



Torah U'Tefilah

A Collection of Inspiring Insights

∞ Besamei HaTorah ... Beneath the Surface

By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר, כפת תמרims, וענף עץ עבת, וערבי נחל (ויקרא כג:מ)

You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a tree of splendor, fronds of date palms, and branches of a cord-like tree, and brook willows.

(Vayikra 23:40)

With the Mitzvah to take the *Arba'ah Minim* on Succos we take one *Esrog*, one *Lulav*, three stems of *Hadasim*, and two stems of *Aravos*, which total seven items of growth all together. These correspond to the seven heavens that are suspended above the earth, according to Chazal (*Chagigah* 12b and *Midrash*). From this, the *Chachmei Yisroel* state that whoever fulfills the Mitzvah of the *Arba'ah Minim* properly on Succos, then the seven heavens in the world open up for him, and his *Tefilos* reach the כסא הכבוד, the Throne of Glory. Additionally, the *Chachamim* state that the Mitzvah of the *Arba'ah Minim* is equivalent to all 613 Mitzvos in the Torah. The *Gematria* (numerical value) of the word אתרוג is 610. When we add the other three species, this equals 613.

Rebbe Elazar of Germayza, *zt"l*, author of *HaRokeach*, elaborates on this Mitzvah. The Torah begins with the letter ב (בראשית) and ends with the letter ל (ליל), and the *Sifrei Nach* begin with the letter ו (ויהי) in *Sefer Yehoshua*, and end in *Divrei Hayamim II* with the letter ל (ליל). The letters that begin and end the Torah and Nach, join together to form the word ליל. This hints to us that whoever fulfills the Mitzvah of *Lulav* properly, it is as if he has fulfilled everything that is written in the Torah and other Holy Writings.

(*Parperaos LaTorah*)

∞ Succos Thoughts – Ideas and Reflections

By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

We celebrate Succos by leaving our homes and spending seven days in a *Succah*, a temporary structure built for this *Yom Tov*. Our Rabbis suggest a symbolism that is expressed with this action. Succos is celebrated just as the summer has ended. In the past, most people worked in agriculture, and they would be completing their busiest season at this time. By moving into temporary huts, we are reminded of the temporary state of this world and the importance of not losing focus to the mundane. Yet, we may feel at a loss because we have spent so much effort in our work. Therefore, suggests Rav Shimon Sofer, we read the laws of *Maaser* and *Tzedakah* (on *Shimini Atzeres*) to encourage us by realizing that we can take all of the efforts we invest in our work, and elevate them through utilizing those same efforts to be for Mitzvos. By using our produce and that which we have amassed from our mundane actions to perform the Mitzvos of *Maaser* and *Tzedakah*, we are elevating all of our efforts to have a *Ruchniyus* aspect as well, which in turn causes all of our mundane labor to be spiritual.

Pearls of Wisdom ... A Word for the Ages

The Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, *zt"l*, would spend hours selecting *Hadasim*. When asked why he did this, he explained that he felt that his lengthy effort was a *Segulah* for *Siyata Di'shmaya*, help from *Shamayim*, in regard to *Shemiras HaEinayim*, guarding one's eyes from seeing things that are not appropriate to look at. In addition, Rav Segal said that all the exertion and effort that one undergoes in building a *Succah* and purchasing the *Arba Minim*, is spiritually cleansing and is part of a complete *Teshuvah*!

Succos תשפ"ז 5787

Compiled by: Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

Staten Island Z'manim

	Erev Succos	First Day	Second Day
<i>Sof Z'man Shema M"A</i>		9:11	9:12
<i>Sof Z'man Shema Gra</i>		9:47	9:48
<i>Sof Z'man Tefilah</i>		10:47	10:47
<i>Chatzos</i>		12:47	12:47
<i>Candle Lighting</i>	6:30	After Tzeis	
<i>Sh'kiah</i>	6:48	6:46	6:45
<i>Tzeis HaKochavim</i>	7:30	7:28	7:26
<i>Rabbeinu Tam (72 mins)</i>	8:01	7:59	7:58

∞ Succos Treasures

On Rosh Hashanah we blow the *Shofar*, and one aspect of the *Shofar* is its ability to break down walls. When Yehoshua sounded the *Shofar*, the walls of Yericho fell down. Rav Shlomo Wolbe, *zt"l*, explains that in a similar sense, we do the same thing on Rosh Hashanah. Every time we make a mistake, it adds a brick to the wall we construct between ourselves and Hashem. That's why we often find it difficult to relate to Hashem. However, when we blow the *Shofar*, the wall falls down and we find ourselves able to get closer to Hashem, and this is what we experience on the *Yamim Nora'im*. After Yom Kippur, we don't want to be distracted by the world around us which entices us to abandon our new relationship with Hashem. We therefore proceed to build a wall between ourselves and the outside world, and that is our *Sukkah*. We sit in the shade of Hashem for seven days with the *Ushpizin* as our guests, and this intense connection has the power to keep us close to Hashem for the entire year to come!

Pearls of Wisdom ... A Word for the Ages

Once, within a few days of Succos, a righteous *Esrog* merchant came to the house of Rav Yehuda Leib Chasman, *zt"l*, to show the *Tzadik* one particular *Esrog*. Although this *Esrog* was not especially beautiful, Rav Yehuda Leib decided to purchase it. However, before he finalized the deal, another set of *Esrogim* were brought to him, and all of them were far more beautiful than the first one. Rav Yehuda Leib sat and thought for a while, and said, "I certainly can't afford to buy two *Esrogim*. However, I had already given up on finding a more beautiful *Esrog* and decided to purchase the first *Esrog*, even though it is not as nice as the new ones that were brought to me. There is a *Pasuk* in *Tehilim* (15:2) which says "*V'Doveir Emes Bil'vavo*", that you should speak truth in your heart. I believe that fulfilling the words of this *Pasuk* is also *Hidur Mitzvah*, a beautification of the Mitzvah. Therefore, I will purchase the first *Esrog* I decided on, and in using it, I am using an *esrog* that is also *Mehudar*!

When Rav Chaim Brisker got married, he was not able to buy his own set of *Arba Minim*, and he would use the *Lulav* and *Esrog* of his wife's grandfather, the *Netziv*. The custom in *Shul* was that the congregation would not begin reciting *Hallel* until Rav Chaim made his *Brachah* and shook the *Lulav*. One year, on the first day of *Succos*, when it came time for Rav Chaim to take the *Lulav*, he could not be found in the *Shul*. When the *Netziv* noticed that he was not there, he instructed the *Shul* to not wait any longer and to begin saying *Hallel*. A short while later, Rav Chaim appeared at the entrance to the *Shul*, and the *Netziv* hurried over to give him the chance to make the *Brachah*. Surprisingly, Rav Chaim refused, saying that he would explain why later. After *Davening*, Rav Chaim Brisker said to the *Netziv* that this year a question had arisen regarding the *Netziv's Esrog*, however, he said, "The question only applies to me. It has nothing to do with anyone else." The *Netziv* said, "If there is a question about my *Esrog*, then surely it applies to me just as it does to you." Rav Chaim explained, "This year is the eighth year of the *Shemittah* cycle, and your *Esrog* came from *Eretz Yisroel*. Even though it is *Kosher* to use because it came from a non-Jew, it was harvested in the seventh year, and I am strict on myself regarding this. The *Netziv* said, "This too, is a question for me as well." The next day, on the second day of *Yom Tov*, at about four o'clock in the morning, Rav Chaim was woken up by a knock at his door. It was the *Shamas* of the *Netziv*, who had been sent to call for Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim was a bit disturbed, wondering what could be so urgent that he had to go to the *Netziv* at such an early hour on *Yom Tov*. He quickly got dressed and rushed to the *Netziv's* house, and saw him sitting among a mountain of open *Sefarim* piled high. The *Netziv* welcomed him with joy, and announced, "I have good news for you! You can make a *Brachah* on my *Esrog* today without any problem! Immediately after our discussion yesterday, I sat down to analyze the question, and I have been working on it since then. It is now clear to me without any doubts that it is permissible to fulfill the *Mitzvah* with my *Esrog*!" The *Netziv* then began to elaborate the details of his reasoning, but Rav Chaim interrupted him and said, "Wait, I haven't said *Birchas HaTorah* yet." He then went to say the *Brachos* with *Kavanah*. When he was finished, Rav Chaim was surprised to see tears flowing down the cheeks of the *Netziv*, and he asked what was wrong. The *Netziv* responded, "How can I not cry, when a young *Talmud Chacham* like you has not said *Birchas HaTorah* by four o'clock in the morning?! What will become of the next generation?!" Rav Chaim was forever impressed by this. He marveled that to the *Netziv*, *Yeridas HaDoros*, the spiritual decline of the generations, was that he could not understand how a Jew could hope to grow and become great if he was still sleeping at four o'clock in the morning on *Yom Tov*! It upset him so much that he even cried over it!

Pearls of Wisdom ... *A Word for the Ages*

There are certain points in *Hallel* when we wave the *lulav* in all six directions. Rav Naftoli of Ropshitz used to have the following thoughts in mind when waving then *lulav*: *Hashem, You have commanded the four directions of the world to protect the Jewish people from harm. We implore You, Hashem, Who lives in Shamayim, please look down on the world and see how oppressed and downtrodden Your children are. Please have mercy on us!*

✪ **Succos Treasures**

There are many requirements that a *Succah* needs, and some of them are enumerated in the first *Mishnah* of the *Mesechta*. A *Succah* must be lower than 20 *Amos*, it must be at least 10 *Tefachim* high, and have a minimum of three walls— two of which must be full walls, while the third may be only a partial wall. Another rule for the *Succah* (*Succah* 28a) is that it must be big enough for a person to fit his head and most of his body inside it— which is a minimum of 6x6 *Tefachim*. Rav Betzael *HaKohein* (*Mar'eh Kohein*), teaches that all of these requirements can be learned from the letters of the word *Succah* (סוכה) itself! The ס, which has a *Gematria* of 60, hints to the minimum height requirement of at least 10 *Tefachim*, as it says in *Menachos* (41b), a *Tefach* is comprised of the width of six fingers, and 6 (fingers) x 10 (*Tefachim*) equals 60. The נ, which has a *Gematria* of 6, hints to the area of 6x6 *Tefachim*, which is the minimum requirement for one to have his head and majority of his body within the *Succah*. The כ, which has a *Gematria* of 20, is a reference to the maximum height of 20 *Amos* for a *Succah*, and the shape of the letter ה hints to the least amount required for walls for the *Succah*— two complete walls (like a ה), and a third partial wall, like the leg of the letter ה!

Pearls of Wisdom ... *A Word for the Ages*

The *Vilna Gaon* said that the most difficult of the 613 *Mitzvos* is *V'Samachta B'Chagecha*, and you should rejoice on your festival, because it means that one should be happy and joyful for eight straight days of *Yom Tov*. It is a challenge to avoid worrisome and sorrowful thoughts and allow nothing to interfere with the *Simchah* of *Succos*!

The *Chazon Ish*, *zt"l*, once approached Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, *zt"l*, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Yeshivas Ponovezh*, and handed him an *Esrog*. The *Chazon Ish* told Rav Michel Yehudah that it was definitely *Kosher* and it was not from a tree that was grafted, and he asked Rav Michel Yehudah to plant the *Esrog* seeds in his yard. The *Chazon Ish* told him that he would have *Parnasah* from this *Esrog*. Rav Michel Yehudah asked, "Can an *Esrog* grow in the climate in Bnei Brak? Also, I don't have any experience growing *Esrogim*, and *Esrog* trees take much time to cultivate. I don't have time to cultivate an *Esrog* tree, I want to learn *Torah*!" The *Chazon Ish* replied that all he would have to do was plant the seeds and water it, and nothing more, promising him that it would not take up much of his time, and added, "*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* can send a *Brachah* with a simple wind!"

Rav Michel Yehudah listened to the *Chazon Ish*, and planted the *Esrog* seeds in his yard. The *Chazon Ish* constantly inquired about how the tree was doing, checking that Rav Michel Yehudah was watering it enough. During the second year of the tree's life, it looked like it would wither and fail. Rav Michel Yehudah reported this to the *Chazon Ish* and the *Chazon Ish* told him not to worry. He reminded him, "If the *Ribbono Shel Olam* desires it, He can make a wind come that will revive the tree and make it live for many years!" After the *Chazon Ish* said this, there was an immediate improvement in the tree, and it started flourishing. Remarkably, the *Esrog* tree grew stronger and the *Esrogim* became the famous *Lefkowitz-Chazon Ish Esrogim*. True to the promise, Rav Michel Yehudah hardly had to invest any time into it, despite the fact that an *Esrog* tree is usually very sensitive and requires much attention. Additionally, most *Esrog* trees do not usually last for many years, but 70 years later, that tree still stood tall in Rav Michel Yehudah's yard and was still producing beautiful *Esrogim*! However, before the end of the *Shloshim* following the passing of Rav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz, his famous *Esrog* tree had begun to dry out. The tree's branches had gradually dried, and the fruit and leaves had fallen off. It became apparent that as Rav Michel Yehudah lived, so did his miraculous *Esrog* tree!

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