF A TZADDIK'S FERVOR

The incredible light and energy in serving Hashem that Reb Leizer radiated were such that everyone around him caught his spiritual fire and was transformed.

R' Yisrael Shimon Kastelanitz, the renowned author of the *sefer Mizkeinim Esbonan*, records that he witnessed the following event:

In his later years, R' Yisrael Shimon was walking through the streets of Yerushalayim when he chanced upon

an old friend from his youth in Teverya. At that time, despite being home to many great *tzaddikim*, Teverya was also a hub for various Zionist and secular movements. This specific friend, unfortunately, joined those movements and eventually moved to America, and this was their first meeting since.

He greeted his friend warmly, asking, "How are things? Where are you up to in life?" The friend replied, "I moved to America back then, but I must tell you one thing." He shared that even at his lowest points, he had never desecrated *Shabbos* in the slightest bit.

R' Yisrael Shimon turned to him in surprise and asked, "How is that possible?" The man responded, "R' Yisrael Shimon, I don't understand your question. We grew up together in the same *Beis Midrash*. Don't you recall the fiery *davening* of Reb Leizer Katz? Anyone who witnessed the holy *avodah* of Reb Leizer on *Shabbos* finds it impossible to desecrate *Shabbos* afterward, regardless of how far they may have fallen."

Such was the greatness of the *tzaddik* Reb Leizer Katz; his *avodah* safeguarded a fellow *Yid's chillul Shabbos*. Despite the young man's obstacles (having strayed from the path and moved far away from Eretz Yisroel), the spiritual fire of Reb Leizer remained indelibly etched before him. Even without Reb Leizer exchanging a single word with him, observing his holy *avodah* left a lasting impression that ultimately led him back to his Jewish roots years later.

year on *Simchas Torah*, he was honored with *Chosson Torah*. One year after *davening*, as he walked home from *shul* accompanied by Rabbi Yisrael Shimon Kastelanitz, Reb Leizer suddenly became like a pillar of fire and began dancing in the middle of the street in Teverya. The local Arabs gathered around, watching in bewilderment at the remarkable sight of an elderly rabbi dancing in the public thoroughfare.

Reb Leizer noticed them and turned to Rabbi Yisrael Shimon, saying, "I don't understand why they find this strange. No one finds it odd when a *chosson* dances enthusiastically on his wedding day. It is the same for me, I was the *Chosson Torah* today!" And with that, he continued dancing in the street.

During the *Simchas Beis Ha'shoeva*, despite being one of the distinguished elders of the community, he danced childlike, performing somersaults in the center. At one point, when his fervor could no longer be contained, he would jump onto the table to sing and dance, setting the entire *Beis Midrash* ablaze with the fire.

He disregarded his personal dignity, just as the *Rambam* describes at the end of *Hilchos Lulav*. When Dovid Hamelech danced before the *Shechinah*, he cast aside his own honor to focus entirely on the honor of Hashem. Likewise, Rabbi Leizer danced and filled the *Beis Midrash* with the fire of joy and *avodah*. His personal prestige was immaterial; his sole priority was serving Hashem with *simchah*.

וְהוּא כְּחֵתִי יוֹצֵא מִחֶפְתִּי

When it came to Sukkos, Reb Leizer's *avodah* was no less magnificent. Every

TORAH NUMBED THE PAIN OF SURGERY

Teverya's neighborhood doctor, Dr. Burger, often recounted an astounding story. Although Dr. Burger was not a *Slonimer chassid*, he once remarked to the *Birchas Avraham*, the *Slonimer Rebbe* of Yerushalayim, "I truly miss Reb Leizer. There are simply no individuals of that caliber anymore."

The *Birchas Avraham* turned to him in surprise and asked, "How were you acquainted with Reb Leizer?" While Dr. Burger was a devout *Yid*, he was not part of the *Slonimer* circle, making his deep emotional connection to Reb Leizer all the more intriguing.

Dr. Burger shared that during one visit, he scheduled a necessary surgical procedure for Reb Leizer.

On the day of the surgery, the doctor explained the need for anesthesia. However, Reb Leizer declined, just as many other *tzaddikim* had done. (The *Chazon Ish*, the *Moditzer Rebbe*, and several other *tzaddikim* underwent surgical procedures without being anesthetized.)

The doctor tried to reason with him, saying, "Without anesthesia, the pain will cause you to flinch, making it impossible for me to operate." Reb Leizer reassured him, "Do not worry. Just notify me two or three minutes before you begin, and everything will be fine."

And that is precisely what happened. Dr. Burger performed the surgery and later noted that throughout the entire operation, Reb Leizer did not move even a fraction of a millimeter. When the procedure concluded, Reb Leizer remained blissfully engrossed in deep Torah thoughts and *avodas Hashem*.

Suddenly, he turned to the physician and asked, "Have you finished the procedure?" to which the doctor replied, "Yes."

Dr. Burger finished by saying, "Now do you see why I miss Reb Leizer? so much?"

UNRESTRAINED FERVOR AND ENTHUSIASM AND THE RUINED LULAV

The following remarkable story was frequently related by the *Birchas Avraham*. Notably, he once shared it with the *Gerrer Rebbe*, the *Beis Yisroel*. From then on, whenever the *Beis Yisroel* met the *Birchas Avraham*, he would request to hear the story again in full detail.

Before Sukkos, Reb Leizer would typically purchase an entire crate of *lulavim*. During Hallel, his fervor was so intense that he would shake his *lulavim* with abandon, repeatedly striking the wall until they became disqualified for use. He was so detached from physical surroundings during *davening* that it was a familiar sight to see his *lulav* get ruined daily, requiring a replacement of his *lulav* each morning.

One year on *Hoshana Rabbah*, the *Birchas Avraham* met Reb Leizer before *Shacharis* and noticed that he seemed distraught, lacking the warm smile that usually illuminated his face. Approaching him, the *Birchas Avraham* offered his assistance. Reb Leizer explained that he had run out of functional *lulavim* for the last day of *Chol HaMoed*.

The *Birchas Avraham* replied, "I have an extra one. I will lend it to you, but it must remain *kosher* so my family can fulfill the *mitzvah* later." He offered it on the strict condition that Reb Leizer exercise caution during *Hallel* to avoid damaging the *lulav*.

Reb Leizer promised, "I assure you, when I *daven Hallel*, I will remain completely composed. This time, I will restrain myself."

The *Birchas Avraham* later recounted this to the *Beis Yisrael* of *Gur*, noting that they began *Hallel* with great fervor. He kept an eye on Reb Leizer to see if he could actually contain his vivacity.

When they reached the very first word of "*Hodu*," Reb Leizer leaped up and began the ritual shaking the *lulav* with such enthusiasm, his countenance like that of a *malach*. As of that first "*Hodu*," the *lulav* was completely ruined; disqualified according to every

halachic opinion.

The *Beis Yisrael* frequently asked the *Birchas Avraham* to repeat this story. He would ask him to mimic Reb Leizer's physical movements, his gestures, and the specific melody he used.

Such was the intense fire of those ancient *tzaddikim*. While we cannot reach their exalted level - nor are we expected to - their example should open new pathways for us to at least reach some higher level in *avodas Hashem*.

The passion and enthusiasm we bring to mundane, material pursuits like food, drink, and other worldly comforts, we should strive to act with at least that same level of excitement and vitality when performing a *mitzvah*.

May Hashem help us merit serving Him with true joy.



Foundations of Yom Tov

CONNECTING TO SHABBOS AND YOM TOV

THE CHALLENGE OF
EMOTIONAL
DISCONNECTION
DURING HOLY DAYS

One of the most significant challenges and sources of distress a person can experience is coming into *Shabbos* without feeling its sacred light. Lighting the candles Friday night without sensing the spiritual

atmosphere brings an indescribable anguish. Sitting at the *seder* without connecting to its significance causes deep heartache.

Imagine someone dancing with their only child at a wedding. They might intellectually recognize the celebration, yet if their emotions remain detached from the joy of the moment, it brings a level of anguish that is impossible to describe.

Such is the pain people face on *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* when they remain unmoved by the occasion. They might be davening on Rosh Hashanah, yet their heart feels cold as stone; they may be sitting in the *sukkah* but fail to feel its unique *kedusha*.

What's the solution to such emotional agony? How can we open our hearts?

THE NECESSITY OF SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The first step involves a shift in perspective. Failing to feel the holiness of *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* is a serious concern that should trouble us enough to motivate action. If we view spiritual connection as merely an extra luxury rather than a necessity, we will never find a way to improve our situation.

To illustrate this, consider physical preparations for *Yom Tov*. No one would dream of sitting at the *seder* without *matzah*, wine, maror, or charoses; that is simply not an option. Before *Yom Tov*, nobody merely sits back and hopes for a beautiful *Yom Tov*; they take action. Everyone is busy preparing, with each family member

playing their role. A father ensures the *matzos* are baked and wine is purchased, while a mother spends hours cooking in the kitchen. Before Succos, the entire family gets involved, gathering wood and making trips to the hardware store. Without preparation, there would be no *Yom Tov*.

The same logic applies to our spiritual state. When *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* arrives, it should be unthinkable to enter it without feeling its essence. Lacking that feeling is as significant as missing candles for *licht tzinden*. If you do not feel the sanctity of *Shabbos*, it is as if you have only half a *challah*.

A spiritual void is a tangible deficiency; it matters just as much as the physical components. Emotional absence represents a real loss and signifies a lack of wholeness. It is like having only a partial celebration—the experience is fundamentally diminished.

We should not be content entering these holy days without an emotional connection. While we must fulfill our obligations as servants of Hashem regardless of our feelings, we must also recognize that feeling the *mitzvah* is an integral part of our duty.

Serving Hashem includes the obligation to love Him, as the posuk states ואהבת – “*And you shall love Hashem your God*”, בכל לבבך – “*with all your heart*”, בכל נפשך – “*with all your soul and will*”, ובכל מאדך – “*and with all your resources.*”

Your heart must be alive and full of inspiration. בכל לבבך implies putting the same passion, willpower, and energy into entering a *sukkah* or *Shabbos* as you would for anything else

you deeply desire. If you aren't doing this, a vital part of the *mitzvah* is missing.

STUDYING THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS AND HALACHOS

After acknowledging the lack of spiritual connection, the next step is identifying the practical tools we can use to fill this void.

The first primary method is studying the inner, spiritual dimensions of *Yom Tov*. Let us expand on this concept.

The owner of a *matzah* bakery must master the *halachos* regarding flour, water, and kneading times. Similarly, conducting a *seder* requires knowing many *halachos* including the required sizes for *kezayisim* and the time frames for eating them. Is it two, four, or nine minutes? How many ounces of wine or grape juice must we drink?

Without studying these *halachos*, a proper *seder* cannot be conducted. Knowledge and preparation are essential for performance. Learning before a *Yom Tov* is necessary for the *Yom Tov* to be celebrated properly.

The *halachos* of blowing the *shofar* are highly complex. The *ba'al tokeah* must review them thoroughly beforehand to ensure the *mitzvah* is executed and fulfilled correctly.

Regarding the *arba minim*, one must know when to recite the *brachos* of *Al Netilas Lulav* and *Shehecheyanu* – do we say the blessings while the items rest on the table or while holding

them? Which hand holds the *esrog*?

When is the *brachah* of *Leishev BaSukkah* recited? Is it said during *kiddush* or after *hamotzi*? And what is the *halachah* if you temporarily leave the *sukkah* – do you repeat the blessing upon returning? All these details must be studied in advance.

Without proper knowledge, one cannot accurately fulfill a *mitzvah*. This principle applies across all *mitzvos*, whether concerning *Shabbos*, *Yom Tov*, the *arba minim*, the *sukkah*, the *shofar*, or specific prayers like *Malchiyos*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros* during *Mussaf*. Whatever the occasion, one must learn the deeper significance of the day beforehand.

Just as there are *halachos* for physical performance – eating *matzah*, blowing the *shofar*, or constructing a *sukkah* – the same principle applies to cultivating our inner feelings and emotional experience of the *mitzvah*.

Numerous *sefarim* explain the spiritual meaning of *Yom Tov* and offer methods to awaken our emotions, enabling us to connect our hearts to the day and feel its significance.

When *Yom Tov* approaches, we must study and read about its essence. Just as we review *halachah* each year before building a *sukkah*, we must also revisit the foundational inner meaning of the holiday annually to arouse our feelings and truly connect.

THE TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIP OF REBBE AND TALMID

The second method to opening our hearts for *Yom Tov*, by reading the ways the *tzadikim* and *gedolim* conducted their *Yom Tov*. By learning how they experienced the light of *Yom Tov*, our feelings awaken to grasp what occurs during these elevated days.

The *Shulchan Aruch* instructs us to visit our *rebbe* on *Yom Tov*. While the *Gemara* establishes this as *halachah*, how can we fulfill this today?

How can someone visit the *Beis Yosef* if they do not live in *Tzfas* – and even if they did, could only visit his resting place? How can we travel back hundreds of years to visit our *rebbe*s on *Yom Tov*?

The practical fulfillment of this directive comes through reading stories of the *tzaddikim* – specifically accounts regarding their conduct on the *Yomim Tovim*. Through these stories, we learn how they celebrated and fulfilled each *mitzvah*. Engaging with these narratives is considered equivalent to visiting them in person.

The *Mishnah* in *Avos* states משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסרה ליהושע - *Moshe received the Torah at Har Sinai and gave it over to Yehoshua*. The *Mishnah* (as well as the *Rambam* in the introduction to his *sefer*) outlines the entire chain of transmission from *rebbe* to *talmid* until the completion of *Talmud Bavli* and *Talmud Yerushalmi*.

Interestingly, even after these texts were codified, the tradition of *rebbe*s conveying to *talmidim* continued. This chain persisted throughout the generations until and even after the *Shulchan Aruch* was written.

The *Beis Yosef* still gathered *talmidim* to learn directly from him, even though the law had been clearly documented. Through the ages, the *Ramak*, the *Arizal*, Reb Chaim Vital, the *Alshich*, the *Baal Shem Tov*, the *Maggid of Mezritch*, the *Vilna Gaon*, and Reb Chaim Volozhiner all maintained vibrant circles of disciples.

What is the deeper significance of this enduring bond between *rebbe* and *talmid*?

Two reasons account for this. First, even when the Torah is fully written, personal guidance remains necessary to grasp its true meaning. Second, certain practical domains cannot be mastered through texts alone. For instance, in *hilchos kashrus* – such as delicate techniques for slaughtering and preparing meat – studying the *Shulchan Aruch* or *Gemara* is insufficient without a master demonstrating the practice.

There are many areas of Torah that remain inaccessible without someone to guide you. Furthermore, there are many disputes in *halachah* necessitating guidance from a *rebbe* to determine the final ruling.

Consequently, despite the entire Torah being written and explained, when learning it one must still seek out his *rebbe*.

EXPERIENCING THE REBBE'S PASSION AND ZEAL FOR MITZVOS

Yet there is an even deeper dimension to the *rebbe-talmid* relationship: transmitting the spiritual passion and inner fire required to fulfill a *mitzvah*, overcome the *yetzer hara*, maintain

yiras shamayim, pray with *kavanah*, and truly connect with holy days. Students traveled to witness that living fire firsthand.

This pattern has been evident throughout all generations. The *Arizal*, with his mind brimming with Torah, remarked that he found it impossible to write his Torah down. Thus, it was his talmid, Reb Chaim Vital, who recorded all the writings of the *Ari Hakadosh*.

Interestingly, Reb Chaim Vital also documented much regarding his *rebbe's* conduct and character - the way his *rebbe davened*, how he learned, his *middos*, and his *yiras shamayim*. In essence, he was demonstrating that his *rebbe's* Torah and life guidance isn't merely *halachos* and intellectual lessons, but also the passion, the heart, and the emotional depth of how to fear and serve Hashem.

A similar tradition unfolded among the disciples of the *Baal Shem Tov*. Their records focused less on technical *halachic* rulings and more on conveying the warmth, fervor in prayer, and enthusiasm for *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* that they witnessed in their master.

The same held true for the *talmidim* of the *Vilna Gaon*. The *Vilna Gaon* wrote the *Biur HaGra* on the *Shulchan Aruch* and *sefarim* on *kabbalah*, such as on *Sifra D'Tzniusa*. In the introductions to these *sefarim*, his *talmidim* Rav Chaim Volozhiner, Reb Mendele Shklover, Reb Yisroel Shklover, and his children write that they're presenting the *Vilna Gaon's* Torah.

Interestingly, they describe his personal conduct and fire with which he served Hashem - his *davening*, his learning, his diligence, his joy in Torah, and his refusal to remain idle or a single moment.

They write how he learned twenty-four hours a day; describing how he slept only two hours a night, waking every thirty minutes to wash his hands, and even during those brief half our so called sleep, his mouth never ceased reviewing his studies in his sleep.

Thus, we observe a remarkable reality: *talmidim* in every generation, whether from *chassidish* or *litvish* backgrounds, sought their *rebbe* for two purposes. One was to learn Torah and practical *halachah* - how to act and perform *mitzvos*.

The second was to learn how to serve Hashem with passion, feeling the depth of *Shabbos*, *Yomim Tovim*, and *mitzvos*, and learning how to overcome the *yetzer hara*. This was the purpose of involving a *rebbe* in their life.

Reflecting on this, we ask: where do we turn today? How can we return to the *Baal Shem Tov* or the *Vilna Gaon*?

The answer lies through reading and transmitting stories of these *tzaddikim*. And this is why the introductions of the *Vilna Gaon's sefarim* are full of stories of his life.

Rav Chaim Vital documented accounts of the *Arizal*, as well as the *talmidim* of the *Baal Shem Tov* who recorded stories and transmitted them through the generations. This was done so that in our days, centuries after these *tzaddikim*, we can benefit from their influence.

If we invest the time to realize the importance of telling, reading, and applying these stories of the *tzaddikim*, it's as if we're traveling to them, and it all comes back to life. This practice will assist us in our daily lives, particularly during *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*.



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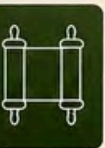
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